

**An Exploration in Language Pedagogy: Developing Oral
Language Skills in Three and Four Year Old Children in an
Early Intervention Setting**

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2008**

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Education, Faculty of Education, St. Patrick's
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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of doctor of philosophy is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the President, Dr Pauric Travers, and St. Patrick's College for affording me the opportunity to pursue this PhD degree. I wish to thank especially Dr. Mark Morgan who first encouraged me to begin the study. Thank you also to Dr. Mary Shine Thompson for her support and advice throughout the process.

I owe a real debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Peter Archer for his expert guidance and for his kind support and generosity towards me throughout our time working together.

I wish to thank Dr. Deirdre Martin, my second advisor, for her valuable contribution.

I wish to acknowledge the great debt of gratitude I owe to the children and their parents and to the classroom professionals, school principal and staff of the school in which I conducted this study. My regret is that they must remain anonymous. Most especially, I would like to have named the two professionals who welcomed me into their Early Start classroom and facilitated me in every possible way. Their expertise was a great source of learning for me and they have my deepest respect and gratitude.

In my own Special Education Department, I wish to thank Dr. Jean Ware for granting me a period of study leave in which to further the work and my colleagues for their support and encouragement throughout. I wish to thank especially, Celine O'Connell who gives so generously of her expertise and who has been so helpful to me.

I wish to thank Sharon King for her work and help and Molly Sheehan, in the College Library, for all of her help and guidance during my explorations in inter-library loan.

I wish to thank my wonderful family for their faith in me and to remember my dear parents who would be pleased and amused at the whole endeavour.

My greatest debt is to Conrad, my husband; wise and strong and with great humour, one couldn't wish for a better fellow traveller.

ABSTRACT

The first aim of this study was to explore whether the aspects of adult speech to young children which have been identified in the literature as being facilitative of children's language development, could be adapted for use as teaching strategies. A second aim was to examine whether these strategies could constitute an inclusive language pedagogy for early years settings. The areas of language development considered were children's acquisition of the elements of the language system and their use of that system to engage in expository and narrative discourses.

The study was designed as a qualitative, interactive enquiry located within the ethnographic tradition. The data collection technique was participant observation. The study was conducted through the generation of data, first hand, by the researcher adopting a teaching role. Over one school year, during weekly visits to an early years setting, conversations between the researcher and the participants were generated and recorded in small group, one-to-one and whole group contexts.

The findings show how the use of a range of adult talk strategies contributed to the development of discourse skills in all of the participants. In Phase 2 of the study, all of the participants, including two children with serious language delay, were exhibiting knowledge of vocabulary and structure, engaging in discussion on topics, and presenting information to an audience, in ways which contrasted sharply with their communicative behaviours in Phase 1.

The findings of the study suggest the need for increased support for practitioners in language teaching and learning in early years settings in Ireland and for reform of curriculum and early intervention policy. Directions for future research to build on the findings from this study are also suggested.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The first aim of this study is to explore whether the aspects of adult speech to young children, which have been identified in the literature as being facilitative of children's language development, can be adapted for use as teaching strategies. A second aim is to examine whether these strategies can constitute an inclusive language pedagogy for early years settings. The areas of language development being considered are children's acquisition of the elements of the language system and their use of that system to engage in expository and narrative discourses. The aspects of adult talk being explored are the fine tuning, modelling and discourse enabling strategies which adults use to support their children's language development. Within the wider focus of exploring methods of language teaching and learning for early education, the study has the specific focus of furthering the work of the Early Start Programme by exploring areas of language teaching and learning which have not hitherto been an explicit focus of the Early Start curriculum. In this chapter, the context of the study and the rationale for the enquiry are presented briefly and the research questions are outlined.

Development of spoken language is included as a central domain of learning in early years curricula and in guideline documents currently in use in educational settings for children aged birth to six, in Ireland (Early Start Curricular Guidelines for Good Practice, In-Career Development Team, 1998; Primary Curriculum, NCCA 1999; Framework for Early Learning, NCCA, 2005a; Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, CECDE, 2007). Equally, the importance of the development of oral language skills is highlighted in DEIS, An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion (2005a) which is the most recent initiative from the Department of Education and Science (DES) aimed at combating educational disadvantage.

The treatment of oral language in the revised Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 1999) is particularly significant in that it presents language as both a system to be acquired and a resource for learning and it links learning explicitly to teaching. The curriculum content is expressed in terms of four strand units: Receptiveness to Language, Competence and

Confidence in Using Language, Developing Cognitive Abilities through Language and Emotional and Imaginative Development through Language. Expressed in this manner, it is clearly intended that the language curriculum will provide children with opportunities both to learn language and to learn through language. The areas of language learning are interpreted in explicit statements of desired learning outcomes and these statements are prefaced by the additional statement that children *will be enabled* to develop these levels of competence. Learning is defined in direct relation to the enabling condition of teaching. This approach to language teaching and learning suggests comprehensive treatment of it within the curriculum. However, evaluations of practice, available from within the primary school system, suggest that oral language teaching and learning is problematic within the curriculum (NCCA, 2005b; DES, 2005b).

In its Primary Curriculum Review, Phase One, The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) reports that teachers were very supportive of the presence of oral language in the curriculum (NCCA, 2005b). However, teachers reported difficulty in understanding the structure of the English curriculum and they identified developing children's oral language as among the greatest challenges posed by the Revised English Curriculum.

In a parallel evaluation of the implementation of the Revised Curriculum from the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (DES), there are recommendations on the need to emphasise the teaching of oral language as a discrete and integral part of the English Curriculum (DES, 2005b). Further, there are recommendations for the provision of clear guidance on the timetabling and organisation of oral language lessons and for the provision of exemplars to support the teaching of oral language at each class level.

Further evidence of teachers' difficulties comes from a study of literacy in schools with high concentrations of pupils who are disadvantaged (Eivers, Shiel & Shortt, 2004). In that study, teachers identified oral language as a priority need for their in-career development and a number expressed frustration at their lack of knowledge about how to develop children's oral language skills. Taken together, the findings of the three studies mentioned suggest that,

while there is a commitment from teachers to language teaching and learning in primary schools, there are problems with practice and there is a degree of insecurity among teachers about their abilities to interpret, to plan and to teach the content of the oral language curriculum. Issues relating to oral language in the Primary School Curriculum are discussed again in the concluding chapter and the content of the Oral Language Strand is examined with reference to the findings of this study.

Children under four years old in Ireland, including children with special needs, do not have access to a universal system of pre-school provision and can be placed in a variety of settings run by a variety of agencies including statutory bodies such as the Department of Health, voluntary and community agencies and the private sector. Within this range of services, very little research evidence is available on the nature and quality of provision. In one recent study conducted in two geographical areas of the country, a wide range of providers was identified and all were including some children at risk for reasons of disadvantage and some children with disabilities. In some centres, the majority of children were described as disadvantaged (McGough, Carey & Ware, 2005). In the study, levels of staff qualifications and knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy fell far short of those identified in the international literature as the levels required for effective intervention for vulnerable children. In the last decade, a number of reports have documented the need for the provision of a range of professional development options so that critical conditions for quality can be met in this sector (National Forum, 1998; DES, 2003; OECD, 2004).

The most recent initiative from the DES targeting children under four, is the provision in the action plan, DEIS, to provide *an educational dimension* within existing child-care services in disadvantaged communities (DES, 2005a, p.33). This provision is intended as an intervention for 3 year old children, in the year before entry to primary school. In this initiative, mapping new provision on to existing services will require adequate supports for professional development as in the main this sector is unregulated in terms of staff qualifications, curriculum content and pedagogic practice.

It is hoped that this study will inform and support practice across the range of early years provisions currently available in the Irish context, both in the primary school system and in the wider early years sector. As the focus of the study is the pedagogy of first language development within an early years curriculum, it is envisaged that the findings will be relevant to practitioners who are supporting any first language development. Early years provision in Ireland includes children who are acquiring English as an additional language who may not be in receipt of first language support. While there is an urgent need to further enquiry into appropriate means of language support for this population of children, in the Irish context, this enquiry is not included in the present study.

In the study, it is intended to build on approaches to language teaching and learning which have been promoted in the Early Start Programme to date. This work was developed during the years from 1996 to 2005 when I was a member of an In-Career Development Team supporting Early Start personnel.

Early Start is one of a small number of provisions for children under four years, which is funded and regulated by the DES. It is a one year, early intervention programme targeting 3 year old children who are considered to be at risk of school failure, for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage. The intervention was initiated by the DES, on a pilot basis, in 1994, in eight primary schools and subsequently extended to forty primary schools. All forty schools were part of a wider scheme for addressing educational disadvantage (the Designated Areas Scheme). Within the catchment areas for each of these schools, children are admitted to Early Start on the basis of greatest need including children who have identified disabilities, children without assessments whose development is perceived to be delayed and children who are considered to be at risk of under achieving in school or of developing a general learning disability. The programme operates a ratio of two adults to fifteen children and it is taught by primary school teachers supported by child-care workers.

In 1996, the Special Education Department, in a College of Education in which I work, was invited by the DES to contribute to the professional development of the teachers and child-care workers in Early Start. My work with the programme included delivering short

programmes of continuing professional development in curriculum and pedagogy. I was supported in this work by colleagues from the Special Education Department and by a small team of experienced early years teachers who were available to the programme, periodically, on short-term release from their schools. During that time, we comprised the In-Career Development Team.

AREAS OF ENQUIRY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Language teaching and learning was given close attention in the professional development seminars and in-class support visits provided to Early Start personnel. In the Curricular Guidelines for Good Practice (In-Career Development Team, 1998), the language curriculum is articulated as development of children's sentence level skills of vocabulary and grammatical structure and development of their skills as conversational partners, described in the guidelines as listener-speaker skills. The concerns here are for both linguistic and communicative competence.

The language curriculum in Early Start is also concerned with the role of language in learning. In this regard, one of the key areas of focus is the relationship between language and thought, and how growth in linguistic competence contributes to children's cognitive development. Here the concern is that language competence should go beyond the linguistic and the communicative to what Bruner describes as the analytic or propositional function of language (Bruner, 1975, 1996). Accordingly, in the Early Start curricular guidelines, language learning is represented as both acquisition of the language system and competence in the use of that system to support other key areas of development.

Within this framework for language learning, the principal focus of attention for pedagogy has been adult-child linguistic interaction. Here the concern has been to identify and to articulate how the individual characteristics of the learner and the contribution of the consciously focused adult act, and interact, to best promote the acquisition of the system and the use of language as a tool.

This focus on the adult-child communicative context is grounded in a theory of teaching and learning in which adult-child conversation is the locus of language acquisition and provides the collaborative, social framework within which the child is initiated into the meaning systems of the culture. This view of teaching and learning is based in Vygotsky's (1962) social-constructivist theory and in a social-interactionist theory of language acquisition and development (Tomasello, 2003; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; MacWhinney, 1999, 2001; Snow, 1999). This study is underpinned by these perspectives on the social nature of knowledge.

While the development of the Early Start curriculum has been informed by the literature on children's acquisition of the language system and on the role of language in learning, in the present study, the literature review has been broadened substantially and has extended beyond any investigation of the literature conducted in the work of Early Start to date. In this study, adult-child dialogue is seen as the vehicle for both teaching and learning in relation to language acquisition and use. In articulating this perspective, the continuing challenge to practice is to identify the qualitatively significant features of the adult's contribution and to effect the appropriate match between these, the learning context, and the differentiated characteristics of the child as learner. These concerns provide the impetus for this study and bring a focus which extends beyond that of the Early Start work to date. A further development is the focus on children's discourse skills which is central to this study. To date, this area of language development has not been an explicit focus in the Early Start curriculum.

The first area of enquiry is the facilitative features of adult talk to young children. Here the concern is to explore the nature and style of adult talk which can generate, and support, the kinds of language knowledge and use required by young language learners and which can constitute a communicable language pedagogy. There is a particular focus here on exploring the adult styles which develop children's expository and narrative discourse skills. This area of enquiry gives rise to the first research question for the study which is as follows:

- Can the facilitative aspects of adult speech to young children support their development of sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentence structures in the use of decontextualised language for discourse, that is, in the construction of narratives and explanations?

A second area of enquiry follows from the first and relates to the different strengths and needs of the children. There is a need to explore whether and how the differentiated use of the strategies can support children, in this age group, whose communication and language skills place them at different points along a continuum of learning, including children who are exhibiting serious language delay relative to their chronological ages.

The children in the study have a wide range of language competencies and the group includes two children with significant levels of expressive language delay in vocabulary knowledge, length of utterance and range of language use.

In this second area of enquiry, the concern is to explore whether the adult talk strategies can be adapted and differentiated to support the diverse needs of the group of children in the study and whether the entire range of strategies used can be considered to constitute an inclusive pedagogy, appropriate to the full range of needs encountered within this early intervention setting. In this regard, a second research question arises and is as follows:

- Can the facilitative aspects of adult speech support the differentiated language needs of children in an early intervention setting, including children with language delay?

These research questions will be addressed through analysis of the data provided by the study.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Following this introductory chapter, the remainder of the thesis is laid out as follows:

Chapter 2 is the first chapter of the Literature Review. In it, the case for a social-interactionist view of language acquisition is presented, the facilitative features of adult talk to young children are identified and their relationship to children's acquisition of the language system is discussed. These are the facilitative features referred to in the first research question.

Chapter 3 is the second chapter of the Literature Review. In this chapter, language learning is defined as a progression through increasingly complex modes of meaning, in the pre-school and early school years. It is argued that this progression can be defined as a continuum of learning. An inclusive pedagogy is defined as differentiation to meet individual children's needs along points on the continuum, and the evidence for a range of individual differences and characteristics is discussed including differences associated with socio-economic disadvantage. The argument for a continuum of learning and the evidence for a range of individual differences are relevant to addressing the second research question. In Chapter 3 also, the discussion on modes of meaning is linked to developing children's use of decontextualised language in discourse. The use of the facilitative features of adult talk to develop discourse skills is an important area of enquiry in the study and is relevant to both research questions.

Chapter 4 is the final chapter of the Literature Review. In this chapter, a case is presented for dialogue as the essential context for language teaching and learning in early years settings. This argument is extended to include the evidence from the field of early language intervention that, in dialogue, adult strategies can be differentiated to provide a maximally responsive environment. Along with the discussion in Chapter 3, this discussion in Chapter 4 provides the basis for addressing the second research question.

In Chapter 5, theoretical issues relating to the research methodology are discussed. It is argued that a qualitative approach within the ethnographic tradition is appropriate to the aims and purpose of the study and that participant observation is the relevant data collection

technique for this enquiry which is based in adult-child dialogue. Issues of access and ethical considerations are also discussed. In this chapter also, the methodologies from the studies reported in the Literature Review are discussed with reference to their relationship to the methodology adopted in the present study.

In Chapter 6, the Design and Methods are outlined. The study was conducted in two Phases. The methods and procedures for data collection in each phase are outlined and discussed.

In Chapter 7, the methods for the analysis of data in each phase are outlined and discussed.

The findings from the study are presented in Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11.

In Chapter 8, the findings for Phase 1 of data collection are presented and discussed. The findings presented are for the children's baseline competencies in language, during Phase 1 of the study.

The findings from Phase 2 of data collection are presented and discussed in Chapters, 9, 10 and 11. Findings for the use of two kinds of strategies in developing the children's skills in expository discourse are presented in Chapters 9 and 10. Findings for the use of two kinds of strategies in developing the children's narrative discourse skills are presented in Chapter 11.

In Chapter 12, the Conclusions and Implications of the study are presented.

CHAPTER 2: ADULT SPEECH TO YOUNG CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the evidence on what are the facilitative features of adult speech to young children is examined. This examination begins with a discussion of the relationship between environmental input and children's language acquisition as proposed in a social/interactionist theory of language acquisition and development. The chapter continues with an investigation of the theoretical positions and research evidence underpinning the interactive styles, contexts and strategies which are considered to constitute the facilitative features of adult support. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of some issues of culture and methodology which are relevant to the content of the chapter.

A SOCIAL-INTERACTIONIST THEORY OF LANGUAGE

The theoretical positions and research evidence which focus on the social nature of language learning are of key importance to the rationale for this study. In seeking to identify a repertoire of teaching strategies, the study is premised on a belief in the role of environment in language acquisition and development. This premise has its theoretical and empirical basis in a social/ interactive model of language acquisition. The social/interactive model allows for exploration of critical issues in language pedagogy including the nature of adult-child linguistic interaction and the relative contribution of adult and child to language acquisition, the interrelation of the structural and functional properties of language and the relationship between language competence and other areas of learning.

From a social/interactionist perspective, language is an emergent system, deriving from interactions between individual/ biological and social/environmental processes, and constructed socially through adult-child interaction (Tomasello, 2003; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; MacWhinney, 1999, 2001; Snow, 1999). An understanding of language as an emergent system also includes the view that language develops in tandem with, and not separately from, other areas of development (Snow, 1999). In this understanding, both child and adult have key roles. Acting on innate social and cognitive capacities, through adult-child linguistic interaction, the child develops particular intention reading and pattern finding

skills with which to segment and to process adult linguistic input (MacWhinney, 2004; Tomasello, 2003). In this way, the child exploits a combination of social precociousness and neural processing skills to develop learning mechanisms through which to construct a language. The adult provides a model of linguistic input on which the child can act and is a critical partner in the social interaction which is the context for the child's learning. The adult model is characterised by specific features which are regarded as facilitating the child's acquisition skills and the adult's contribution is considered to be part of the construction process.

While language is regarded as an emergent system, the goal of language is communication, and language acquisition is interpreted to mean communicative competence. That is, language system and language use are regarded as interdependent and acquisition of structural - linguistic skills is meaningful only to the extent that children use these linguistic elements effectively to interpret and convey intended meanings in social contexts (Barton & Tomasello, 1994). In an extension of this view, language is considered to originate in the child's social capacities and the pragmatic use of language, its capacity to perform particular communicative functions, is seen as the driving force of language learning (Bruner, 1976; Bruner & Bornstein, 1989; Snow, 1999; Carpenter, Nagell & Tomasello, 1998), and the motivation for the child's acquisition of the structural elements of vocabulary and grammar (Tomasello, 2003).

From this perspective language acquisition is inextricably linked to context and the dominant view is that insights into child mechanisms of language acquisition are best sought in instances of language in use in social interaction (Clarke, 2003; Wells, 1999). Equally, there is consensus that the role of environment in language learning is rooted in the adult's desire to facilitate the child's communicative intent. Following from this, the contribution of the environment is seen as constituted in the facilitative features of adult speech which, by their nature, are designed to support the child's growth in communicative competence (Snow, 1989, 1999; Bruner, 1983; Bruner & Bornstein, 1989, Clarke, 2003; Chouinard & Clark, 2003).

There is consistent agreement, across the various strands of research included in the social/interactive model of language acquisition and development, on what constitutes supportive adult input to children learning language. The facilitative features of adult talk that are identified can be described as the use of specific talk strategies in particular contexts with these contexts having distinctive qualities of interactive style. The talk strategies which are identified are requests for clarification with recasting and expanding of children's utterances and a topic continuing and topic enhancing style. The contexts are ones of conversation, and prototype conversation, in which both adult and child pay joint attention to objects and events which are of interest to the child. The interactive style is characterised by temporal and semantic contingency on the child's utterances, including mapping of language to the child's communicative attempts, and by fine tuning the complexity of adult utterances to the child's levels of comprehension.

Agreement on these facilitative features is evident across the various perspectives represented in the social interactive model. From the perspective of language theorists who are principally concerned with identifying child mechanisms of language acquisition, these facilitative features represent good positive evidence upon which the child will act (MacWhinney, 2004). Language acquisition theorists, together with socio-linguistic and psycholinguistic theorists and researchers, who are concerned with articulating the role of environment in language learning, describe these features as the social and linguistic supports supplied by the adult to the learner constructing an emergent language system (Clarke, 2003, Wells, 1999; Snow, 1989, 1999; Bruner, 1983, 1999). Equally, for theorists and researchers whose specific emphasis is the role of intervention in the language development of children with a range of disabilities, these features constitute a social support model of intervention through which the child experiences a necessary, highly responsive environment (Warren, 2000; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002).

In the following sections of this chapter, the facilitative features of adult speech are discussed with reference to the research evidence which supports them and which affords insights into the nature of their role in children's language learning. The features can be categorised as talk strategies in social contexts, which are characterised by distinctive interactive styles. For

the purposes of the review, the features are discussed under two headings: talk strategies, and contexts and interactive styles. Contexts and interactive styles are discussed first as these are constituted through particular features of adult-child interaction and such interactions begin from the moment of the child's birth and well before the onset of language.

LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTEXTS AND ADULT INTERACTIVE STYLES

Joint Attention and Intersubjectivity

Within the social/interactive model of language development, language emerges in a social context in which the socially precocious infant and the supportive adult contribute to the construction of meaning. The communicative relationship begins to emerge immediately the child is born. At birth, typically developing infants appear to already hear and discriminate speech sounds (Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002), and show a number of signs of social responsiveness to their caregivers in the first few weeks of life, for example, preferring their mother's voice to another female (Locke, 1993; Dockrell & Mercer, 1999). What appears to be a social predisposition on the part of the baby generates a social response from the adult and patterns of interaction develop which are structured around the infant's capabilities and behaviours (Dockrell & Mercer, 1999).

In the first few months of the child's life, the interaction is characterised by what Bruner (1999) describes as a developing mutuality of awareness; a primitive inter-subjectivity between child and adult. Adult behaviours appear to be tailored to respond to what are perceived to be the infant's communicative attempts. They include promoting periods of mutual gaze where the mother returns the infant's gaze and sustains the mutual gaze period for as long as the child attends. The interactions are characterised also by what appears like vocal turn taking. Bruner (1983) quotes a study by Stern, Hofer, Haft and Dore (1982) which shows that by the end of the second month, mother and child have achieved sustained eye-to-eye contact with vocal accompaniments by both. In the literature, analysis of these patterns of behaviour suggest that the adult is attempting to support the child's perceived communicative attempts by fitting their own initiations and responses in among the child's vocalisations, giving the appearance of a turn taking conversation (Dockrell & Mercer, 1999).

These bidirectional, reciprocal interactions are seen as providing the context from which the child's communicative competence will emerge (Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002). Snow (1999) characterises this early adult-child relationship as evolving through a benign conspiracy of infant perceptual and attentional processes and adult responsive tendencies. She theorises that these mutually engaging behaviours generate social activity which is transformed into social interaction and from this interaction comes the social and interpersonal understanding from which language emerges.

A critical milestone for communicative competence and for entry into language is reached with the achievement of intersubjectivity in the second half of the child's first year. This new level of interpersonal understanding begins in the child's ability to achieve joint attention with the adult, to objects and events. These interactions involve the child, the adult, and an object of interest, for example a toy, to which both are attending.

Shared or joint attention begins in the child following the adult's lead, by tracking the adult's line of regard, to find a visual target, (Tomasello, 1999). Bruner (1999) quotes the outcomes from an early study in which he and Scaife conducted an experiment of children's ability to follow adult gaze (Scaife & Bruner, 1975). In the experiment, children ranging in age from three months to a year, individually, sat facing a researcher who exclaimed, *oh look* and then turned to an object. Bruner reports that, far in excess of chance, even children as young as six months turned in that direction to search for a visual target. He makes the further point that, if the child failed to find the target, he/she often turned back to track the adult's gaze direction again. With these behaviours, children are seen to be 'tuning in' to the attention of adults to outside entities and this shift in level of interpersonal understanding is regarded as prompting the child's growth in awareness of the adult as an intentional being (Tomasello, 1999; Snow, 1989, 1999).

In a detailed, longitudinal study of two boys, Richard and Jonathan, from the time they were aged five to twenty four months and three to eighteen months, respectively, Bruner (1983) documents the children's language development from the establishing of joint attention to

their use of words. The children, who are described as being from middle-class homes, were observed for an hour, at least once a fortnight, during play routines with their mothers, and video and audio recordings were made. In this study, Bruner identifies the first phase of joint attention as occurring when the children were seven months old. He describes this phase as being initiated and controlled by the mother who introduced objects, or focused on objects the child was attending to, while using phrases having a rising intonation pattern, with the final syllable of the final word dropping down (*look, here comes tedd-y*). In Bruner's view, this managing of joint attention by the mother results in the child discovering signals in the mother's speech that indicate that the mother is attending to *something to look at* (Bruner, 1983, p.73).

A new phase was initiated with the children's developing ability to reach and take objects and to exchange them with the adult. Bruner's observation is that joint attention now becomes dominated by joint action. The significant achievement for the children here is that by signalling something that is wanted, they now begin to direct the adult's attention as opposed to just being involved in interpreting the adult's efforts to direct their attention. In Bruner's study, this behaviour is interpreted as an initial and primitive form of requesting (the use of the imperative) and it was observed in both children when they were eight months old. Drawing from the evidence of this study, Bruner (1999) describes the sequence of children's acquisition of joint attentional skills as moving from comprehension to productive behaviour.

A further crucial stage in the achievement of joint attention begins with the emergence of the child's use of pointing (interpreted as akin to a pre-linguistic use of the declarative). In Bruner's study, this behaviour was observed in Jonathan at age nine and a half months and in Richard at age thirteen months. The study shows that the children's comprehension of pointing by the adults preceded their own use of pointing by about two months. Bruner's study also provides evidence that children begin to accompany pointing with phonetically consistent but non-standard expressions. He quotes Richard's use of *apoo* for *apple* and *boe* for *bird*. He also provides evidence that the mothers capitalised on their children's abilities to point, with questions like *where's the X?* and *what's this?* and the study shows that by the

time the children were fifteen months old, questions like *where's your nose* (answered by an appropriate point) and *what's this?* (pointing to the child's nose), had been incorporated into familiar games and routines. The study shows how, in these contexts, these questions elicit vocalisations which lead to non-standard words or approximates to words and finally to standard names.

Tomasello (1999) describes the term *joint attention* as characterising the whole complexity of social interactional skills acquired by the child from the second half of his/her first year. Through monitoring the attention of others to objects in the environment, the child comes to an understanding that others can perceive the world and can have intentions towards it. This act of comprehension, of cognitive and social understanding, is considered to signal the beginning of the child's understanding of communicative intentions and goals in others and to prompt intentional behaviour in the child (Bruner, 1983, 1999; Tomasello, 1999; Snow, 1999).

A second influential study provides evidence that, for typically developing children, joint attentional skills seem to be well in place by the end of the first year. In a longitudinal study, Carpenter, Nagell and Tomasello (1998) assessed acquisition of joint attentional skills in twenty four children, over a six month period, from the time the children were nine months until they were fifteen months. Children were assessed at monthly intervals on nine different measures of joint attention: joint engagement, gaze following, point following, imitation of instrumental acts, imitation of arbitrary acts, reaction to social obstacles, use of imperative gestures and use of declarative gestures. Stringent criteria were applied to ensure that children were consciously following, or directing, the adult's attention rather than simply reacting to a stimulus. For example, one criterion was that children should be seen to be alternating attention between object and adult. The findings showed that all nine skills were in place, for the majority of children, by age one year. All of the skills emerged in close developmental synchrony for individual children, with nearly 80% of children mastering all nine skills within a four month period.

Within the social/interactive model of language acquisition, the dominant view is that intersubjectivity provides the pragmatic, contextual framework within which children come to an understanding of both sense and reference. As was seen in Bruner's study (1983), in the interactive context, and with support from the adult, the child comes to understand the focus of attention as the referent. Experience of this object of reference is contextualised and is embedded in actions which help the child to interpret the function and meaning attaching to the object and so to establish sense as well as reference. That is, understanding of sense and reference emerges in the intersubjective contexts with this understanding beginning in joint attention and reaching full expression in lexico- grammatical speech (Rollins & Snow, 1998; Snow, 1999; Bruner, 1983, 1999; Tomasello, 1999).

Styles of Response

In the child's pre-intentional stage of development, the adult's contribution to language development is considered to be twofold. Firstly the adult is a critical partner in the social/interactive context which will become the context of intentional communication and language (Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998). Secondly, the adult ascribes meaning intentions and communicative goals to the child, even in the first few months of life, influencing the communicative context accordingly and helping to create the conditions in which the child can become an intentional being (Tomasello, 1992).

With the emergence of intentional communication, in the second half of the child's first year, adult responsiveness takes on particular linguistic features. These features begin as comments or directives about the child's focus of attention e.g. *it's tedd-y; hold teddy*, and develop in complexity in response to the child's emerging linguistic abilities, *yes it is teddy; oh, teddy is soft* (Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998). There is consensus in the literature that these features are embedded in particular physical contexts which facilitate the interpretation of meaning for the child. There is consensus also that they are embedded, or contextualised, in particular styles of adult response which may act to engender feelings of efficacy in children and to ease the task of symbol- referent matching and of combining words to form grammatical utterances (Bruner, 1983, 1999; Rollins & Snow, 1998; Tamis-Lemonda, Bornstein, Kahana-Kalman, Baumwell & Cyphers, 1998; Snow, 1989; 1999). The physical

contexts are the highly recurrent physical routines and formats such as mealtimes, dressing and bedtime rituals, which help to establish and to situate meaning for the child (Bruner, 1983, 1999; Rollins & Snow, 1998; Snow, 1989; 1999). Within such contexts, mothers are seen to employ particular styles which support or *scaffold* the interpretation of meaning for the child (Bruner, 1983; 1999).

These supportive interactive styles are referred to variously as contingent responsiveness, responsive interaction, and mother- child responsive interaction and it is a prominent topic for discussion in the literature on language acquisition and development for both typically developing children (Bornstein & Tamis-LeMonda, 1989; Snow, 1999; Bruner, 1999; Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein & Baumwell, 2001; Dodici & Draper, 2003) and children with disabilities (Yoder et al., 1998; Marfo, Dedrick & Barbour, 1998; Kelly & Barnard, 2000; Hauser- Cram, Warfield, Shonkoff & Krauss, 2001; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; Guralnick, 2005). Contingent responsiveness is defined as an adult linguistic response which is temporally and semantically contingent to the child's utterance and sensitively matched, or finely tuned in complexity, to the child's level of communicative functioning (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 1998; Yoder et al., 1998; Hauser- Cram et al., 2001).

A number of studies have provided evidence of the effects of a generally responsive adult style on aspects of communication and language development for typically developing children and for children with disabilities. In a longitudinal study of the relationship between children's early language competences and environmental input and acquisition of later language milestones, Tamis –LeMonda and her colleagues included maternal responsiveness in the children's first year, as one of the predictor variables of earlier onset of key language milestones in the children's second year (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, Kahana-Kalman, Baumwell & Cyphers, 1998). In the study of forty mother- child pairs, with typically developing children, the researchers predicted that children who imitate vocalizations, utter first words spontaneously and show receptive understanding as early as nine months, and who are engaged in interactions with more responsive mothers, achieve key language milestones relating to expressive vocabulary, combining words, and use of representation, earlier in their second year. Children's competences were measured at bi-monthly intervals

from age nine months to age one year and nine months and these measures were coupled with observational measures of maternal responsiveness when the children were nine and thirteen months. A statistical technique known as events history analysis was used to determine when linguistic milestones are reached in development and what variables predict the differential timing of those achievements.

The outcomes of the study highlight both the role of earlier child achievement and maternal responsiveness in later child language competence. When child and mother factors were considered together, the onset of the later language milestones differed by as much as five months between children in the lower and upper 10th percentile of the predictor variables. Timing of the children's earlier milestones of first expressive words and first fifty words in receptive language, and maternal responsiveness when the children were thirteen months, each contributed uniquely to variation in one or more of the language milestones in the children's second year. Maternal responsiveness specifically predicted the second year milestones of fifty words in children's expressive language and children's combining of words.

The authors identify a number of limitations to the study. Firstly the participants are described as coming from homogeneous, intact, middle –class families. In this respect, the results may not generalise to other populations and cultural groups. Secondly, the measures of child language which are described as repeated assessments were derived from mothers' reports. While the authors make the point that this is an established method and is considered acceptable, they acknowledge the possibility that the relationships between variables may reflect individual differences in the ways in which mothers supply information about their children's language. A third concern which is not identified by the authors, but is identified here, is the lack of specificity in the definition of responsiveness. This results in only limited insights about the nature and types of interactions which were predictive of positive language outcomes.

A major study of early intervention focusing on young children with disabilities and their parents also reports quality of mother-child interaction as a significant factor in the

development of children's communication and language (Hauser- Cram, Warfield, Shonkoff & Krauss, 2001). The study was a prospective, longitudinal, non experimental investigation designed to generate and test conceptual models of child and family development in order to effect change in intervention policy and practice. Specifically, the study was concerned with identifying factors which affect children's developmental outcomes and family well-being. The participants were 183 children with three types of disability: Down syndrome, motor impairment and developmental delay and their parents. Data were collected at five time points from the time the children entered intervention as infants or toddlers, until the children were ten years old.

In the outcomes from the study, type of disability was a strong predictor of development in cognition, social and daily living skills and of changes in parent and family stress. Beyond type of disability, child factors of behaviour and mastery motivation, and the environmental factor of mother –child interaction, were key predictors of change in both child outcomes and parent well-being. Mothers who are described as more responsive and growth promoting in their interactive behaviour had children who showed greater growth in mental age, social skills and communication skills. For social and communication skills, this finding was demonstrated for children of all three types of disability and for those with both high and low levels of mastery motivation. When mental age was controlled for, mother-child interaction was the only significant correlate of communication skills at age three. Mother-child interaction was also the only variable that predicted change in children's communication skills; mothers who had higher levels of interactive skills had children who made greater changes in their communication skills beyond those predicted by changes in mental age. By age ten years, children whose mothers had more positive interaction skills demonstrated a ten month advantage in communication skills.

The longitudinal nature of the Hauser-Cram, Warfield, Shonkoff, Krauss, Sayer, & Upshur, (2001) study and the wealth of data it has produced, provide important insights into child and family processes for a range of children with disabilities. However, once again, the role of mother-child interaction is described in general terms only and no satisfactory detail is provided about the specific linguistic processes involved. Nevertheless, the study highlights

the critical role of mother-child interaction in contributing to vulnerable children's communication skills through the early and middle- school years and it has significant implications for the focus of this study.

In a number of intervention studies from the early nineties, mother- child interactions which included a range of types of responsivity showed positive effects on children's vocal turn taking, intentional communication and word use. In a randomised group experiment, Girolametto, Verbey and Tannock (1994) trained parents of children with developmental delay, to use a range of responsive strategies including, responding to children's focus of attention, following children's attentional lead, commenting on both children's and adult's own activities and contingent linguistic responding to the child's communicative attempt. The children were at the sixteenth month level developmentally. In this study, the children who participated in the intervention showed increased ability to engage in sustained joint attentional episodes.

In studies by Wilcox (1992) and Wilcox, Shannon and Bacon (1992), children in an intervention group, whose parents and early years providers were trained to use a number of responsive strategies, had more intentional communication and more word use than children in a control group. Both studies included toddlers with communication delays who were just beginning to use intentional communication. For children in the intervention group, parents and professionals were trained to consistently interpret, comply with, or ask clarification questions about, the meaning of the children's prelinguistic communication attempts. As the programme progressed the adults concerned with the children in the intervention group, were taught to require increasingly clear and conventional cues from the children before responding. In the second of these studies, Wilcox et al. (1992) report that children who received the responsivity intervention used more symbolic communication with their mothers, one year after the intervention ended, than did children in the control group. In addition, in this study, children of mothers who had been taught to be more responsive had higher scores on standardised tests of global language development and on a standardised test of global developmental level, than did children in the control group, one year after the intervention.

Taken together with the studies outlined already, these studies provide strong evidence of the effects of adult responsivity in children's communication and language development. Further, in the Wilcox et al. study (1992), the generalisation of positive outcomes to the standardised tests for the intervention group, provides more compelling evidence for the importance of responsivity and responsivity training. These results suggest that training adults in responsiveness may have accelerated children's existing communication skills and also affected the acquisition of later language skills.

The studies outlined so far contribute evidence of the effectiveness of a generally responsive style of adult interaction on children's early communication and language development. Contingent responsiveness is an important topic in the literature on the role of environmental input in children's language acquisition and development. Within this literature, a number of studies have attempted to address contingent responsiveness in more specific terms by attempting to identify styles of response which, while qualifying as semantically and temporally contingent to the child's utterance, may be more or less facilitating or inhibiting. In these studies, styles of response are distinguished according to whether they *follow* the *child's initiation* about an object of joint attention or *direct* the child to respond. For the purposes of this review, these contrasting styles will be referred to, respectively, as *reciprocal* responding and *directive* responding.

In general, in the literature, there is consensus that responsive maternal styles which constitute reciprocal responding are characterised by utterances which follow the child's attentional lead and which label, describe, or comment upon, objects, actions or events to which the child is currently attending. Equally, there is consensus that these styles are generally facilitative of children's language development (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986; Akhtar, Dunham & Dunham, 1991; Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein & Baumwell, 2001, Hoff & Naigles, 2002). Directive responding styles are characterised as attempts to control children's communicative behaviour and to change their focus of attention. These styles have been shown to be negatively related to measures of children's language development (Mahoney & Neville-Smith, 1996; Tomasello & Farrar, 1986). However, there is an emerging view which

suggests that this may be too simplistic a characterisation and that, depending on the context, age, and typical or delayed status of the child, both styles can support children's learning (Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998; Warren, 2000; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006).

Studies which have looked at maternal style and children's vocabulary development, when children are at the single word stage of acquisition, suggest that mapping utterances to the child's focus of attention is the salient factor in vocabulary acquisition. These studies suggest that, within this condition, both reciprocal responsive and directive responsive styles of interaction promote children's vocabulary growth. In a study with typically developing thirteen month old children, Akhtar et al. (1991) found that the proportion of maternal utterances that were directives about the child's actions with an object to which the child was attending, was positively related to total vocabulary and number of nouns mothers reported children using nine months later. This positive outcome was reported for directives which came immediately, following the child's attentional focus.

In contrast, lead directives, which are described as *redirecting* children's attention, were negatively associated with vocabulary development. Equally, in a study of typically developing fifteen month old children, Tomasello & Farrar, (1986) found that adult linguistic behaviours which would be described as reciprocal responsive, were associated with later vocabulary. In that study, labelling and description of the child's object of attention, in contexts of joint attention, were positively related to children's later total vocabulary and production of nouns. In both of these studies, the same adult utterances, addressed to children outside of joint attentional episodes, were not related to later vocabulary development.

A recent study (Masur, Flynn & Eichorst 2005) builds on the work of Akhtar, Dunham and Dunham (1991) and attempts to define reciprocal responsive and directive responsive styles more specifically and to conduct a more rigorous investigation of their contributions to children's vocabulary development. In the study, reciprocal responsiveness is defined in terms of two adult linguistic behaviours. The first of these is described as *follow descriptions*. These are adult labels and descriptions which are mapped on to children's on-going activity and which make reference to aspects of the environment to which children are currently

attending. The second is imitation where the adult copies the child's vocal behaviour or action. Two kinds of directive responsiveness are defined; intrusive directives which may disrupt a child's on-going activity and supportive or follow directives. Follow directives are defined as maternal utterances which are an immediate response to the child's focus of attention and which map language to that focus including naming and describing the object and extending the child's engagement with it, through suggested actions (e.g. *that's the square block*, when the child is holding or looking at the block; *try it in this space*, when the child is looking at the shape box), (Masur, Flynn & Eichorst, 2005).

This was a predictive analysis study in which it was hypothesised that maternal reciprocal responsive, and directive responsive measures, would both be related to children's later vocabulary levels. The participants were twenty typically developing children and their mothers. The mother-child pairs were observed in naturalistic interactions in the participants' homes at three time intervals, when the children were ten months, thirteen months and seventeen months. Children's vocabularies were evaluated at ages thirteen months, seventeen months and twenty one months. There were a number of methodological strengths in the study: Statistical controls were used to adjust for size of children's initial vocabulary and to control for frequency of maternal utterances as a measure of influence on children's outcomes. A number of methods were used to evaluate children's later vocabulary knowledge. The methods were maternal report, observational measures and a combined measure of total vocabulary. The inclusion of three time intervals in the study allowed for analysis of changing patterns of predictive relations with development.

This study provides a number of important insights into the nature of maternal styles and their effects on children's vocabulary development. The analysis shows a coherent pattern of significant predictive relations between mothers' reciprocal responsiveness and directive responsiveness and their children's later expressive vocabulary development. The outcomes also show that maternal characteristics associated with vocabulary growth changed with development. Reciprocal responsiveness was strongly predictive of children's vocabulary growth in two age periods, with imitation emerging as the strongest predictor variable in the thirteen to seventeen month period. Follow directives were positively related to children's

vocabularies in all three age periods and intrusive directives were negatively associated with development in all three age periods.

This study is particularly useful in that it provides direction about specific aspects of supportive maternal styles. The outcomes for reciprocal responsiveness, when defined as follow descriptions, confirms existing research evidence for this style of interaction. However, an interesting outcome here is that this style was most effective for children at the later time interval, that is, during the second half of the children's second year. At this stage of children's development, mothers who provided more utterances, describing aspects of the environment to which their children were currently attending, had children who acquired larger total, observed and reported vocabularies. It would appear that utterances describing action and events, more than those simply labelling objects, are more relevant to children's learning at this stage of accelerated language development. It may be that the greater semantic content represents a more finely tuned response and a more appropriate challenge to the child's current comprehension levels.

The outcomes for imitation of the child's utterances and for the supportive role of follow directives are also particularly significant. The role of imitation or repetition of the child's utterances has not had much attention in the research on efficacy of utterances which immediately follow the child's initiation or focus of attention. Equally, in the research with typically developing children, any form of directiveness has largely been regarded as inhibiting of children's language learning (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986; Mahony & Neville-Smith, 1996; Landry, Smith, Miller-Loncar & Swank, 1997). The significant point here may be that imitation and follow directives are important features of fine tuning and of adult's sensitivity and adaptation to the child's need for greater scaffolding in achieving intentional communication.

The positive role of follow directives, or prompts, is recognised in the literature on language intervention (Marfo, Dedrick & Barbour, 1998; Yoder et al., 1998; Kelly & Barnard, 2000; Warren, 2000; Warren et al., 2002). Early intervention researchers have suggested that directives may be a necessary part of the adult's repertoire of supportive strategies,

constituting an adaptive response to children who themselves are less responsive and who display less differentiated cues to adults during interactions (Marfo et al, 1998; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995; Yoder et al., 1998). For children with communication and language difficulties and delays, follow directives can act as finely tuned adjustments to children's levels of engagement and disengagement (Kelly & Barnard, 2000), and can maintain synchrony in the interactions (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000).

One further study contributes evidence of the role of both reciprocal responsiveness and directive responsiveness in supporting language learning in vulnerable children. The study is significant also in that it is concerned with quality of mother-child interactions from children's pre-school years until their entry to kindergarten. Dodici, Draper and Peterson (2003) included measures of responsiveness and guidance, among a set of predictor variables, in a correlational analysis of the relationship between scores for mother-child linguistic interactions, when children were fourteen, twenty four and thirty six months old, and children's scores on standardised tests of language and literacy when they were fifty four months old. The study was part of a larger, longitudinal study by an American midwestern university and the Early Head Start National Research Consortium. The participants were twenty seven children and their mothers, described as coming from low- income American households.

Mother-child interactions were assessed using an interaction coding system at each of the three time intervals (PICS; Dodici & Draper, 2001). An overall interaction score was also given. Standardised tests of language and literacy were used to measure children's receptive vocabulary, symbolic representation and phonemic awareness when children were fifty four months old and were about to enter kindergarten. Statistical controls for the effects of children's initial language competence were included in the analysis of data.

In the study outcomes, the overall interaction score and the interaction scores for the various age points were correlated with the children's receptive vocabulary, symbolic representation and phonemic awareness, at entry to kindergarten. Receptive vocabulary and phonemic awareness were most strongly related to the overall interaction scores and to interaction

scores at thirty six months. Symbolic representation was most strongly related to the overall interaction score and to interaction scores at twenty four months. A further reported outcome is that the mean scores of the children on all three language and literacy measures, at fifty four months, were close to norm referenced standard scores and deviations.

From the perspective of this review, a limitation of the study is the fact that the predictor variables of maternal reciprocal responsiveness and directive responsiveness were not investigated separately but were included along with four other variables in a combined rating scale. However, this concern may be mitigated by the fact that the only non- maternal style variable, child language competence, was statistically controlled for in the analysis. Taken together with the remaining variables of joint attention, maternal tone, and amount of appropriate language, the outcomes suggest that all of these variables can be included in a description of a facilitative adult style.

Style of response has been discussed at length here because understanding the contributions of both reciprocal and directive responsiveness is central to the areas of enquiry in this study. The specific talk strategies which will be discussed in the following section are embedded in and delivered through these communicative styles and the extent to which the strategies are facilitated or inhibited by a reciprocal or directive style is critical in informing pedagogic principles. Taken together, the evidence from the studies reviewed suggests that each of the styles identified is likely to support young language learners differentially, according to the child's stage of language acquisition and the child's ability to initiate communication. Both reciprocal responsiveness and directive responsiveness can be considered as characteristics of facilitative adult styles.

ADULT TALK STRATEGIES

Repetitions, Recasts and Expansions

Along with particular kinds of interactive style, particular features of adult talk have been identified as facilitative of children's language development. Adult talk in the form of repetitions, recasts and expansions of children's utterances has been shown to be associated with children's later acquisition of grammatical structures including mean length of utterance

and verb complexity. Findings in this regard include typically developing children (Nelson, Denninger, Bonvillian, Kaplan & Baker, 1984; Saxton, Kulcsar, Greer, Marshall & Rupra, 1998; Chouinard & Clark, 2003; Saxton, Backley & Gallaway, 2005) and children with disabilities (Scherer & Olswang, 1989; Yoder, Spruytenburg, Edwards & Davies, 1995; Nelson, Camarata, Welsh, Butkovsky & Camarata, 1996; Fey, Cleave & Long, 1997; Hancock, Kaiser & Delaney, 2002).

There is broad consensus in the literature that exact repetitions by adults, of children's utterances, almost exclusively follow well-formed child utterances and probably serve as reliable indicators to children of successful communication, in appropriately structured linguistic forms (Snow, 1989; Chouinard & Clark, 2003). Conversely, expansions and recasts are considered to present a challenge to the child's emergent system, juxtaposing a contrast utterance to the child's and offering an alternative and enhanced form on which the emergent language user can act (Snow, 1989; Richards, 1994; Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000; Saxton, 2005).

Definitions of expansions and recasts vary slightly in the literature with some definitions of recasts including expansions or treating the two as synonymous (Snow, 1989; Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000). In an example of a combination recast and expansion from Snow (1989), *child: bird sing, adult: the bird is singing* (p. 91), she interprets the adult response as expanding the child's utterance and confirming its content, while recasting and correcting its form. However some studies have focused on expansions as distinctive strategies. Two experimental studies, with children with disabilities, treat expansions as utterances which literally add one or more words to the child's utterance. In a study aimed at developing word combinations in preschool children with autism, when children were at the single word stage of expressive language development, Scherer and Olswang (1989) found that repeating the child's object label, e.g. *teddy* and adding one more semantic element to it, e.g. *soft teddy*, facilitated children's spontaneous imitation and later spontaneous production of targeted early word combinations, denoting possession, location and attribution. Yoder, Spruytenburg, Edwards and Davies (1995) used a similar procedure with children with developmental disabilities who were also at the one word stage of expressive language development. Here,

expanding children's utterances in the context of a very familiar activity, increased children's mean length of utterance. In this study, the increases in children's utterance length were generalised to new contexts with different adults and new sets of objects.

The distinguishing feature of the recast is the element of change. Fey and Proctor-Williams (2000) describe adult recasts as responses that immediately follow the child's utterance, maintain the child's meaning, and incorporate content words from the child's utterance, while modifying one or more of the constituents (subject, verb, object), *e.g. child: he need it, adult: he needs it*, or changing the grammatical form of the utterance (affirmative to negative; declarative to interrogative) *e.g. this James, adult: is this James?* (p. 179). Snow's (1989, 1999) definition includes the same essential elements. In her view, the facilitative aspect of recasts rests in their provision of responsive feedback to the child as communicator and emergent language user. Essentially, they act as requests for clarification from the adult to the child. Recasts and expansions repeat the key aspect of the child's utterance but recast the ill-formed structure *e.g. child: bird singing pretty song, adult: he's singing a pretty song* (Snow, 1989, p. 91) and may add one or more semantic elements, *e.g. child: teddy leep (sleep), adult: teddy is sleeping, in his bed*. In this way, they serve the dual purpose of acknowledging the child's communicative intention and the legitimacy of the communicative attempt, while indicating that the form of the utterance is somehow inadequate. Snow's rationale for the role of recasts in supporting children's language acquisition is commonly articulated in the literature as the negative evidence model (Chouinard & Clark, 2003). This, in turn, is exactly compatible with Saxton's more recent Direct Contrast model in which he argues that recasts are error contingent adult utterances, which act as corrective input to children, in contexts of naturalistic conversational interaction (Saxton, 2005).

Once again, the principle of fine tuning in contexts of joint attention is proposed as an essential condition to these aspects of adult facilitative input. In this context, fine tuning is described as the adult adjusting the level of his/her talk to the level of the child's own output and comprehension level. In Snow's (1989) view, the adult is seeking *optimal discrepancy* between the child's level and his/her level of input. She describes optimal discrepancy as occurring when the gap between the child's level of receptive/expressive functioning and the

level of input, is small enough that the child understands the meaning of the utterance, but is also large enough to model new structures not yet mastered. In this regard, recasts and expansions are seen as optimally beneficial to the child when they provide a manageable combination of challenge and comprehensibility. Effective decisions on optimal levels of discrepancy require close knowledge of the child's level of functioning and assume differentiation in levels of complexity of adult input, in accordance with levels of child competence.

A number of recent studies provide evidence that recasts which constitute negative evidence are facilitative of children's development of grammar. In a study of adult reformulations of children's utterances, Chouinard and Clark (2003) show that parents recast their children's utterances from a desire to understand the child's meaning intention. As they check on what children mean, parents reformulate children's utterances and in doing so they simultaneously present a recast which is a conventional version of any erroneous parts of the child's utterance. This study was concerned with investigating whether adult reformulations of children's erroneous utterances provided negative evidence to children and, if so, whether children made use of that evidence. The longitudinal data were drawn from the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) Archive (MacWhinney & Snow, 1990) and consisted of transcripts of conversations between five typically developing children speaking, spontaneously, to one or both parents, at intervals between the age of two years and four years. Three of the children were acquiring English as their first language and two were acquiring French. Extensive data in the transcripts for each child allowed for detailed analysis of both child errors and adult reformulations. Transcripts were coded and reliability checks were conducted.

The outcomes of the study show that adults reformulate their children's erroneous utterances and that children attend to and take up these corrections, in their responses. The study also shows that adults repeat children's error free utterances. However, reformulations of errors occur significantly more often. Reformulations were found for a range of child errors; phonology, morphology, syntax and word choice and rates of reformulations were similar across these error types. Reformulations of the same types and with the same conversational

function occurred in both English and French. The outcomes also show that parents reformulate significantly more often for younger children. The evidence here is that this is a response to their greater number of errors and to the need for greater scrutiny and scaffolding of their perceived meaning intentions. Children's levels of uptake of the adult reformulations were analysed according to four measures of response: explicit repeats of corrected elements, acknowledgements of corrections, repeats of new elements included in the reformulation or, explicit rejection of the reformulation, signalling that the adult has misunderstood. The percentages of uptake for each of the five children on all of these measures showed positive evidence that children attend to reformulations.

In their discussion of the findings, Chouinard and Clark (2003) suggest that it is in the to-and-fro of conversation that children receive information about the appropriateness of their own utterances. In the interest of achieving mutual understanding, adults provide corrective feedback on which the child can act. These points cohere with Snow's (1999) view that while the helpful features of adult input may be pragmatic, propositional and grammatical in nature, the essentially helpful feature is the pragmatic. She suggests that a focus on the pragmatic is what enables children to process input relating to semantics and grammar because, essentially, language is about using these elements to accomplish goals in the world.

In an experimental intervention study, Saxton, Kulcsar, Marshall and Rupra (1998) focused on the effects of negative evidence versus a less contingently responsive form of adult utterance described as positive input. In the negative evidence form the essential criterion is that the adult response is contingent upon the child's error and the contrast between the utterances is immediately available to the child. Positive input is defined as all grammatically correct adult utterances which respond to and maintain the adult-child topic of conversation. This definition of positive input is consistent with a facilitative aspect of adult talk described by Yoder et al. (1998) as topic continuing utterances. These are utterances that continue the established topic and demonstrate aspects of grammar, for example verb tense, without necessarily repeating any of the child's utterances. There is evidence that this kind of adult response is facilitative of children's acquisition of grammar (Farrar, 1990).

In the experimental intervention study referred to above, Saxton et al. compared the cumulative effects of positive input versus negative evidence on children's use of past tense verbs, over a period of five weeks. The participants were twenty six children ranging in age from three years eight months to four years six months who were attending two nursery schools in London. The children came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds including several participants from non indigenous backgrounds. Criterion for inclusion in the study was that children spoke fluent English and had only English spoken to them at home. Children were taught two nonsense verbs and then tested on their use of the past tense of these verbs in the two adult input conditions.

The outcomes of the study show highly significant differences in the incidences of correct usage of the verbs in the two input conditions. Across all children and all test sessions, one hundred and seventy two correct responses were recorded for the positive input condition compared to three hundred and fifty seven in the negative evidence condition. Outcomes also show that, over the five weeks of the study, levels of correct usage increased at a much faster rate in the negative evidence condition.

In a more recent study, Saxton, Backley and Gallaway (2005) found positive effects for adult negative evidence on children's acquisition of three grammatical structures with no effects for adult positive input. This was a longitudinal, time lagged, correlational study in which frequencies of adults' negative evidence, in their conversations with two year old children, were correlated with the children's use of grammatical structures twelve weeks later. Regression analysis and partial correlation techniques were used to control for the possible effects of children's initial language competence on later outcomes.

Imitation and Modelling

Two other kinds of adult talk strategies are discussed in the literature: elicited imitation and modelling. These differ essentially from the strategies discussed above in that, while expansions, recasts and topic continuing utterances are all features of adult talk to young children which occur spontaneously, in naturally occurring conversations, imitation and modelling are deliberate and highly structured language teaching strategies which have been

developed largely by clinicians and other early interventionist practitioners (Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000). At the same time, the naturally occurring styles and strategies discussed above have also been included as key aspects of adult talk in early intervention curricula. Two examples of curricula which include variations on all of these strategies are, Responsive Interaction and Milieu Teaching (Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995; Wilcox & Shannon, 1998; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002). The consensus in the intervention literature is that in an early years curriculum, the full range of strategies outlined in this chapter are probably necessary (Yoder et al., 1998; Warren, 2000; Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000). The current concern is whether this range of strategies, including the more structured practices, can be accommodated effectively in naturalistic teaching settings (Warren & Yoder, 1997; Smith, Warren, Yoder & Feurer, 2004). These concerns are exactly relevant to the research questions in this study and they will be addressed in the third chapter of this review of literature.

CULTURE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Two further considerations are relevant to the issues discussed in this chapter. Firstly, the theoretical positions on the facilitative features of adult talk to young children outlined in the chapter, and the research studies reviewed, reflect the cultural and societal values which are now associated with industrialised, technological societies, which have developed formal systems of education. The literature (Lieven, 1994; McCabe, 1997) points to the fact that other societies share different cultural milieus and that children learn and develop successfully, in varying cultural contexts, some of which may exhibit different attitudes to responsivity. For example, there are cultures in which adults do not speak to pre-linguistic babies (Lieven, 1994). The theoretical discussions and research perspectives outlined in this chapter are relevant to the cultural setting and values of the population of children who are the participants in this study.

Secondly, the review has included both experimental and longitudinal correlational studies of mothers' responsiveness and some of the words of caution which are articulated in the literature about these methodologies are relevant here. The literature constantly highlights the difficulties of using correlational studies in isolation. While eliminating possible confounding

variables allows for more reliable studies, no causal relationships can be assumed between mothers' behaviours and children's language outcomes from correlational studies. The advantage of an experimental study is the possibility of greater confidence in identifying a direct causal relationship. However, it may well be that when one aspect of behaviour changes, others will also change and isolating the exact causal feature may be difficult. In these instances, the inclusion of longitudinal correlational studies can help to specify the particular aspect of maternal style that is associated with change in the child's development.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a social/interactive theory of language acquisition and development has been discussed and the interactive contexts, styles of responsiveness and specific adult talk strategies which are facilitative of children's language have been outlined along with the relevant research evidence. This is the first of three review chapters which provide the theoretical and empirical bases for the approaches to language teaching and learning proposed in this study and used for the analysis of data.

The facilitative aspects of adult speech to young children identified in this chapter are at the heart of the enquiry in this study. Here they have been discussed with reference to the theoretical positions and research evidence which identify their role in language acquisition and development, in children's first two to three years of life. There is much less evidence available about the adult talk strategies which support children's acquisition and development in the years between three and six, either in the home or, in the out of home settings where children are likely to be placed during these years. In the Irish context, these settings include the junior and senior infant classes of the primary school.

The gap in our knowledge about the kinds of adult talk strategies which support children's continued development towards the kinds of language skills which support school learning, has been identified for some time (Snow, 1989) and a number of studies have been conducted. Some of these have contributed to our knowledge of the mother-child interactions which support children's development of aspects of narrative (Peterson & McCabe, 1992; Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999) and two recent studies have examined aspects of adult-

child interactions which contribute to cognitive and linguistic development in preschool settings (Dickinson, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). These studies will be considered in the following chapters of this review.

However, there is a need to identify the adult strategies which support specifically, children's acquisition of the forms and functions of language and their development of discourse skills, in relationships which extend, beyond mother-child interactions, to adult-child interactions in the context of an early years curriculum. This concern is addressed in this study and is articulated in the first research question. That question asks whether the facilitative aspects identified in this chapter can be used to continue supporting children's acquisition and to develop their discourse skills in an early intervention setting. This question is addressed through the application of the strategies in the generation and analysis of data for the study.

In the following chapter, language learning is defined as the child's progression through increasingly complex modes of meaning. A continuum of learning is proposed and an argument for an inclusive practice of language teaching and learning is presented. This argument is supported by a discussion of the evidence for a range of individual characteristics and differences among young language learners including differences associated with socio-economic disadvantage. In the final section of the chapter, the discussion on modes of meaning is linked to developing children's use of decontextualised language in discourse.

CHAPTER 3: LANGUAGE IN AN EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

This is the second chapter of the Literature Review. The chapter begins with a discussion of the relationship between language and learning from a social/interactive perspective. In the study, learning is conceptualised as the child's progression through increasingly complex modes of meaning with language as the system through which the different modes of meaning are achieved. Four modes of meaning are discussed and are linked to the social interactive model of language development. Drawing on this model, a rationale for providing an inclusive early years curriculum and pedagogy is presented and the differentiated abilities of the population of young children, for whom such a curriculum is intended, are identified from the research literature.

The chapter is also concerned with identifying the features of adult talk which support the development of children's use of decontextualised language in discourse. These are the levels of language competence which have been identified, by both theorists and researchers, as necessary for access to knowledge in the school curriculum (Halliday, 1993; Bruner, 1996; Goldenburg, 2001; Mercer, 2002) and particularly, for achievement in literacy (Olson, 1996; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001, Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer-Wolf, 2004). To set the context for the discussion on discourse, the nature of decontextualised language and its role in learning is examined. In the final section of the chapter, strategies for developing children's discourse skills are identified.

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING: A SOCIAL INTERACTIVE PERSPECTIVE

The social/ interactive model of language acquisition and development provides a theoretical and empirical construct within which it is possible to articulate a theory and practice for language development within an early years curriculum. Within the social/interactive model, from both the socio-linguistic (Halliday, 1993; Cloran, 1999; Painter, 1999; Wells, 1999, 2001, Wells & Claxton, 2002) and psycholinguistic perspectives (Bruner, 1996; 1999), human learning is described as a process of making meaning. With entry into language, children have access to a meaning system, a resource, through which experience can be

interpreted, represented and reflected upon, and can become knowledge. From this perspective, language is the basis of learning. In learning language, children are also learning through language and new modes of language provide for new forms of knowledge.

Within the social/interactive model, the relationship between language and learning is characterised as the interaction between acquisition of the language system and use of that system in constructing knowledge at increasing levels of complexity including talking and thinking about abstract propositions. Bruner (1996) and Halliday (1993) provide useful insights into the nature of the interaction between language and learning and into the possibility of increasing children's levels of understanding through increasing the complexity of their levels of language use. Bruner (1999) identifies four modes of meaning: the intersubjective, the actional, the normative and the propositional. These modes are created or realised through adult-child interaction. Each leads to a particular form of understanding and within each, language is the principal sign system through which meaning is constituted and transmitted.

Halliday (1993) proposes that language is a resource which serves a number of meta-functions. Each of these functions enables the child to expand meaning potential or to enter into a new mode of meaning. He identifies three meta-functions: the interpersonal through which children enact interpersonal relationships, the ideational through which children both construe experience and reflect upon it and the textual meta-function through which children enter into discourse.

Halliday's and Bruner's constructs are compatible in their underlying principles. In both, language emerges from and through the interpersonal or intersubjective mode or function. As the child's command of the system develops so his/her potential for meaning making develops beyond the highly contextualised topics of personal and concrete experience, to domains of knowledge, or modes of meaning, which are abstract in nature and which rely on the symbolic function of language.

The symbolic function of language first begins to be understood by the child when, in a context of intersubjective understanding, the adult attaches a name or sign to their joint object of reference. This is Bruner's intersubjective mode. It is the first mode, or frame of reference, for intentional meaning making between adult and child and, in this mode, the child gains a first understanding of how meaning is achieved in a social context. Simultaneously with providing a context for children's entry into the understanding of referents and their meaning, the intersubjective mode enables children to begin to understand that others are intentional communicators and that they can have access to other minds. Equally, children come to understand the conditions for achieving meaning. They learn that it is based in joint attention and intention, that there are conventions of turn taking involved and that contributions from the conversational partners will be relevant to the meaning context. These conditions for meaning are described in the literature as the presumption of intentionality and the presumption of relevance, and knowledge of them is regarded as a prerequisite for dialogue (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Clarke, 2003). They allow for the development of what Mercer (2002) calls a *shared framework of understanding* (p.143), which he says is the basis for dialogue.

In the intersubjective mode, children are initiated into a primitive form of dialogue through which meaning is jointly constructed and they begin to learn how the language system functions as a resource for construing experience and for communicating about that experience. Halliday describes this as the interpersonal function of language, the means through which the child learns to enact immediate social relationships and is initiated into the patterns and complexities of the broader social system. A significant aspect of meaning making in this mode or function is that it is tied to contextual interpretation and negotiation as evidenced in gaze following and looking for objects of adult attention by the child, and in checking for joint reference, following the child's focus of attention, and naming, by the adult.

Bruner's actional and normative modes proceed from the intersubjective and, in these, children's understanding and use of language are extended beyond the interpersonal to the wider social world of actions, experience, and the obligations of social behaviour. As the

adult supports the child in the acquisition of vocabulary and the construction of multi-word sentences, the extension of the child's linguistic competence enables the extension of the child's range of meanings. Of course, the intersubjective relationship continues to operate and the conditions for meaning created through the intersubjective; intentionality, relevance and turn taking, continue to apply.

Two key principles are central to the relationship between language and learning as represented in Bruner's modes of meaning. Firstly, Bruner accepts as a given that representation is central to the development of thought and knowledge, and secondly, he sees representation as a process of construction. The representative function of language is central in this argument. As children acquire utterances, they acquire the understanding attaching to them. In naming and commenting upon the phenomena of experience, children are simultaneously delineating concepts and categorising knowledge. In its representative function, language is constitutive of meaning, not simply reflecting but actively constructing it. This view is compatible with Halliday's (1993) notion of language as both 'doing and understanding', 'action and reflection' (pp. 100-101). Through the modes of meaning or meta-functions of language, children are simultaneously constructing language and conceptualising experience at various levels.

Bruner's actional and normative modes are compatible with Halliday's ideational meta-function. Here children move towards the use of language at two levels which are critical for the development of decontextualised language. Firstly from the time children are about two or three years old, the age varies from beginning of children's second year (Phillips, 1986) to the middle of their third year (Hassan, 1992), adult-child dialogue is characterised by talk which is not just, as heretofore, focused principally on naming and describing experience but which is also *about* experience. These dialogues include explorations of logical- semantic relationships in the form of explanations of cause and effect, hypothesising about behaviours and outcomes, and consideration of abstract principles and feelings such as sharing, friendship and sadness. Secondly, children begin to extend their range of conversational partners and this new form of social interaction provides the opportunity to use language to impart information which is rooted in the child's experience but is unknown to the listener.

Until now, utterances have been context bound and verifiable by both listener and speaker. With this significant departure, children begin to use language not just to represent or rehearse shared experience but to create the experience for the listener, through the meaning carrying words alone.

The construction of decontextualised meaning requires particular knowledge and use of the language system. Here the child is choosing the appropriate words and phrases and structuring them in the meaning carrying sentences while also using the linguistic devices which will maintain semantic relations between the sentences. Halliday (1993) identifies some of these linguistic devices as the use of conjunctions, ellipsis, and synonymy. The rules for dialogue continue to apply, so the conditions of intentionality, relevance and turn taking must also be met. Bruner and Halliday see the child's use of decontextualised language as entry into new forms of knowledge. For Bruner (1996) it is the route to propositional thinking and a way of proceeding from the particularities of the intersubjective, actional and normative modes to an understanding of universals and to achieving decontextualised meaning. For Halliday it represents the textual meta-function of language in which language is autonomous and context free and becomes what he describes as the means and the model for representing action and experience. Both regard the use of decontextualised language as necessary for access to written language and to any form of theoretical knowledge.

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: ISSUES FOR PRACTICE

In the construct outlined above it is argued that language is the basis for learning. Learning is defined as expanding potential for making meaning at progressive levels of complexity, from the immediate context bound level of early intersubjective relationships and everyday concrete experience, to the level of decontextualised meaning making required for the more specialised, and more abstract forms of knowledge, encountered in the educational context. Language is defined as both the system and the resource through which the different levels of meaning are achieved.

The social/interactive perspective on the relationship between language and learning provides a basis for language teaching and learning in an early years curriculum. Language teaching

and learning can be conceptualised as the development of children's knowledge of language as a system and a resource, for the co-construction of meaning between adult and child, through progressive modes of meaning or levels of complexity, and in preparation for entry into formal educational knowledge. Equally, meaning making can be represented as a progression through, and accumulation of, forms of understanding, along a continuum, beginning with the intersubjective. The continuum allows for differential rates of progress by children and for inclusion of children whose acquisition of the language system, and opportunity to use the system to construe meaning, may be compromised by biological or environmental factors or by a combination of these.

The position outlined above provides for an inclusive theory and practice of language teaching and learning in an early years curriculum and it is the position which underpins the approaches to teaching and learning adopted in this study. Two major challenges to practice arise from this position. The first is the need to interpret the child's current levels of understanding and use of the elements of the system, and to establish the frames of reference, or modes of meaning, to which the child has already been initiated. The second, which is a major focus of this study, is the need to identify the repertoire of teaching strategies which would constitute a relevant and inclusive pedagogy. A relevant pedagogy is defined in the study as one which can support children's acquisition of the language system and their use of that system in the construction of meaning at progressive levels of complexity. An inclusive pedagogy is one which is differentiated sufficiently to match the varied language competences of the children including children with language delay.

In relation to the second challenge referred to above, the strategies for supporting children's acquisition of the language system have been identified in chapter one of this review. The strategies for developing children's use of decontextualised language and discourse skills will be the topic of discussion in a later section of this chapter and issues about the differentiation of strategies to include children with atypical development will be discussed specifically in Chapter 3. In relation to the first challenge identified above, some discussion is relevant at this point in the review. The critical factor in the application and differentiation of the teaching strategies will be the individual characteristics of the children as learners and

the concern for an inclusive pedagogy rests in the need to address a wide range of abilities and needs. From this perspective, a discussion of the characteristics of young children as language learners is relevant by way of setting the parameters for teaching and learning in an early years curriculum and establishing how those parameters can accommodate children who are exhibiting wide variation in linguistic ability.

Individual Differences and Characteristics

The literature points to the enormous growth in knowledge and command of the language system achieved by children in their first three years, with most typically developing children acquiring an expressive vocabulary of several hundred words and command of the basic morphological and syntactic structures of the language by age three to three and a half years (Bates & Goodman, 1999). Typically developing children are initiated into intersubjective meaning making by the second half of their first year. Over the following two years, their acquisition of the language system moves rapidly from production of first words towards the beginning of their second year, to word combinations at around age two, followed by the production of ever more complex, adult like, utterances. By age three, children can be active participants in conversation, talking quite fluently on some familiar topics (Wells, 1985; Dockrell & Messer, 1999; Clark, 2003).

Historically, the literature which has focused on typically developing children has been dominated by an emphasis on the amount of language acquired by children in the first three years of life and by the remarkable similarities in the sequence of that development, as observed across children, acquiring a given language. At a global level, the passage from sounds, to words to grammar appears to be a universal of child language development (Bates & Goodman, 1999). However, research has also highlighted very large individual differences, among typically developing children, in onset time and rate of growth, for all of the critical components of the language system: word comprehension, word production, word combinations and sentence complexity (Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Bates, Thal & Pethick, 1994; Shore, 1995; Bates, Dale & Thal, 1995). The variations in children's rates of development of the components of language are much greater than the variations usually observed in other maturational milestones such as crawling or walking and are considered so significant as to

challenge any notion of a universal, maturational timetable account of early language development (Bates et al., 1995). Rather, the view in the literature is that variations in rate of development are so large as to require substantial contributions from both genetic and environmental factors with particular emphasis on the interaction of these factors (Bates et al., 1995; Bates & Goodman, 1999).

From a large scale study dating from the early nineteen nineties, Bates, Dale and Thal (1995) present evidence for wide variation in rate of development, for typically developing children between the ages of eight and thirty months, along all of the critical measures of early acquisition of the language system: word comprehension and production, word combinations and sentence complexity. These data are drawn from a six month longitudinal study with a uniquely large group of one thousand eight hundred and three children, aged between eight and thirty months. The children's parents participated in a norm referencing study for the development of the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (CDI) (Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Thal, Bates, Hartung, Pethick & Reilly, 1993; Bates, Marchman, Thal, Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Reilly & Hartung, 1994; Marchman & Bates, 1994). The inventories used were two parental report instruments: CDI: Infants, for children aged eight to sixteen months and CDI: Toddlers, for children aged sixteen to thirty months. The instrument had been developed over a period of fifteen years. Reliability and validity had been demonstrated through a number of studies in which there were positive and significant correlations between the inventory checklists for vocabulary and grammatical complexity and a number of forms of laboratory assessment including standard tests (Camaioni, Caselli, Longobardi & Volterra, 1991). The study was conducted in three centres across the United States. Participants were drawn from a wide range of socio-economic groupings although the majority of families were in a higher income bracket with parents who had at least high school education. Children with serious health problems or who had extensive exposure to a language other than English were excluded from the study.

The outcomes of this study show great variation in age of onset and rate of development of all of the elements of the language system for typically developing children between the ages of eight and thirty months. For vocabulary comprehension, at ages eight, ten and sixteen

months, the mean number of words reported by parents is thirty six, sixty seven and one hundred and ninety one respectively. The standard deviation is 1.28 indicating a wide range of competence with vocabulary comprehension at ten months going from a low rate of zero to a high of one hundred and forty four. At sixteen months, the corresponding range is from seventy eight to three hundred and three. A significant factor here, and an indication of the magnitude of the differences, is the fact that the overall correlation between age and comprehension is positive and significant but accounts for only thirty six percent of the variance.

The outcomes of the study show wide variation also in the onset of combinatorial language and in sentence complexity. At eighteen months, eleven percent of parents report that their child is combining words *often* while forty six percent report that their child *sometimes* combines words. Combining words is regarded as the initial step in grammatical development. By twenty five months nearly all parents report some ordering of words but nineteen percent of parents still do not report the often use of combinations by their child. The outcomes for sentence complexity show substantial differences in the ages at which children show evidence of complex sentence use with differences of between six months to a year for typically developing children of the same chronological age. For example, children functioning at 1.28 standard deviations above the mean at age sixteen months are showing a level of competence which will not be reached by children who are one standard deviation below the mean until they are twenty eight months old.

Typical and Atypical Language Development

Together with reporting variation in children's rates of development, in their analysis, Bates, Dale and Thal (1999) discuss a range of issues relating to early language development in typically and atypically developing children. Two of these issues, for these groups of children, are of particular relevance here. Firstly, data confirm the established view of dissociation between comprehension and production in the early stages of language development for typically developing children. There is ample evidence in the study (Infant Group 8-16 months) of children understanding a great many more words than they can produce.

Secondly, Bates, Dale and Thal, argue for a strong relationship between vocabulary size and composition and the development of grammar in typically developing children. Data from the study show a strong correlational relationship between vocabulary size and the appearance of multi-word speech and an equally strong, but later emerging relationship, between vocabulary size and sentence complexity. For most children in the study, word combinations begin when vocabulary develops to between fifty and two hundred words while sentence complexity accelerates markedly when total vocabulary exceeds four hundred words. Bates et al. suggest that grammatical development depends upon a critical vocabulary base and further, that the development of different aspects of grammar may be linked to, and depend on, the composition of that vocabulary base. They show the connection between vocabulary and grammar by relating the nature (sequence and rate) and type (nouns, followed by verbs and adjectives followed by function words such as pronouns and prepositions) of children's early word acquisition to the growth of word combinations and sentence complexity and argue that vocabulary type has a particular growth function linked to the development of grammar. They go on to discuss this issue in relation to children with atypical development including children with Down Syndrome and children with Williams Syndrome and children who are described in the literature as late talkers.

Late talkers are defined as children between eighteen and twenty four months who are in the bottom tenth percentile for expressive vocabulary and who have normal non-verbal cognition and hearing and absence of serious emotional difficulties or obvious neurological deficits (Bates et al., 1995; Thal, Bates, Goodman & Jahn-Samilo, 1997; Ellis-Weismer, 2000). Because of the great variability in early language development, researchers are hesitant to describe these children as language impaired before at least the age of three. There is evidence that a number of late takers go on to develop normal language within a year (Thal, Marchman, Stiles, Aram, Trauner, Nass & Bates, 1991). However, there is also clear evidence of continuity in the delayed rate of language development for substantial numbers of late talking children (Thal et al., 1991; Bates, et al., 1995).

In an earlier study, Bates and her colleagues found that late talking children who did catch up and who had normal vocabulary production and mean length of utterance, one year after first identification, were those who had normal comprehension at the first time point. The children who were still delayed one year later were those for whom both comprehension and production were delayed at time one (Thal, Marchman, Stiles, Aram, Trauner, Nass & Bates, 1991). Bates et al. (1995) point to a striking dissociation between word comprehension and production in late talkers with specific expressive language delay. In the 1991 study, for children with normal comprehension, the mean production vocabulary (based on the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories) was 23.33 (range, 2-64) whereas the mean comprehension vocabulary was 285.8 (range 224-371). They make the point that the late talking population provides an extreme variant of the comprehension/production dissociation that exists for typically developing children. Equally, they point to the fact that vocabulary and grammar were strongly associated for children in this study.

While children with Down Syndrome and Children with Williams Syndrome differ greatly in the nature of their learning disabilities, both groups of children are significantly delayed in the acquisition of language. There are both significant similarities and significant differences between these groups of children and between both groups and typically developing children. Bates, Dale and Thal (1999) quote evidence from an on-going study of one hundred and thirty children with Williams Syndrome and Downs Syndrome between one and six years old, to illustrate these points.

In the period of development covered by the CDI: Infants (equivalent to typically developing children between 8-16 months), the children with both Syndromes were delayed by many months or years on both word comprehension and word production. However, a marked separation began to emerge in the period covered by the CDI: Toddler Inventory (typically developing children from 16-30 months) at which point both groups were approximately two years older than a typically developing language matched control group. At this point children with Williams Syndrome moved far ahead and word combinations and sentences began to emerge in this group. Two points are relevant here. Firstly, in relation to comprehension and production, although there is considerable variability within both of these

groups of children, there is no more obvious comprehension/production dissociation in either group than is present in typically developing children. Equally, there are no significant differences between the groups in comprehension/production profiles.

Secondly, a significant point is that for children with Williams Syndrome, grammatical development, when it begins, is linked to vocabulary development in the same way as it is for typically developing children. Bates et al. argue here again that for these children, at least in the emergent stages, early grammatical development is inextricably tied to vocabulary level. By contrast, there is clear evidence from the group of children with Down Syndrome of significant dissociation between grammar and vocabulary development. When matched for vocabulary size with typically developing children and children with Williams Syndrome, children with Down Syndrome scored significantly below the grammatical levels of the other two groups. Bates et al. conclude that vocabulary size is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the onset of word combinations, the acquisition of grammatical function words and growth in sentence complexity.

Implications for an Inclusive Pedagogy

The work of Bates and her colleagues (Bates et al., 1995; Bates & Goodman, 1999) affords particular insights into the range of variation that exists across the population of early language learners, including children with typical and atypical development. Bates, Dale and Thal (1995) present evidence for individual differences in early language development in typically developing children and in children with a range of disabilities. They conclude that most of the variations observed in children with atypical development represent extensions of the variations that are also observed in children with typical development. They also conclude that any reliable theory of language development will have to account for the variations that are observed in early language learning. It follows that approaches to language teaching and learning in an early years curriculum will also have to take account of the individual levels of competence we know children will bring to the early years setting.

This position holds out a challenge to early years educators and, within that challenge, the possibility for a more inclusive pedagogy. The challenge is to differentiate the teaching and

learning sufficiently to match the variability in children's levels of competence. The possibility for a more inclusive pedagogy arises from the evidence that the variations observed in the language development of children with different kinds of disabilities can be represented as similar to those observed in typically developing children, but at a greater extreme in terms of delay. This allows for the conceptualisation of early language learning as a continuum; one on which there is wide variation in the rate at which the milestones are achieved, but nonetheless, one on which all young language learners have reached a recognisable point, including children with serious delay. From this position, it is possible to consider designing a practice to match a much wider range of abilities and needs than might have been considered heretofore. This again implies the challenge to differentiate the practice and to identify the range of pedagogic strategies which are appropriate to the range of abilities and needs.

Language Development and Disadvantage

Together with the large individual differences in onset time and rate of development which have been documented for young children learning language, research has also highlighted variations which are correlated with social class. In the discussion so far it has been established that researchers attribute the wide variation in young children's individual levels of language competence to the interaction between biological and environmental factors (Bates et al., 1995). Equally, what is described as *true individual variation* (Bates, et al., p.102) has been highlighted as a robust feature of early language learning, regarded as contributing to a substantial proportion of the variation in children's development, independently of such factors as age, gender and social class.

Notwithstanding this account, a range of studies have also linked variation in amount and quality of children's vocabulary, and in complexity of sentence structure, to the socio-economic status of the family. These studies show that children from families who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage typically have smaller vocabularies (Hart & Risley, 1992; Hoff-Ginsberg & Tardif, 1995; Arriaga, Fenson, Cronan & Pethick, 1998), containing less sophisticated words (Hart & Risley, 1992; Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001) and produce complex sentences at a later age (Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995;

Arriaga et al., 1998). There is also evidence that indicates that children from disadvantaged backgrounds manifest variation in speaking style but have good control of equally complex and rule-governed grammar (Gee, 2001; Wolfram, Adger & Christian, 1999; Edwards, 1997; Vernon-Feagans, 1996).

The body of research which links variation in amount and quality of children's vocabulary and in complexity of sentence structure, to the socio-economic status of the family puts the focus firmly on the role of environmental input in children's language learning. It attributes differences in the rate, amount and complexity of language development, in children from families which are socio-economically disadvantaged, to differences in amount and quality of talk experienced by the children and to differences in style features of adult input.

A study by Arriaga, Fenson, Cronan and Pethick (1998) shows that a group of sixteen to thirty month old children from low- income families had scores which were strikingly lower than those of middle- class children on vocabulary production, word combinations and sentence complexity. The study compared the language skills of one hundred and three children from low- income families with those of three middle, to upper middle class groups of children (one hundred and three in all), matched on age and gender. Some useful insights are provided in this study about the work of Bates, Dale and Thal (1995) outlined above. The children from low- income families were assessed using the MacArthur CDI: Toddler inventory and the comparison scores were drawn from the original CDI normative study (Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Thal, Bates, Hartung, Pethick & Reilly, 1993) which has been discussed at length in an earlier section of this chapter. In that study, no significant correlations were reported between socio-economic status and language outcomes.

In the Arriaga et al. (1998) study, the mean percentile score for productive vocabulary, for the children from low- income families (29.74), was significantly lower than the mean for the aggregate CDI normative group (50.04) with a total of 55.3% of the children from low- income families falling below the 25th CDI percentile and 35.9% falling below the 10th percentile compared with 11.7% of the middle- income group. While the disparities between

the groups are very marked, there was also wide variation in the scores of the children in the low-income group.

The outcomes for age of appearance of word combinations showed a four to five month difference in favour of the children from middle-income families and the outcomes for sentence complexity showed that 78.5% of the children from low-income families fell below the 50th percentile compared to 50.3% of the children from the middle-income group. Arriaga et al. make the point that, in contrast with the findings of previous research (Wells, 1985), the lower scores for the children from low-income families were not a function of a disproportionate number of very low scores for these children and a disproportionate number of very high scores for the more advantaged group. Rather, the effect was quite pervasive among the children who were disadvantaged. The entire distribution for this group was shifted about thirty percent toward the lower end of the distribution of the advantaged group, for both productive vocabulary and grammatical development.

In the original MacArthur CDI normative study, the authors cautioned that, as the study was conducted with children from predominantly middle and upper middle class families where parents had at least a high school education, the norms might not be representative of children from lower-income populations. Arriaga et al. suggest that their findings confirm these reservations and confirm also the fact that the general absence of a strong relation between SES and language development reported in the original study, is best explained by the limited SES range of the population on which the norms were developed.

In a two and a half year, longitudinal study, Hart and Risley (1992; 1995) found a robust relationship between the amount and quality of talk experienced by children in the years from seven months to three years, and the children's rate of vocabulary growth, vocabulary use, and IQ test scores at age three. In this study, Hart and Risley were interested in the family interactional variables associated with children's language development in the preschool years. The most significant difference between families was the amount of talk experienced by children and the factor most strongly associated with amount of talk was socio-economic status.

The study included forty two families selected as representative of national family demographics in terms of family size, socio-economic status (SES) and minority families in the mid-western United States. Four socio- economic groupings (SES) were identified on the basis of family occupation: thirteen families described as professional SES families, ten described as middle SES families, thirteen described as lower SES families and six families without employment, described as welfare families. Data were collected during one hour, monthly observations, conducted in the children's homes, from the time the children were seven months until they were three years old. Parents' talk was analysed in terms of quantity and quality of vocabulary and sentence structures in talk addressed to children, and according to features of interactive style, including initiations and responses, discourse features and emotional tone. Children's talk was analysed for cumulative vocabulary growth and mean length of utterance. From this data, measures were derived of the children's productive vocabulary knowledge and use at age three and at this age also, the children were assessed on the Stanford- Binet Intelligence Scale.

The outcomes of the study show substantial differences between families in amount and quality of talk addressed to children with these differences associated with SES and remaining stable over the two and a half years of the study. In the initial analysis of amount of talk per hour addressed to children, when they were eleven to eighteen months old, the numbers of utterances addressed to the most advantaged and least advantaged children were four hundred and eighty two and one hundred and ninety seven utterances respectively. When the quality features of adult talk to their children at ages one and two were quantified, again major differences associated with SES emerged. In an average hour, the professional parents displayed a greater variety of words, more multi-clause sentences, more past and future verb tenses, and greater quantity and variety of questions (Hart & Risley, 1995). In families in the lowest SES group, the utterances addressed to children were fewer in number and less rich in nouns, modifiers, verbs, past tense verbs and clauses.

There were also significant differences in the style characteristics of families with the most disadvantaged families less inclined to continue talking or to develop a topic with their

children, and more inclined to use prohibitive or negative utterances. The children from the most advantaged families received affirmative feedback five times more often than the children from the least advantaged families. The outcomes for the children at age three on vocabulary growth, vocabulary use, and on the variety of tasks in the Stanford-Binet I Q test battery, are all strongly correlated with family SES with the lowest achieving children coming from the most disadvantaged families.

A significant finding in this study is that while all of the outcomes for children at age three were strongly related to family SES, specific quality features of adult talk were each more strongly related to each measure of child outcomes than was family SES. For example, the richness of nouns and declaratives in parents' utterances, the variety of words of all types used, the use of questions, a higher proportion of affirmatives and a lower proportion of imperatives and prohibitions, were each more strongly correlated with vocabulary growth than was family SES. Another significant finding is that in overall terms, the amount of talk directed to children also determined the quality of the talk they received. Parents who talked more gave the children more opportunities to experience the quality features of language. While the children in the lowest SES group heard talk which was somewhat less rich in quality than that directed to children in more advantaged families, they were most disadvantaged in the amount of talk directed to them.

In a follow up study, Walker, Greenwood, Hart and Carta (1994) reported on the progress of twenty nine of the original group of children at age nine, when the children were in elementary school. The outcomes of this study show that children's achievements and family SES at age three were strongly predictive of language (receptive and expressive), verbal ability and academic achievement at age nine. In the follow up study, children from lower SES families continued to demonstrate lower performance on language and reading related achievement, in a surprisingly stable manner, across grades in the elementary school. The authors make the point that differences in the early language environment appeared, ultimately, to affect the development of children from low SES families throughout their schooling. They make the further point that there was no evidence in the study of sensitivity to children's differential levels of achievement in language and academic competence, in

school programming, with no evidence of individualisation of subject matter in response to clear differences among children on multiple measures of academic competence. The authors express concern that differences in early language and intellectual competences arising from family interactional variables associated with SES, may also be contributed to by school related factors, placing children at risk for progressive and cumulative poor performance through the early years of schooling. Other research on the relationship between language competence and school achievement points to the fact that schools fail to take account of the variance in children's abilities to respond, in expected ways, to tasks that require formal academic language. There is a concern that expectations for how school-based tasks are to be linguistically structured and presented are seldom an explicit focus of instruction for students even though these expectations determine how students are assessed as they progress through school (Schleppegrell, 2001).

The Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development is a longitudinal study which examines the relationship between the language and literacy environments of children from low- income families, at home and in preschool, and their subsequent achievements in language and literacy in kindergarten and in elementary school (Snow, 1991; Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995; Tabors, Roach & Snow, 2001; Dickinson, 2001). The study began in 1987 with a group of eighty three children and their families of which seventy three were still involved in the study three years later, when the kindergarten assessments were carried out. Starting when the children were age 3, data were collected through yearly observations in the children's homes when they were 3, 4 and 5 years old and through yearly observations in their preschools, when they were 3 and 4 years old. Beginning when the children were 5, yearly assessments of language and literacy skills were carried out. Outcomes at age 9 have been reported for fifty four of the original group of children and data at age 12 are available for fifty one of the original group (Tabors, Snow & Dickinson, 2001).

Findings from the Home-School Study of Language and Literacy corroborate a number of the findings from the studies outlined in the previous section of this chapter. The study provides strong evidence for the role of environment in children's acquisition and use of language and it highlights the possibility of language delay for children at risk for reasons of

socio-economic disadvantage. Equally, it confirms the wide variation in levels of language competence existing in this population of children. It also confirms the relationship between children's early competences in language and emergent literacy skills and their later outcomes on formal tests of achievement in these areas of learning.

In relation to acquisition of vocabulary and sentence structure, findings from the study for children's receptive vocabularies, Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) and sentence complexity at ages 3 and 5, show some delay in the children's acquisition of these elements of the language system. When the children were 3;9, their mean MLU was 2.92 (SD 0.67, range, 1.17-4.22) and when they were 5;6, their mean MLU was 3.46 (SD 0.69, range 1.64-4.96). Snow (1999) interprets these scores as more comparable to the scores of children of 2;2 and 3;1 respectively.

The sentence complexity scores for a random subset of twenty one of the children, when they were 3;9 indicate a mean of 76.9 (SD 9.70, range 60-94). Snow reports this score as lower than the expected average which would be 82 (SD 4-6) for a child aged 3;9 and closer to the average (77) for a child aged 3;4. The children's mean standard score on receptive vocabulary at age 5 (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) was 93, only slightly depressed from the norm of 100. In reporting these outcomes, the authors are concerned to stress the wide variation in language abilities reflected in the range of children's scores. Nevertheless, they do also make the point that the scores for sentence length and sentence complexity are, on average, well below those that would be expected from an otherwise comparable group of more advantaged children (Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995; Snow, 1999).

A major focus of the study is the relationship between children's home language and literacy environments and their achievements on a range of tests administered at age 5 (Tabors, Roach & Snow, 2001). For the final analysis of data in this regard, three composite variables relating to home language and literacy were derived: extended discourse, rare word density and home support for literacy. These were correlated with three measures of children's language and literacy achievements at age 5: narrative production, emergent literacy skills and receptive vocabulary, taken from the School Home Early Language and Literacy Battery

– Kindergarten (SHELL-K). The SHELL-K (Kindergarten) and SHELL-1 (First Grade) is a battery of oral language and early literacy tests which was designed specifically for this study. It includes traditional measures of emergent and early literacy skill, standardised measures such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) Reading, and novel assessments of children's ability to produce decontextualised language in a variety of genre: narration, description and definitions (Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995).

The outcomes here show significant correlations between all three of the home environment composites and all three of the kindergarten measures, with some variation in the strength of the relationships. The strongest relationships were between the home environment composite variable, Home Support for Literacy, and all three of the kindergarten measures, Narrative Production, Emergent Literacy and Receptive Vocabulary with correlations of .40, .36 and .50 respectively, and between all three home environment composite variables, Extended Discourse, Rare Word Density and Home Support for Literacy, and children's receptive vocabulary, with correlations of .36, .50 and .50 respectively. Further analysis was conducted to allow for the possible influence of a particular set of control variables: gender, race, reported family income, mother's education and children's mean length of utterance at age three. When these controls were applied the earlier correlations remained but the relationships were somewhat weaker.

Outcomes on language and literacy achievements have been reported for fifty four of the original students at age nine, and for fifty one of them at age twelve, when the children were in fourth and seventh grades. These outcomes are for Receptive Vocabulary as measured by the PPVT-R and for Reading Comprehension as measured by California Achievement Tests (CAT). The children's achievements on these tests at ages nine and twelve were normally distributed with considerable variation on each test. On the PPVT-R at both ages, the mean for the group was close to the national average. For Reading Comprehension, the mean was just below the national average at age nine and at the national average at age twelve.

Correlations between kindergarten language and literacy measures, and outcomes at ages nine and twelve, showed considerable stability across time. The strongest correlation was between kindergarten Receptive Vocabulary and fourth grade scores on the same test, with a strong correlation also between these measures from kindergarten to seventh grade. Kindergarten receptive vocabulary was also strongly correlated with fourth grade reading comprehension and even more strongly with comprehension in seventh grade. Children's scores on Formal Definitions and on Narrative Production in kindergarten were also correlated with Receptive Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension in fourth and seventh grade.

The Home –School Study also examined the preschool classrooms that the children attended at ages three and four. In reporting the study, Tabors, Roach and Snow (2001) make the point that while they found significant relationships between the home variables and children's kindergarten achievements, the correlations do not account for all of the variance in children's scores at age five. In this regard, the nature and quality of the children's preschool experiences were regarded as potentially critical influences on their language and literacy abilities. Reports of outcomes of the study include analyses of adult child interactions and curricular features which were expected to influence these areas of children's development (Dickinson & Smith, 2001). This analysis is extremely relevant to the focus of this Thesis and will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this literature review.

Further Implications for an Inclusive Pedagogy

The studies relating to children who are at- risk for reasons of socio- economic disadvantage again emphasise the importance of early experience in children's language development and the relationship between early language competence and later school achievement. They corroborate the evidence for wide variation in the population of young children learning language but also highlight the particular vulnerability of children in this population for language delay. This evidence highlights the need for, and the importance of, a language curriculum in early years teaching and learning. It also reinforces the argument for differentiated practice and for fine tuning of teaching strategies within a language curriculum. The evidence also confirms the need to develop children's knowledge of the

language system as well as their use of it as a resource. The need for emphasis on both quantity and quality of children's vocabulary and sentence structure emerges clearly in the research. The studies outlined suggest that these elements of the language system may be areas of particular need for children who are living in disadvantaged circumstances as well as for children whose language is delayed because of a specific disability.

CHILDREN'S DISCOURSE SKILLS

Within an early years language curriculum, one of the critical areas for development is children's use of decontextualised language in discourse. Decontextualised language is described as language which is context free (Bernstein, 1971), autonomous (Olson, 1977) or disembedded (Donaldson, 1987). It is not rooted in any immediate context of time or situation and does not rely on observation or physical experience (Painter, 1999) but stands as an unambiguous or autonomous representation of meaning (Olson, 1977). The literature on language and learning describes decontextualised language as representing the kind of semantic style or meaning making which is necessary for educational knowledge (Bernstein, 1990; Halliday, 1993; Hasan, 1996; Bruner, 1996; Cloran, 1999; Painter, 1999; Pellegrini, 2001).

Discourse requires that children produce several utterances or conversational turns to build a linguistic structure such as a narrative or an explanation (Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001). In the field of linguistic theory, discourse and the sentence are regarded as the two basic units of analysis in language. The distinction between the two is related to the distinction which is drawn between language form and function. Discourse requires that we necessarily go beyond the sentence to an intrinsic relation between utterances and their context of use.

Coherence in terms of the organisation of the structure and cohesion between utterances are two of the basic conditions for discourse (Hickmann, 2003). Hickman, like Halliday (1993) and Bruner (1996) argues that both levels of linguistic organisation, the sentence and discourse, are necessary for meaning. Her view is that linguistic competence simultaneously requires knowledge of the syntactic and semantic properties of well- formed sentences and knowledge of the pragmatic properties of well- formed discourse. Further, she argues that

discourse is constitutive of meaning and gives children a mechanism for acquiring the linguistic elements, or forms, that discourse itself requires (Hickmann, 2003).

Educational knowledge is concerned with concepts which are both more specialised and more abstract than those of every day common sense knowledge; what Bernstein (1990) describes as the transmission and development of universalistic orders of meaning as opposed to meanings which relate to local situational contexts. Halliday (1993) describes educational knowledge as construed in a different kind of language. Typically, it is embodied in written discourse which is abstracted from any situational context shared by author and reader. Meaning is carried purely through the symbolic function of language and the text will include words which themselves refer to abstract entities. Further, within the text, meaning is built in a systematic, logical fashion, maintaining an internal coherence which places particular contextual demands on the reader. The reader must decipher ideas and concepts in the immediate context of the sentence while following the logic of the text by simultaneously back referencing to earlier content, and constantly reinterpreting meaning as new knowledge unfolds through the reading (Halliday, 1993; Painter, 1999). Equally, the language itself is challenging, with more complex and more abstract forms including more sophisticated vocabulary and the use of metaphor where meaning is not expressed in its typical linguistic form (Halliday, 1993; Painter, 1999). The consensus in the literature, over a long period of time, is that educational knowledge requires a particular linguistic learning style (Painter, 1999) in which language, and in particular the propositional function of language (Bruner, 1996), is brought to deliberate and conscious awareness for children (Halliday, 1993; Snow & Tabors, 1993) so that they can both reflect on language and use it as a tool for reflection.

The view in the literature is that children are inducted into the linguistic learning style required for educational knowledge through their early apprenticeship in using decontextualised language, orally, in adult/child dialogue. In the discussion on Bruner and Halliday in an earlier section of this chapter, it was argued that children begin to be initiated into the use of context free language in their second and third year. At this stage, children are engaged by adults in talk which not only names, describes and recalls experience but which also requires them to talk about, and so to begin to reflect on, experience.

Halliday (1993) quotes evidence of his own child, Nigel, at age two years seven months, engaging in a form of hypothetical reasoning as he explains, *if you walk on the railway line the train will come and go boomp and knock you over* (p. 104). Halliday credits this development from commenting on experience, to reasoning about experience, to the conversations about logical-semantic relations that are structured for children by the adults in their environments and the models of language that are provided in these conversations. Hasan (1992) corroborates this view in her exploration of rationality in every day talk between mothers and their three and a half and four year old children as does Painter (1999) in her study with her own child. This style of interaction is also the child's entry into discourse.

In their second and third years also, children begin to extend their range of conversational partners and to convey information which is unknown to these new listeners. When children engage in recounts and anecdotes about personal experience, their language is necessarily moved into a context independent style (Painter, 1999). In these new kinds of conversational experiences, children are required to engage in dialogue, over several conversational turns, to build linguistic structures such as narratives or explanations. Painter (1999) suggests that adults begin to teach children to deal in decontextualised meaning by scaffolding their ability to provide what she describes as texts, which do not depend on shared experience, and which are characterised by verbal explicitness, even before children's second birthdays. In structuring these kinds of extended linguistic interactions, adults are also initiating children into discourse.

Drawing from her study based on observations of her own child between the ages of two and a half and five, Painter (1999) presents five features of adult/child language which she suggests lead to the development of decontextualised language, and constitute the meaning styles necessary for formal learning and school knowledge. Painter's view is that, by age five, this child had been inducted into a style of meaning making which was characterised by understanding of, and reliance on, the symbolic function of language rather than reference to the concrete world of experience. This style of meaning making included five specific

features: (i) an ability to learn vocabulary through definitions; learning the meaning of a word by relating it to another meaning rather than by pointing physically to the object; (ii) attending to principles underlying categories by learning to specify and explain criteria for category membership, e. g. *a cat is an animal because it's got fur*; (iii) construing contexts beyond personal experience by relating experiences where shared meanings are not assumed; (iv) being able to attend to linguistically presented (or textual) information rather than relying on physical or observational experience; (v) construing information exchange as a means of learning by being alert to language as an information carrying system and being overtly conscious of the way in which meaning is being constructed in the dialogue context.

A critically important aspect of the development of decontextualised language is its relationship to cognitive growth. In using decontextualised language, children are engaging in decontextualised thinking. As discussed already, Bruner's view is that cognition relies upon representation and, equally, that representation is a process of construction. In engaging in and being exposed to what Painter (1999) calls the linguistic creation of context, children are using language as a symbolic, syntactic and conceptual system to construct context free ideas.

Decontextualised language is central to Vygotsky's well known account of the relationship between thought and language. In his view, decontextualised language first begins in play in the form of talk to accompany play episodes. Vygotsky (1978) describes play as the first manifestation of children's emancipation from the constraints of context in that, through play, children enter an imaginary situation in which objects signify something other than their material meaning; Vygotsky (1978) uses the example of a stick being used as a horse. The talk that accompanies the imaginary situation is also detached from the immediate sensory experience. It is decontextualised and it both constructs and represents the decontextualised thinking of the play.

Exposition, Narrative and Explanation

Children's use of decontextualised language in discourse is first developed through adults scaffolding children in the use of descriptions, definitions and classifications (Painter, 1999).

Halliday (1993) describes this as the use of the ideational function of language to reflect on experience and to construct logical- semantic relations. These language uses also represent Bruner's actional mode of meaning through which children learn to relate events and utterances to what he describes as the arguments of action (Bruner, 1996). Here children learn to attribute meaning based on understandings of actions, caused by some agent, to some purpose. This expositional mode of discourse is a critical area for development in an early years language curriculum. Through it, children enter into a new mode of meaning and develop what Bruner calls a new frame for thinking about the world. In this mode, children move on from their initial naming of, and commentaries on, objects and events to a stage where that commentary is qualified and elaborated on, where naming is extended to include categories and the criteria for classification, and meaning can be further explicated by explaining the causal relations between the category and the criterion for membership.

Painter (1999) describes this mode of meaning, or semantic style, as requiring the child to adopt a cognitive stance and to use language consciously and deliberately as an object of reflection. Citing her study with her own child, she points to the fact that he had been initiated into this style of discourse in his second year. She provides examples to show that by age three and a half, he was explaining through definitions: *speeding means fast*; *drown is to go down to the bottom and be dead*; and was habitually producing utterances in which the category and the grounds for categorisation were carefully explicated.

She also reports an important shift in the complexity of the child's reasoning when he moved from a concern with explaining cause- effects relations, based in obvious events and states in the world, to a consciousness of the need to justify his own reasoning about the world. She quotes the child's statement: *our cat is an animal because it's got fur*, as indicating a desire to explain *what I say* rather than *why something happens*. Here, the child is dealing with the internal, causal link, between a statement and the grounds for it. Painter sees these *internal explanations* as building significant strategies for reflection and as supporting the child towards the use of decontextualised thinking.

Exposition is a basic aspect of children's development in discourse in the early years. It embodies the relationship between language as system and resource and is critical to children's understanding of decontextualised language. It begins children's initiation into this kind of disembedded cognitive and semantic style which is developed further through more developed explanations and through narrative.

Narratives and Explanations both provide children with opportunities to engage in extended discourse on a topic. They are regarded as providing children with opportunities to build linguistic structures representing both complexity and coherence (Beals & Snow, 1994). Narrative has been defined as the oral sequencing of temporally successive events, real or imaginary (McCabe, 1991). It is regarded as a vital human activity through which we represent and make sense of ourselves and our experiences. Various kinds of narrative have been identified including the relating of accounts, recounts, events and stories (Heath, 1983). Children's personal narratives have also received attention in the literature (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1992; Peterson & McCabe, 1994; McCabe, 1997).

Bruner (1986, 1996) sees narrative as having an essential role in the construction of meaning in human experience. In his view, its role is an interpretative one; making sense of human actions, difficulties and intentions and their relations to cultural values. He describes narrative as including the intersubjective, actional and normative modes of meaning but also as transcending them to create truths that can be generalised. It is at once rooted in the context of human action and emotion and concerned with interpreting the consequences of these. In the act of interpretation, meaning is decontextualised from the particular to the general.

Narrative structure provides a particular paradigm for children's constructions of meaning. While cultural diversity in narrative structure is documented in the literature (McCabe, 1997) there is also consensus on the general structural properties of the well formed story. Generally, within a narrative, meaning is constructed in terms of a setting, a complication and a resolution, with an evaluation which denotes the narrator's attitude to the story content (Hickmann, 2003). These general structural requirements are often further refined to include

character, episodes, and temporal and spatial location, with intentionality, goal based behaviour and causal relations related to all of these (Stein & Albro, 1997). Two of the defining features of narrative are coherence in the general structure of the story and cohesion between the sentences which relate it (Hickmann, 2003).

The relationship between narrative and explanation is well argued in the literature (Beals & Snow, 1994; Beals, 2001) and discussions on what are regarded as necessary properties of stories such as the behaviours, motivations and dilemmas of characters, also include recognition of the need for children to engage in explanation in relation to these story elements (Stein & Abro, 1997). In a discussion on the relationship between narrative and explanation, Beals and Snow (1994) outline the similarities between the two. They describe both as structural forms of extended discourse on a specific topic, requiring formulation of a goal, and requiring control over inter-utterance cohesion markers. They point to the fact that both forms of discourse require the participants to use decontextualised language. They also make the point that explanation can be regarded as a primary function of narrative, central to an explication of the temporal and causal connectives which afford insight into the purposes, intentions and feelings of the storyteller. This view is compatible with Stein & Albro's (1997) account of narrative as chronicling aspects of dilemma or conflict requiring appraisal and resolution, and also requiring evaluation of goals and explanations of consequences. These perspectives allow for the development of explanation, as a form of discourse, within the various contexts for narrative that arise in an early years setting. Equally, opportunities for explanatory discourse, other than in a narrative context, arise in the context of early years curricular activities.

Developing Discourse Skills

A number of research studies have focused on the development of children's discourse skills and have identified particular styles of parent-child interaction and particular features of adult talk which facilitate children's development of exposition, narratives and explanations (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1992; Peterson & McCabe, 1994; Painter, 1999; Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995; Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999; Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001; Beals, 2001; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer Wolf, 2004).

These interactional styles and specific features at once rely upon, and are extensions of, the facilitative aspects of adult speech to young language learners outlined in Chapter 2.

Styles of adult talk which facilitate children's construction of stories are described as topic extending and topic elaborating (Peterson & McCabe, 1992). Within these general styles, parents use specific strategies. They contribute information on the story topic, naming objects and describing characters and events. They repeat, clarify and extend children's utterances through recasts and expansions, and they ask questions which elicit particular types of information from the children, including context setting questions establishing the time, location and nature of events and the characters involved (Peterson & McCabe, 1992; Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999). Parents' sensitivity and responsiveness in the form of utterances which confirm interest and which encourage the child to continue, with an invitational and exploratory rather than a directive style from the parent, also contribute to story length and content (Peterson & McCabe, 1994; Peterson et al., 1999). Children's development in the use of explanations is supported by adult styles of interaction which contribute to a joint topic of attention by supplying words, word meanings and descriptions, by discussing, requesting and offering information about intentions and motivations and, particularly, by describing and by challenging the child to describe, cause-effect relationships (Painter, 1999; Beals, 2001).

Narratives and explanations are described as structured forms of extended discourse on a specific topic. They require formulation of a general goal or outcome and control over particular linguistic features such as specific vocabulary and inter-sentence cohesion (Beals & Snow, 1994). Both forms are decontextualised in nature requiring the participants to talk about topics outside of the here and now and offering children the opportunity to make connections between ideas, events and actions (Beals, 2001). These modes of discourse happen in dialogue and rely upon the conditions of joint attention and fine tuning which were identified in Chapter 1 as prerequisites for the maximally responsive environment. The process is described as collaborative participation (Beals & Snow, 1994) or co-construction (Peterson et al., 1999). In family situations, the collaboration can be a multi-party one in which family members co-narrate stories using an array of social, cognitive and linguistic

skills analogous to those which underlie formal academic discourse (Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph & Smith, 1992).

The evidence outlined above identifies the kinds of adult behaviours which facilitate children's development of discourse skills in dialogue contexts. These contexts require the adult to contribute to the discourse and to scaffold the child's contribution. A number of research studies have established a positive link between adult scaffolding behaviours and young children's growth in discourse skills (Peterson & McCabe, 1994, Peterson, Jesso & McCabe, 1999; Tabors, Snow & Dickinson, 2001). Peterson, Jesso and McCabe (1999) found a positive correlation between parents' use of topic continuing strategies and their children's immediate growth in vocabulary and in their use of decontextualised language in the construction of narratives, one year later. In the Home-School Study, Tabors, Snow and Dickinson, (2001) found strong positive relationships between adult strategies and growth in children's vocabulary, word definitions and listening comprehension.

Monologue Contexts

The strategies outlined above have been discussed in terms of their support for children's discourse skills in dialogue contexts. However, children also need to use discourse skills in autonomous presentations akin to monologues. The use of discourse skills in monologue contexts has been defined as the presentation of continuous linguistic structures such as retelling a story, answering open-ended questions, giving explanations, giving descriptions, defining words and participating in a group discussion (Snow, 1989). The consideration here is to identify the kinds of adult strategies which support children in moving from the dialogue to the monologue context. Snow (1989) discusses two hypotheses as to the kinds of adult responses which may provide the social supports which guide children towards more autonomous use of discourse skills. Elements from each hypothesis are useful in constructing a repertoire of strategies to support children's autonomous discourse skills.

The co-construction hypothesis suggests that collaboration in the construction of oral *texts* such as narratives and explanations, with exposure to the adult scaffolding strategies outlined in the previous section, facilitates children's abilities to produce these kinds of texts by

themselves. So, participating in highly structured retellings of familiar events, where parents elicit report narratives or scripts from children, collaborate in the production of them and provide opportunities for practice and display, may help children to develop skills in autonomous narrative. There is some research evidence to support this hypothesis. In the Peterson et al. (1999) study of parents' scaffolding of children's discourse skills, children, whose mothers guided their retellings of personal narratives by providing particular prompts and cues through which the children could structure the narrative, later used these strategies independently in their autonomous constructions of narratives for a non- scaffolding researcher.

A second hypothesis, described by Snow (1989) as the autonomy hypothesis, derives from the work of Ninio and Bruner (1978) and also provides useful guidelines as to which adult strategies might support children's development of monologue skills. This hypothesis rests on the supposition that shifting the burden of meaning making more towards the child, with less emphasis on negotiation of meaning by the adult and greater insistence on the need for clear expression of meaning intention by the child, would help the child to move towards the monologue form. From this perspective, strategies such as requiring that the child contribute the greater part of the information when recalling jointly experienced events, or, when engaging in discussion on familiar pictures or picture storybooks, would constitute opportunities for the child to practice monologues and to learn about the listener/speaker demands of the monologue form.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the relationship between language and learning has been examined and a rationale for including language in an early years curriculum has been presented. The range of variation that exists across the population of early language learners and the presence of this diversity for both typically and atypically developing children has been discussed. It has been argued that this diversity is represented along a continuum of learning and that such a continuum presents the challenge and the opportunity to design an inclusive pedagogy.

In this chapter also, the importance of children's development of decontextualised language and its use in discourse has been discussed. Forms of discourse have been examined and the adult strategies which support the development of children's discourse skills have been identified from research. Identifying the teaching strategies which support the development of young children's discourse skills is one of the central areas of enquiry in this study. The weight of the evidence quoted in this review of literature is from studies of adult-child interaction, in one-to-one contexts, in home settings. The challenge in this study is to explore whether the supportive strategies identified in these interactions can be translated and adapted for the more varied contexts and the different role relationships of an early years setting. This issue is addressed in the first research question which asks if the facilitative features of adult talk can support the development of children's language, including their discourse skills. The strategies for supporting children's discourse skills which have been identified in this chapter, have been included in the approaches to language teaching and learning adopted in this study. They are included in the framework for analysis of data and are discussed further in that section of the thesis.

In the final chapter of the Literature Review, a case is presented for dialogue as the essential context for language teaching and learning in an early years setting and as the means through which appropriately differentiated and inclusive teaching can be achieved.

This argument is supported by a discussion on the theoretical perspectives and research evidence which are informing current directions for language teaching and learning, in the field of language intervention.

CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ADULT-CHILD DIALOGUE

INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter of the Literature Review, adult-child dialogue is proposed as the context for language teaching and learning in an early years curriculum. It is also proposed as the means through which language intervention strategies are included in the teaching repertoire and are embedded in naturalistic teacher-child conversation. In the opening section of the chapter, one longitudinal study (Painter, 1996) is discussed in depth because it provides detailed evidence of the role of adult-child dialogue in one child's acquisition and development of language, including the complex language uses which are of interest in this present study. From there it is argued that, through the enactment of dialogue, children move through processes of change which can be identified as points along a continuum of language learning. It is proposed that language teaching and learning in an early years setting is essentially a process of dialogue. In the final section of the Chapter, the argument for dialogue is developed with reference to current directions in language teaching and learning, from the field of language intervention.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN DIALOGUE

From a social-interactive perspective, learning is a process of interpreting, or making meaning about, experience and of internalising this knowledge as concepts and ideas. This interpretation or meaning making is a semiotic process. It relies on language as the principal sign system for construing, representing and communicating meaning and it is constructed in the social context. As Halliday (1993) proposes, language learning is a social process through which experience becomes knowledge and language is the basis for learning. From this perspective, the child is simultaneously acquiring the language system and coming to know the world which is construed by language, with the knowledge base widening and deepening according as the language becomes more complex and sophisticated. A critical feature of this view of language and learning is that language use and intellectual development are inextricably linked. Cognitive and linguistic processes are both semiotic in nature; to construe meaning in language is to construe it both verbally and mentally. Thought and

language are seen as the two components of the semantic domain; each is concerned with the symbolic representation of meaning, and language competence is seen as the mediating factor in both.

Halliday (1993) describes the child's acquisition of the language system as the acquisition of a meaning potential, or, a resource. Drawing on this view, Painter (1996) suggests that language learning can be considered as a process of change, or development, in the child's meaning potential. Here, meaning potential is interpreted both as semantic and cognitive potential and change is brought about through dialogue with conversational partners. Painter describes the linguistic resources, or meaning potential, of any particular speaker as comprising a complex set of possibilities for meaning, encompassing both semantic and lexico-grammatical options. Meaning potential is actualised as words and grammatical structures and any utterance, or text, as she describes it, constitutes a manifestation of *some* of the options from the meaning potential of the speaker. This tangible evidence of meaning making also allows insights into the conceptual system, or frames for thinking, which underlie it.

Painter suggests that the process of change in the child's meaning potential, both cognitive and linguistic, can be theorised in terms of the relationship between language as potential and language as actual utterance. This relationship is conducted and developed in the social context. Children construe and re-construe the language system from the numerous instances of language use in which they participate. Equally, in their utterances, they provide instances or evidence of their current meaning potential or use of the system and, also, a means through which the conversational partner can adjust and enhance that potential. In dialogue, children can be enabled to construct utterances that go beyond their current meaning potential. These collaboratively produced texts can constitute a challenge to the child's current system and can cause it to extend and to accommodate to the new possibilities for use of the system.

Painter supports her argument with evidence from her longitudinal study conducted with her own typically developing child, from the time he was two and a half until he was five years old (Painter, 1996). Her analysis, in a later publication (Painter, 1999a), of the child's

development of decontextualised language in that study was quoted in Chapter 3. In the publication quoted here, (Painter, 1996), she uses evidence from the study to discuss the nature of the challenge that is posed to the child's emerging language system through the enactment of dialogue. Painter's study is particularly relevant to the aims of this thesis in that it provides evidence of a continuum of progression in the child's verbal and mental processing and insight into the nature of the adult-child conversation which stimulates that progression.

In reporting the data from the study, Painter uses Halliday's meta-functions of language, the interpersonal, the ideational and the textual, as a framework to describe the child's progression through modes of meaning. Within this framework, she identifies the critical points at which new levels of meaning are constructed in the dialogue context, the development of the linguistic resources to represent and to communicate these meanings and the requirements of dialogue which prompted or enabled this new learning. At the point at which Painter's study begins, the evidence shows that the child is already well initiated into the interpersonal function of language, and is exchanging information as a participant in dialogue.

In the discussion in Chapter 3, it was established that a critical milestone in children's understanding and communication of meaning is reached somewhere between 18 and 24 months, when children begin to offer information which is unknown to the listener. During this age interval, within the interpersonal mode of meaning, the child comes to understand and to use the informative function of language and, with this development, come some of the critical conditions for learning. In the dialogue context, the child comes to appreciate the complementarity of telling and knowing: that through the telling of unshared experience, new knowledge can be constructed for the addressee. The child is learning about the nature of information and about the kinds of roles adopted by listeners and speakers in the exchange of it. At this stage, in the dialogue context, the child is moving beyond the use of language for achieving joint attention and action and for construing observations and recreating shared experience, to learning how to enact dialogue as an exchange of knowledge.

Painter (1996) shows that by age two and a half, the child's utterances are indicating the beginnings of progression towards the ideational mode. Now the child is engaged, not just in the interpretation of experience, but in discussion about and reflection upon experience, including discussion in decontextualised contexts. Painter identifies the beginnings of this level of meaning making with the child's first use of what she describes as cognition clauses as in the following dialogic exchanges: mother: *where's the blue cup?* child: *I expect daddy's got it;* child: *I think my jean has got pocket,* mother: *your jeans have, yes.* Here the child is beginning to use language structures which are usually used to represent internal, cognitive processing of information. However, Painter's analysis is that, at this point, while new structures are in evidence, the substance of the utterance, and its function, are still rooted in the interpersonal, in the management of the immediate giving and receiving of information and in the enactment of dialogue rather than in reflection upon it.

In her discussion of the child's progress from this point, Painter provides a useful analysis of the role of adult-child dialogue in the development of language and cognition. As outlined above, with entry into the ideational function of language, children are using language to comment on and to think about experience as well as for the immediate construal of it. Painter outlines how the communicative context and the resources of language enable this level of development by allowing for symbolic processing at two levels. In conversation with others, children can engage in symbolic processing, externally, by using language to comment on, recall, report experience (*he told me; I said*) and internally, by being required to use language to reflect upon and to show understanding of and knowledge about experience (*I thought, she might be ..., he knows*). These levels of symbolic representation are key milestones in early learning. The child's understanding of the external forms of symbolic representation now includes expanded knowledge of the role of listener and speaker. As givers and receivers of information, participants in dialogue can reconstruct meaning, at second hand, in a context different from the original and through the function of indirect speech. Equally, by participating in dialogue, the child's understanding of the internal forms of symbolic representation is challenged to include an understanding of others as thinking and reflecting beings.

Painter shows that by age two years ten months, the child was using language to recount experience and to quote a third party as in the utterance, *we went in there and Sally said 'there's babies asleep'*. She describes this as the child's use of language for reflection on, and consideration of, external symbolising, or meaning making about material events. At this age too, the child was repeating phrases heard in outside contexts (e.g. *big boys don't cry*). Painter's analysis is that the dialogue context enabled the child to reflect upon this expression and to reconsider its validity in relation to his own experience (mother: *...well everybody cries sometimes*, child: (remembering real incident) *somebody might step on somebody's toes*, mother: *oh yes...even mummy cries then*, child: *yes, even mummy cries*). By age four, the child was showing a developed awareness of third parties as sources of information and as providing topics for comment and negotiation as in the exchange: child: *at kindy* (kindergarten) *they always say 'put your hand over your mouth'*, mother: *well, the main thing is that you turn your head away and don't sneeze onto anything*, child: *they say its so you don't get germs*, mother: *it's so you don't give germs to other people*. In the course of the study also, the child's understanding of givers and receivers of information and how these roles are enacted, extended to understanding that written texts can also take the role of information giver or primary speaker. Painter suggests that this knowledge is constructed with the child in dialogue. She describes how, referring to printed information, e.g. a road sign, printed label or written text, the adult uses phrases like *it tells you* or *it says*. This suggests to the child the communication of information from a primary speaker to an addressee in a way which is continuous with and comparable to the processes the child is familiar with in relation to the human speakers of his/her experience.

The child's use of language for reflection as an internal mental process began to be in evidence from the end of his second year e.g. mother: *.....Hal's seven*, child; *no Hal's four*, mother: *no, he's seven*, child: *oh seven, I thought he's four*, with some evidence also of awareness of the internal mental processes of others, e.g. child: (to mother who has been out) *Daddy thought it was bedtime*, mother: *did he?*, child: *mm, and I thought it was bath time*. However, strong evidence of talk about third parties as thinking, reflecting beings and representations of their thoughts and knowledge did not appear until the fourth year e.g. child: (recounting the cat's reaction to a game) *we used a bath brush and she* (cat)

thinks...she thinks it was her own one. It was a toilet brush. By his fifth birthday, the child was confidently representing mental activity using cognitive verbs in a variety of tenses, representing his own thoughts and knowledge and that of third persons e.g. child: *a long time ago, when you didn't know, we swapped beds*; child: *It is for Hal but he's got to guess what it is, he doesn't know what it is.*

Painter also shows that in his third and fourth year, as listener and speaker in dialogue, the child was engaged in the process of using language to reason about perception and to reorganise his own knowledge. He was also learning to be guided in the linguistic construal of reality as sometimes more reliable than perception e.g. father: (discussing cars, in traffic)...*and they go fast because they've got a big engine*, child: *but that one doesn't go faster than us. See (as they move off) we will go faster*, father: *he's not trying, if he was really trying he could go much faster than us*, child: *if he goes very fast he can- if he goes very fast he can beat us*. He was also learning that while utterances or texts are a means of knowing, when subjected to reflection and discussion they can also be contested or interrogated as in the case of the expression, *big boys don't cry*, in the example quoted above. Equally, the child was aware of the talk of others as a source of knowledge and learning, e.g. *I know 'cause Hal told me*, and also of the fact that they too had to have sources of knowledge, e.g. mother: *he likes it really*, child: *how do you know? Did he tell you?*

Painter's study shows the child's progression, over a two and a half year period, to a sophisticated level of symbolic processing where the nature of the dialogue is often propositional and is conducted in decontextualised language, signifying decontextualised thinking. Painter identifies dialogue as the source of this learning and the interpersonal meta-function of language as its impetus. Her analysis is that the child's development of the lexicogrammatical resources to represent his own thoughts and ideas and those of others, emerges from a desire to extend the options for interpersonal communication. Secondly, she points to the fact that when the child does move towards the representation of decontextualised meanings, it is by constructing these meanings in exploration and negotiation with the current dialogue partner.

In this analysis of the study, Painter's is examining the child's entry into symbolic processing and his growth in ability to exploit the meaning potential of language rather than his development of the vocabulary and sentence structure of the system. Her attention to the role of the adult in the dialogue process is focused on how the adult guides the child towards expanding meaning potential rather than on the identification of specific talk strategies. Painter identifies the adult's role as guiding the child in the direction of comment and reflection, highlighting the salient point for negotiation, and validating or challenging the child's construal of reality, often by pointing up the limitations of perceptual evidence and the possibility of other explanations. Through all of these processes, and in the dynamic, collaborative context of interpersonal communication, the adult is demonstrating the use of language for symbolic representation. That is, the adult is supporting the child's progression through the modes of meaning (Bruner, 1996) which were discussed in chapter two of this review.

In Painter's analysis, one of the critical features of dialogue is that it enables the reconstruction and representation of information from other contexts and from other speakers and listeners. This provides repeated opportunities for the adult to help the child to bring his/her knowledge to consciousness, to see himself/herself as a conscious knower, and, as both actual and potential knower because of the possibility for reciprocal exchange. This kind of collaborative meaning making also requires that the meanings being negotiated are represented in decontextualised language, helping the child towards an understanding of information as semiotic in nature and a product of mental processing rather than a direct representation of reality. Here too there is a continuum of learning. The study shows that the child first showed evidence of the use of cognition clauses, to represent his thinking about, and reconsidering of, experience, around the age of two years ten months, e. g. child: *I thought he was four*. However, he was four years old before there was consistent evidence of him talking about other people as thinking beings and representing what he considered to be their thoughts and knowledge. Painter makes the point that this time span attests to the complexities of the understandings being reached. She stresses the importance of the enactment of dialogue as the route to this learning and her view is that the learning begins,

not just in the enactment of dialogue, but in the representation of that dialogue beyond the immediate context, early in the child's experience

A Continuum of Teaching and Learning

In the previous section, it was argued that, through the enactment of dialogue, the child progresses in the use of language for increasingly complex levels of symbolic representation during the period which can be described as the preschool and early school years. The discussion was grounded in the evidence from one longitudinal study conducted with a typically developing child and it provides empirical evidence for the development of the modes of meaning (Bruner, 1996) or meta-functions of language (Halliday, 1993) which were outlined in chapter two of this literature review. The discussion builds on the arguments for adult-child linguistic interaction as the locus of language teaching and learning which have been outlined already in Chapters 1 and 2 of this literature review. Together these arguments establish adult-child dialogue as the essential context for language teaching and learning in the early years.

In the foregoing section, language learning has been described as a process of change in the child's meaning potential. Equally, it has been proposed that the child's utterances provide both evidence of current meaning making and the means through which the adult can act to adjust and to further develop that meaning potential. Drawing on the arguments outlined in the chapters of this review so far, it is possible to identify a series of milestones, or points, in early child development when processes of change in the child's meaning making should be in evidence and when the child is, potentially, progressing to new modes of meaning making, each building on the one that went before without displacing it. These points of change are:

1. The establishing of intersubjective understanding and mutual intention between child and adult, towards the end of the child's first year
2. Growth in understanding of the process of information exchange, at around the age of two years, with the accompanying growth in understanding of the roles of speakers and listeners as givers and receivers of information, and the development of the concept of telling and knowing

3. The development of the capacity to reflect upon, and to comment about, experience in decontextualised language and to see oneself as a thinking, knowing being
4. The development of the ability to identify others as thinking, knowing beings and to represent the knowledge and thoughts of others

These processes of development are enabled by and through the child's growing knowledge and command of the language system and its functions. This, in turn, is enabled by the adult styles of interaction and specific talk strategies identified in the chapters of this review so far, including the interactive style discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

From the discussion outlined above, language teaching and learning is conceptualised as a continuum of interpretation of experience through adult-child dialogue. The notion of a continuum is critical in that it allows for the identification of young language learners, including those with atypical development, as communicating or aspiring to communicate, in any one particular mode of meaning and, potentially, progressing towards the next. Equally, it provides for a continuum of adult strategies through which to challenge the child's utterance, to enable the change in meaning potential, whatever the child's current level of meaning making is.

Teaching Through Dialogue

From the perspective outlined above, a principal concern for language teaching and learning in an early years setting is the need to structure dialogue contexts in which the adult strategies can be embedded and can be appropriately differentiated according to the characteristics of the learner. To construe teaching and learning in an early years setting as essentially a process of dialogue is to attempt to provide a way forward from the arguments traditionally associated with the structure and practice of early education. These arguments turn on issues of structure and on the merits of child initiated versus teacher directed learning. At their most polarised, clear distinctions are argued between what is described as child-centred education, emphasising child-initiated learning and frequently referred to as developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1986) and what is considered to be a teacher directed curriculum, de-emphasising play and focusing on specific outcomes in

knowledge and skills (Cole, 1995). The highly structured, teacher directed curriculum has traditionally been associated with early childhood special education. The debate on the effectiveness of this approach versus the developmental approach of DAP, has been a feature of discussions on curricular approaches within early childhood special education (Carta, Schwartz, Atwater & McConnell, 1991) including approaches to language intervention (Cole & Dale 1986; Cole, Dale & Mills, 1991). Equally, the debate has been conducted within the broader field of early childhood education and an over emphasis on what is described as teacher directed learning has been a criticism of mainstream practice (Bredekamp, 1986; Rojas-Drummond, Mercer & Dabrowski, 2001). One of the contributing factors to these differing perspectives is the fact that early intervention, or early childhood special education, and mainstream early childhood education have evolved as different provisions, informed by different philosophies and different theories of teaching and learning (Safford, Sargent & Cook, 1994).

Cole (1995) provides a useful outline of the characteristics of, and contrasts between, what has come to be known as DAP and what have been regarded as behaviourally oriented, special education practices. He identifies the two fundamental characteristics of DAP as 1) using age appropriate activities and 2) allowing the child to select activities that follow his/her personal interests. By contrast, he describes traditional early childhood special education practices as relying heavily on teacher – selected tasks, based on logical, didactic progressions that are initiated and directed by the teacher. Other fundamental differences are that DAP models tend to promote child- to –child interactions versus teacher- child interactions and child initiations versus teacher initiations. Developmentally Appropriate Practice is also seen as promoting what is described as discovery learning versus skills based training. Where the development of specific skills is a focus within the DAP model of curriculum, this learning happens in the context of on-going activities dispersed throughout the day rather than being confined to discrete instructional periods (Cole, 1995).

Since the early 1990's, the field of early language intervention has contributed greatly to the development of a theory and practice in early education which moves beyond the traditional orthodoxies on curricular structures, as articulated by Cole (1995), and attempts to address

the needs of children as individual learners in a social context (Cole, Dale & Mills, 1991; Kaiser, Yoder & Keetz, 1992; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995; Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998; Warren, 2000; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; Smith, Warren, Yoder & Feurer, 2004; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). In an overview of directions in communication and language intervention, Bricker (1992) identified the designing of approaches that embed specific teaching techniques in the daily routines of children's lives, as the goal of communication and language intervention for the nineteen nineties. Her analysis was that approaches were needed which could superimpose specific teaching strategies on natural adult-child social transactions and allow for the use of communicative responses across varied settings, activities and people. One of the key premises for this shift towards what have come to be described as naturalistic, conversation based, intervention approaches (Kaiser, Yoder & Keetz, 1992; Camarata, 1995; Warren, 2000; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; Smith, Warren, Yoder & Feurer, 2004) was an increasing concern that behaviourist approaches were failing to recognise the social-interactive nature of language learning (Bricker, 1992; Goldstein & Kaczmarek, 1992; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995).

Within the intervention literature, throughout the last decade, there has been a growing consensus towards developing a practice of teaching and learning which is compatible with a social-interactionist theory of language acquisition and development. A growing understanding of the dual roles of biological endowment and environmental input in language acquisition and development, and of the social nature of language learning, has resulted in a concern to embed intervention strategies in genuine teacher- child conversations about meaningful, contextualised activities (Bricker, 1992; Goldstein & Kaczmarek, 1992; Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002).

In the recent literature, the social-interactionist view is being articulated as a transactional model of development and intervention in which development is seen as proceeding through bi-directional, reciprocal interactions between the child and his/her environment (Sameroff & Fiese, 2000; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002). This model is grounded in the view that the adult-child communicative relationship is a reciprocal and dynamic one in which both child

and adult affect each other, as early achievements pave the way for subsequent developments (Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002). This view of language development as rooted in the interpersonal relationship and as progressing through reciprocal influence and exchange of meanings between the adult and child, is compatible with the views of Bruner (1996) and Halliday (1993) which were outlined in chapter two of this review. In the transactional model, the role of the adult is identified as that of providing a maximally responsive environment by responding to the child's communicative attempts with a wide range of what are described as natural teaching strategies. These strategies include all of the strategies identified in this review as the facilitative aspects of adult talk to children acquiring language, both as typical and atypical developers. In the current intervention literature, the strategies are based in an assumption of learner-oriented rather than teacher focused topics of conversation and they are intended for use as talk strategies which are finely tuned to the characteristics of the child as conversational partner, in meaningful contexts, throughout the school day (Warren, 2000). Here is the point of consensus with DAP models. The early intervention literature provides two main curricular models through which these strategies can be used as specific teaching techniques and can be embedded into on-going interactions in the early years setting. The curricular models are Milieu Teaching techniques and Responsive Interaction techniques.

Dialogue as a Context for Naturalistic Language Intervention

Milieu Teaching techniques and Responsive Interaction techniques rely on adult-child dialogue. They are described as naturalistic language intervention procedures through which specific teaching episodes, employing specific talk strategies, can be used in response to children's initiations and can be embedded in the on-going stream of interactions in the early childhood setting (Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). Milieu teaching includes two core techniques: incidental teaching and mand model procedures. The distinction between the two centres on whether the adult or the child initiates the instructional episode within the social interaction. Both techniques are seen as necessary and complementary (Kaiser, Yoder & Keetz, 1992; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995; Wilcox & Shannon, 1998; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002). Incidental teaching is a technique first described by Hart and Risley (1975) and designed for

children at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage, to give children opportunities to practice language skills in unstructured play situations. In this technique, the teacher follows the child's lead and explicitly develops the child's conversational topic, mapping words and phrases on to the child's focus of attention, prompting and questioning the child for particular, target responses, expanding on the child's responses and modelling responses for the child to imitate. A mand- model procedure allows the teacher to initiate the teaching episode and to employ explicit prompts for response. These include prompts for elicited responding e.g. *what are you playing with?* and prompts for elicited imitation, e.g. *say I'm playing with the train set*. The teacher may also use time delay techniques to prompt a communication from the child. For example, during turn taking games, where the adult and child are throwing or rolling a ball to each other, or taking turns in matching pictures or dressing a toy, the teacher may delay his/her turn taking hoping to prompt a request from the child. On a continuum of Direct Instruction and DAP models, milieu teaching is described as a hybrid that includes characteristics of both approaches (Cole, 1995).

Responsive interaction techniques are designed to create an optimally responsive adult conversational style (Wilcox & Shannon, 1998). Responsive interaction shares many characteristics with milieu teaching such as embedding intervention techniques in typical activities, following the child's lead and linguistic mapping. However, this technique relies more explicitly on child initiated learning and does not include explicit elicitation and imitation prompts for specific child responses. Rather, adult talk is related to the child's topic of interest and focused input is provided through linguistic mapping, topic continuing utterances, models of elaborative utterances and recasts and expansions of the child's utterances (Wilcox & Shannon, 1998; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002).

There is consensus in the language intervention literature that milieu teaching and responsive interaction techniques constitute naturalistic, conversation based language teaching strategies which can support children's receptive and expressive language skills (Kaiser, Yoder, & Keetz, 1992; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995; Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998; Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002; Woods, Shubha & Goldstein, 2004; Smith, Warren, Yoder & Feurer, 2004; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). In an

early review of the research evidence for the efficacy of milieu teaching, Kaiser, Yoder and Keetz, (1992), examined the evidence for positive effects on children's language development along four dimensions: (i) primary effects on specific targets within teaching episodes, (ii) growth in comprehension and use of vocabulary and of grammatical forms beyond the specific content of the teaching episode, (iii) generalisation of learning beyond the teaching context, (iv) global language gains that are independent of context. Nineteen studies of milieu teaching were examined and both methodologies and outcomes were considered in assessing the evidence for the four dimensions of efficacy outlined above.

In all, the studies included one hundred and thirty four children and adolescents ranging in age from two years one month to fifteen years seven months. The participants included preschool children from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, children who were at risk of, or who were diagnosed with, language delay, preschool and school-age children with mild or moderate general learning disabilities, pre-school and school-age children with autism and children with moderate to severe general learning disabilities. In sixteen of the nineteen studies, the milieu teaching occurred in the context of a classroom intervention programme. The aspects of language which were targeted in the studies varied widely and participants had developmentally appropriate targets ranging from one word responses to multi-word sentences. A number of the studies were concerned with developing children's general responsiveness and functional use of language rather than specific aspects of vocabulary or sentence structure.

Based on the results of the studies that the authors considered to be methodologically sound, this review found strong evidence that milieu teaching produces positive effects on children's use of language targets and on general language performance within specific teaching episodes. Across the studies, within teaching episodes, there was evidence of significant positive effects on the frequency of children's utterances, the complexity and diversity of the utterances and the use of specific language targets. The evidence for global language development was not as strong.

There was strong evidence of generalisation of learning to another classroom context or to interaction with other adults with specialist training. However, evidence of what is described as true generalisation, that is, use of targeted aspects of language in naturalistic settings with untrained adults, was inconsistent across the range of studies. In attempting to assess the evidence for effects on children's global language development, Kaiser et al. considered those studies, within the nineteen, which included standardised pre and post intervention measures of child language development. Five studies met this criterion and in each of these there was modest evidence for positive effects. The review by Kaiser, Yoder and Keetz (1992) applied rigorous criteria in assessing the methodologies and the outcomes of these early studies of milieu teaching. The authors present what they describe as a *conservative* conclusion (Kaiser, Yoder & Keetz, 1992, p. 42) that milieu teaching can be a viable and important intervention for developing children's use of language in communicative contexts.

In an early study comparing the efficacy of milieu teaching with the Direct Instruction approach of the Communication Training Programme (Waryas & Stremel-Campbell, 1983), Yoder, Kaiser and Alpert (1991) found differentially positive effects for children who are described in the study as developmentally young. These were children who produced less than one utterance per minute, who initiated less than 18% of their utterances and were intelligible less than 45% of the time. These children showed greater gains on several post intervention measures, including degree of language delay relative to chronological age, mean length of utterance and use of grammatical elements, compared to similar children who were taught through the Direct Instruction approach. This study had a number of methodological strengths. Children were assigned randomly to either milieu teaching or Communication Training Programme groups and language gains were measured in such a way as to control for contextual effects and to assess for generalisation and for effects on global language development. Following the intervention, language samples were collected in non-teaching episode contexts, with untrained staff members, using novel materials. Criterion referenced and standardised tests were also used as pre and post intervention measures of children's competence.

In a study conducted in nineteen ninety five, Yoder and his colleagues (Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995) compared the application of milieu teaching and responsive interaction techniques in classroom settings. This study was intended as a further exploration of the 1991 study where the outcomes suggested that the effectiveness of a particular language teaching approach might depend on the characteristics of the children and the types of language goals selected. In that study, milieu teaching had been more effective than didactic, direct instruction with children who were in the earliest stages of productive language use. The purposes of the nineteen ninety five study were to compare the effects of two naturalistic teaching approaches on a range of global measures of children's language and to identify the specific child characteristics, prior to intervention, that were associated with different treatment outcomes. A third purpose was to investigate the effects of the teaching approaches when they were implemented by teachers, during on-going activities in classrooms, including young children with mild to severe disabilities.

Participants included children and their teachers and classroom instructional assistants from six preschool classrooms enrolling children with mild to severe disabilities. The classrooms varied in their compositions in terms of including or not including children without disabilities, teacher-child ratios and the disability types of the children enrolled. In all, there were forty six children enrolled in the six classrooms. The naturalistic teaching techniques were implemented at class level with three classes receiving milieu teaching and three receiving responsive interaction. The children in these classrooms were between two and seven years old but average levels of performance were between one and four years old in the cognitive and language domains. In these domains, the children's levels of delay ranged from close to typical levels of development to severe delay in development. Random assignment to class and treatment was not possible so thirty six children were selected from the total population using a matched pairs procedure (one child from the milieu intervention paired with one child from the responsive intervention). The matched pairs were constructed on the basis of four pre-test characteristics: all pairs of children were assigned language goals at the same level (one word, two word semantic relations, simple or complex sentence structure); children's mean length of utterance at pre-test were closely matched; paired children's measured (a) expressive and (b) receptive communication ages were within four months of

each other. This matching process resulted in two subgroups of milieu teaching and responsive interaction intervention participants. The intervention was applied to all forty six children with the results being reported for the thirty six matching pairs only. Teachers implemented the teaching procedures in at least three activities per day for four to five days per week over a sixty four school day period. Examples of activities are play sessions, snack time, circle and small group activities. Activities lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes. Children's language outcomes were analysed according to seven variables: mean length of utterance; rate of talking; diversity of expressive vocabulary; two measures of general receptive language levels and two measures of general expressive language levels.

In the post intervention comparison tests, the outcomes show significant gains for language development in both groups on five of the seven variables measured at the pre-and post test periods, i. e. on mean length of utterance and on the four measures of expressive and receptive language. In overall terms, there were no significant differences related to the differing teaching approaches. Group means did not differ significantly for any of the seven variables. However, multiple regression analyses conducted to determine the interaction between pre-test characteristics of the children and the teaching approaches showed that, for children in the earlier stages of language development, milieu teaching was more effective than responsive interaction in developing children's receptive language and expressive vocabulary. By contrast, responsive interaction was more effective in developing these skills in children who began the intervention with relatively high receptive and expressive language levels

The outcomes of this study provide cause for optimism in attempting to identify a repertoire of effective language teaching strategies appropriate to early years settings which include children with a diverse range of abilities. One of the striking features of the study is that the children varied greatly in their developmental levels and in the range of language goals which were specified for them. The study affords important insights into the possibility that children benefit differentially from teaching approaches, depending on current developmental level, and into the need for matching the teaching approaches to the characteristics of the learner. In outlining the outcomes, Yoder and his colleagues claim moderate confidence in

saying that children whose receptive language was less than twenty two to twenty four months, learned more receptive and expressive language through the milieu approach. This outcome is consistent with the findings from their earlier study (Yoder et al., 1991) in which they found that milieu teaching was more effective for children in the early stages of language learning. In the discussion of these findings they make the point that milieu teaching may be particularly useful in supporting vocabulary development and early semantic relations in word combinations because it uses elicited production methods. The useful teaching point here may be that children are asked to say the particular language target rather than simply being required to listen to the language model as in responsive interaction approaches.

Responsive interaction may be less useful at this stage of language development for a number of reasons. This approach relies heavily on recasts and expansions of children's utterances in response to the adult accurately understanding the child's utterance and comprehending the child's meaning intention. When the child is at the single word or pre-linguistic stage, it may be difficult for the adult to identify the child's intended message without the use of prompt questions, as in the milieu approach. Equally, the relatively infrequent talking and, particularly the infrequent initiating, of the child with developmental delay in the early stages of language learning, may provide very little opportunity for the use of recasts and expansions which are the primary strategies in responsive interaction approaches. Prompts for elicited response and for elicited imitation, as in milieu teaching, may increase the frequency of children's utterances and so, increase opportunities for adult response.

An outcome from an earlier study (Yoder & Davies, 1990) is relevant here. In that study, Yoder and Davies found that children who are developmentally delayed, and who are in the early stages of language learning, combine words to continue the established topic more frequently in response to topic related non yes/no adult questions, than in response to any other type of adult utterance. Yoder et al. (1995) make the point that these word combinations are then more likely to result in adult expansions as the child's communicative intent may be more easily recognised.

In their discussion on the effects of responsive interaction, Yoder et al. provide interesting comment on the differences between the outcomes here and the outcomes of their nineteen ninety one study (Yoder, Kaiser & Alpert, 1991). In this study, responsive interaction was more effective than milieu teaching in supporting the language development of more advanced children who were already using multi-word utterances and for whom language targets were focused on building on existing syntactic skills. In the earlier study, it was the Direct Instruction model which was more effective than milieu teaching for the children with these more advanced skills. Yoder et al (1995) suggest that Direct Teaching and responsive interaction may be more supportive of more advanced language learners because, for the child, both approaches provide more opportunities than milieu teaching for noticing comparisons between the child's and the adult's utterance. They suggest that, in didactic teaching, the careful selection and repeated presentation of exemplars may help children to notice the common underlying language rule which the exemplars model. The use of recasts and expansions in responsive interaction may help the child to focus on the syntactic and semantic information that the adult adds to the child's utterance. Additionally, they make the point that verbal and non-verbal prompts, which are central to milieu teaching, are difficult to generate spontaneously while conversing and are not as easily used by teachers when children have command of sentences and are more able conversationalists. In such a context, where, for example, the language target is the use of complex sentences with conjunctions, the adult can teach more easily through a recast or expansion of the child's utterance.

In summarising the outcomes of this research Yoder and his colleagues make the point that no single language teaching approach is likely to be maximally effective for all children. This conclusion echoes those of other studies (Cole, 1995; Yoder, Warren, McCathren & Leew, 1998). Here, Yoder et al. suggest that both milieu teaching and intensive interaction are effective intervention approaches which need to work in tandem in that they may serve children differentially, according to their developmental level or particular target language goals. They make the point also that the study supports the importance of the role of classroom teachers, and teaching assistants, as primary language interventionists. In the study, the language teaching strategies which were implemented by teachers and teaching assistants, throughout the school day, were effective in supporting the language development

of young children with developmental delays. In recent publications (Warren, 2000; Smith, Warren, Yoder & Feurer, 2004), the naturalistic teaching strategies discussed above are described as recommended practice in early intervention settings, including those that are operating various models of inclusion.

In the recent literature, a third approach to language intervention, described as enhanced milieu teaching, (EMT) is emerging (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). This approach combines milieu teaching and responsive interaction in what is described as a blended approach which emphasises the use of the full repertoire of teacher talk strategies in creating a maximally responsive environment. Hancock and Kaiser (2006) report an earlier study (Hancock & Kaiser, 2000) in which they compared EMT and responsive interaction techniques. This study was conducted with seventy three preschool children with significant cognitive and language delays. The children ranged in age from two years six months to six years five months and their IQ range was 40-119. All of the children were in the early stages of language learning with language ages for receptive and expressive skills ranging between twenty four and twenty eight months and expressive vocabularies of ten words. The children were randomly assigned to one of four groups: (i) responsive interaction implemented by a parent; (ii) EMT implemented by a parent; (iii) EMT implemented by a therapist; (iv) a non intervention control group. Parents implementing the interventions are described as Euro-American and having high school education. For the intervention groups, measures were collected during baseline (5-7 sessions); intervention (24 sessions); follow-up (once per month for six months) and home generalisations were conducted pre- and post treatment.

In the outcomes from the study, responsive interaction and EMT as taught by parents and therapists were both effective in teaching language targets during intervention. Positive effects on language development were still in evidence, for all three intervention conditions, six months after the intervention. However, children whose parents delivered the responsive interaction and EMT interventions performed better on measures of productive language, six months after the intervention, than the children who received the EMT intervention from therapists. There were some differences between the two parent implemented interventions

with children in the EMT intervention performing better on measures of productive syntax. However, these differences were not significant.

An interesting outcome from this study is that it did not replicate the findings outlined above (Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Moussetis, Kaczmarek and Fischer, 1995) in which children benefited differentially from the teaching approaches, relative to their more or less immature levels of language development at the beginning of the study. In their discussion of this failure to replicate findings, Hancock and Kaiser (2006) suggest two possible explanations. Firstly, the children enrolled in this later study were a relatively homogenous group in terms of language abilities at the beginning of the study; all ranging between twenty four and twenty eight months in terms of receptive and expressive language age. Secondly, Hancock and Kaiser suggest that the addition of responsive interaction strategies to the milieu techniques, to form the hybrid EMT model, may have reduced critical differences between the two procedures such that the procedures no longer affect children with varied aptitudes differently.

Environments for Dialogue

In outlining the differential and complementary merits of milieu teaching and responsive interaction, and, most recently, the efficacy of combining the strategies from both, the intervention literature consistently focuses on a small set of variables that are identified as constituting optimal environments for highly responsive adult-child interaction. These variables are seen as providing *enabling contexts* (Warren, Yoder & Leew, 2002. p. 130) for effective communication and language learning, regardless of the specific talk strategies which are then used. Equally, they are regarded as essential in creating the responsive environment within which specific intervention strategies, aimed at developing key aspects of communication, may be maximally effective. These variables are: (i) providing an appropriately structured environment, (ii) following the child's attentional lead and responding contingently to the child's topic, (iii) building social routines (Cole, 1995; Warren, 2000; Warren et al., 2002).

The importance of following the child's lead and of adult contingent response has been discussed at length in Chapter 1 of this review and these strategies have been addressed again in this chapter as essential aspects of both milieu teaching and responsive interaction. Arrangement of the environment in which the adult-child dialogue will be conducted is a key consideration in the language intervention literature (Cole, 1995; Warren et al., 2002; Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). The teaching strategies outlined above rely largely on conversations which arise from the child's engagement with the physical setting. This engagement allows opportunities for the teacher to follow the child's expression of interest, to respond contingently to the child's verbal or non verbal communication, and to elicit particular levels of response and model appropriate language forms (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). Critical features of the environment include the materials available to the children and the ways in which these are arranged to stimulate interest and to prompt children to initiate conversation.

The length of time available to children to engage in activities which promote communication and language is also a feature of an appropriately structured environment. For example research with typically developing children has shown that longer play periods (thirty minutes rather than fifteen) result in higher percentages of symbolic play where children adopt roles and act out stories (Christie & Wardle, 1992). Cole (1995) reports an unpublished study by Buchanan (1993) with children with developmental delay, in which Buchanan examined whether children's expressive language increased relative to the length of their play sessions. Children aged between three and six years were assigned randomly to one of two settings: a setting using a direct teaching approach or one using a child - initiated, responsive interaction approach. The play sessions lasted forty minutes. The analysis showed that both groups behaved similarly during the first half of the session but children in the responsive interaction group produced more utterances, longer utterances, and more diverse vocabulary, during the second half of the play session. The study shows an interesting interaction between language facilitation techniques, children's expressive language and different lengths of play periods.

Enhanced Milieu Teaching as Dialogue

The research studies discussed in the foregoing section provide an empirical basis for characterising the facilitative aspects of adult speech to young children as a repertoire of pedagogic strategies and for embedding them in an early years language curriculum. Further, the studies provide an empirical basis for characterising the repertoire as an inclusive range within which the strategies can be modified, and intensified, according to the strengths and needs of the children as language learners.

In a discussion of the theoretical perspectives which inform EMT, Hancock and Kaiser (2006) outline how it is grounded in both behavioural and social interactive perspectives. They identify the compatibilities between these two perspectives and show how they are mutually supportive and how, together, these perspectives can provide a theoretical framework within which procedures from each can be blended to provide an inclusive pedagogy. Essentially the compatibilities lie in the fact that both approaches rely on the social-interaction of dialogue. Both perspectives are grounded in teaching language and communication through adult responses to children's communicative intentions, which provide more elaborated examples of language in use in the social context (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). The behavioural paradigm highlights critical phases of learning: acquisition, generalisation and maintenance, which can pose particular problems for children with significant developmental delays. In the adaptation of the paradigm to naturalistic settings, specific teaching procedures of prompting, modelling and reinforcing, and structured learning opportunities for imitation and repeated practice, can be contextualised across multiple dialogues and activities throughout the school day. Hancock and Kaiser (2006) argue that these procedures can work in tandem with a social-interactionist approach in which the child is an active agent in the construction of meaning and the teaching proceeds through the nature and quality of the adult's response to the child's initiation. Both perspectives are grounded in the premise that language is learned through social-interaction in which adults introduce more complex forms of meaning making, which are contingent on the child's communicative intention. Hancock and Kaiser argue that the differences between the perspectives can be regarded as points on a common continuum, representing language learning in social contexts.

Recent Studies Highlighting Dialogue

Two major studies which have recently been reported (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004) provide further perspectives on, and support for, the role of dialogue as a critical context for learning in an early years curriculum. The Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001) is a longitudinal study of children's progress from age three years through to high school age. The study was conducted with children who were considered to be at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage. Data from the study, relating to the relationship between home environment variables and children's later achievements in language and literacy, were discussed in chapter two of this review.

The Home School study also examined the quality of the preschool experiences of the children, with a particular focus on the nature of adult- child interactions. In reporting findings on the relationship between teachers' talk strategies and children's language outcomes at age four, Dickinson (2001) identifies a responsive style in which teachers listened and followed children's leads, and strategies which questioned for clarification and which commented on and extended and elaborated on children's utterances, as all positively correlated to children's performances on end of kindergarten test measures of Narrative Production; Formal Definitions; Emergent Literacy and Receptive Vocabulary. In commenting on the outcomes of the study, Dickinson stresses the strong evidence for the role of teacher-child conversations in early language and literacy development. He points to the need to develop teachers' awareness of this and also their awareness of the need for what he describes as intentional teaching in this role. This is a conscious and deliberate teaching which focuses on maximal intellectual challenge to the child. It is based in extended conversations requiring complex verbal reasoning, including reasoning about decontextualised topics and events (Dickinson, 2001).

A report (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004) which summarises the findings on pedagogy from two closely related studies of early years provision in England, also highlights the importance of the quality of adult-child interaction in children's learning. The Effective Provision of

Preschool Education study (EPPE) was a five year longitudinal study, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), to assess the impact of preschool education on children's learning. The study followed the progress of approximately three thousand children who were placed in one hundred and forty one preschool settings across England. In addition to the broad range of quantitative and qualitative data collected in the study, twelve preschools were selected as meeting criteria for effectiveness based on child development outcomes, and these preschools were involved in further analysis on a case study basis. The Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years Study (REPEY) built on this case study analysis with classroom observations, interviews and focus group discussions. Two reception classes were added to the original twelve participating centres for the REPEY study.

The findings from the REPEY research suggest that, in the most effective settings, teachers maintained a balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated activities. Commenting on the distinguishing features of these activities, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) distinguish pedagogical interactions (specific behaviours on the part of the adults) from pedagogical framing (the behind the scenes aspects of pedagogy which include, planning, resourcing and establishing of routines). The most effective settings provided a balance between learning opportunities arising from teacher initiated group work and those arising from what they describe as freely chosen, but potentially instructive, play activities.

Whether activities were child or adult initiated, the findings clearly indicate that a defining factor in children's cognitive outcomes was the quality of the adult intervention in extending the child's engagement with, and thinking about, any particular activity. A number of points relating to the nature and quality of adult interventions are relevant here. Firstly, the achievements of particular settings, as evidenced by children's cognitive outcomes, appeared to be directly related to the quantity and quality of the teacher/adult planned and focused group work that was provided. Secondly, positive cognitive outcomes were closely associated with adult-child interactions which were characterised by high and sustained cognitive challenge; what Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva describe as *sustained shared thinking* (p. 720). This mode of adult-child interaction is defined here as the adult and child working together, in an intellectual way, to solve problems, clarify concepts, evaluate activities or to

construct or extend narratives. Thirdly, adult interventions, in child initiated activities, which increased the levels of cognitive challenge through what is described as thematic conversation and instruction, were identified as characteristic of centres evaluated as excellent in the case study evaluations. An analysis of target child observations revealed that what are described as '*critical moments of learning*' (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004, p. 723), when a child's thinking is developed further, were most common in interactions in which the adult extended a child-initiated episode. The observational data show a direct relationship between the proportion of adult-child sustained shared thinking interactions and settings rated as excellent in terms of child outcome. Adult-child interactions in settings rated as good were characterised more by adults monitoring children's activities as opposed to what are described as the active pedagogic styles of adults in excellent settings. Further characteristics of excellence in pedagogic style, derived from observational data, were responsive teaching styles which differentiated curriculum and achieved appropriate match in levels of cognitive challenge to the learner.

The Home School Project (Dickinson, 2001) and the REPEY research project (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004) provide further support for the role of adult-child dialogue as the key process through which early learning is conducted and mediated. Both studies stress the critical role of consciously planned and focused teaching, conducted through extended conversations with individual children and in small group and whole group situations. In keeping with the points made in the previous section, the studies emphasise the role of the teacher in arranging both '*the physical and intellectual environment*' (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004, p. 727) and in allocating sufficient time and providing suitable materials (Dickinson, p. 285) to enable the appropriate levels of cognitive challenge and language use in the dialogue context.

In their discussion on adult-child dialogue, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva identify particular characteristics of the interaction which they suggest constitute effective pedagogy. As outlined already above, they advocate what is described as '*responsive teaching*' (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004, p. 7250) and they describe this as the establishing of shared purpose between the child and adult within a joint activity. This teaching is informed by the

teacher's understanding of the cognitive, social and cultural perspectives of the learner. In turn, this close knowledge of the child as learner, allows the teacher to choose the specific strategies which will provide optimal challenge to the child. Optimal challenge is defined as guiding the child towards the next appropriate level of achievement by providing the supports to allow the child reach that level and by graduating the level of support to allow for, and in accordance with, the child achieving independence in that particular skill or concept. The child is an active contributor to this process, responding to the perceived intentions of the teacher and influencing the teacher's perspective and strategy use. Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva describe this interaction as '*a process of reflexive co-construction*' (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004, p. 720).

This is a direct interpretation of Vygotsky's theory of teaching and learning as a social-constructivist activity and of Vygotsky's notion of effective teaching as teaching directed at the child's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva quote Vygotsky's term and their work is clearly grounded in Vygotskyian theory. Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory of teaching and learning is a unifying feature of the theoretical positions and research studies which have been discussed in this chapter and, in general, in this literature review. It is compatible with a social-interactionist theory of language teaching and learning and it is reflected in many of the theoretical and research perspectives on language teaching and learning which have been discussed in this review. For example, Vygotsky's notion of the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978, p.84) is compatible with Snow's notion of effective language teaching as achieving optimal discrepancy between the adult input and the child's current levels of language comprehension and use (Snow, 1989). Equally, in a study which was discussed at length in an earlier section of this chapter, Painter (1996) references her view of the process of dialogue as the context for language teaching and learning, to Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development. In this she proposes that finely tuned adult utterances provide both the appropriate level of challenge to the child's current level of functioning and the model for the next level of competence which the child must achieve. In the dialogue context also, the adult employs the supportive strategies; prompting, modelling, recasting and expanding which scaffold the child's learning. In his discussion of dialogue in classroom contexts, Mercer (2002) also adopts a

social-constructivist approach which is drawn directly from Vygotskyian theory. In an interpretation of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, Mercer poses a model of shared understanding which he describes as an *Intermental Development Zone* (IDZ) (Mercer, 2002, p.143). Here the task for the teacher is to help the child to advance beyond his /her current level of capability to new levels of understanding.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the Literature Review, an argument has been presented for the use of adult-child dialogue as a critical context for language teaching and learning in an early years setting. The argument is grounded in a social-interactionist approach to language teaching and learning and this, in turn, is referenced to Vygotsky's social-constructivist theory of teaching and learning. It is proposed also that a social-interactionist perspective can be compatible with elements of behaviourist approaches and that adult-child dialogue can be informed by both perspectives. A central point in this argument is that, in dialogue, in naturalistic settings, the adult has the opportunity to embed a range of talk strategies from each of these perspectives. These strategies can be finely tuned to support the child in the construction and communication of meaning at whatever point the child has reached on a continuum of learning. This argument for a range of strategies, which can be modified to meet the needs of the learner, is also presented as an argument for an inclusive pedagogy. A further proposal in the chapter is that in seeking to identify an effective early years pedagogy, the nature and quality of adult-child interaction is a fruitful avenue of research and one that circumvents the traditional patterns of disagreement on the relative importance of child and adult initiated learning.

The concern to embed a range of adult talk strategies in dialogue, and to explore how these strategies can be differentiated to provide an inclusive pedagogy, is a central area of enquiry in this study and is articulated in the second research question which is as follows: Can the facilitative aspects of adult speech support the differentiated needs of children in an early intervention setting, including children with language delay?

The various strands of enquiry in the study have been discussed in the three chapters of the Literature Review and the theoretical viewpoints and research evidence for each have been presented. In the first chapter, the evidence for how adult styles of interaction support young children's language acquisition and development, in the home, in the years from birth until children are approaching school going age was examined and the specific adult talk strategies that facilitate this development were identified. Identification of the facilitative features of adult talk is a prerequisite for addressing the first research question.

The second and third chapters of the Literature Review are concerned with the use of the strategies in teaching a language curriculum. In the second chapter, the discussion on language learning as entry into progressive modes of meaning provides the basis for the use of the strategies to develop children's language at increasing levels of complexity, including the development of their discourse skills. The evidence for individual characteristics and differences, including those related to socio-economic factors, is included here because it supports the case for a continuum of learning and with this, the possibility of differentiating the strategies to match children's characteristics as learners, providing an inclusive repertoire. This is the basis for addressing the second research question. The literature on the relevance of discourse skills and on the strategies which support them is examined in the remainder of the second chapter. This is because both research questions are concerned with the use of the strategies for the development of these skills.

From the evidence of the first two chapters, adult-child dialogue emerges as the context for language teaching and learning; the vehicle for the use of the adult strategies in supporting children's progression through the modes of meaning, including the development of their discourse skills. This provides the basis for the third chapter. Here a case is made for promoting dialogue as the essential context for teaching and learning in early years settings. This case is supported with evidence from the field of early intervention which shows that, in dialogue, facilitative features of adult talk can be differentiated to provide a maximally responsive environment. The evidence from the field of early intervention is central to addressing the second research question. The case for dialogue is relevant to all of the strands of the enquiry.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The study is designed as a qualitative, interactive enquiry into language teaching and learning in an early years setting. It is located within the ethnographic tradition, with participant observation as the technique for the generation of data. In this chapter, conceptual issues influencing the choice of methodology are discussed and the rationale for adopting an ethnographic approach is outlined. In the discussion, participant observation is proposed as the relevant technique for furthering the central focus of enquiry in the study which is the nature and quality of adult-child dialogue.

This chapter also provides a bridge between the discussions in the Literature Review and the presentation of the study. In making that bridge, the methodologies of the studies reported in the Literature Review are discussed in terms of their relevance to this study. It is argued that, in the main, the methodologies are not directly applicable to this study where the focus is the design of pedagogy for an early years setting.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Research in a Specific Practice Context

This study is motivated by the researcher's concern to explore processes in language teaching and learning, as a means of constructing a theory and practice for language pedagogy, in inclusive early years settings. The study is rooted in the specific context of the Early Start early intervention initiative and the researcher has a particular commitment to enhancing quality of language teaching and learning within that programme. There is a further concern to contribute to the quality of language teaching and learning in the wider early years sector.

In this regard, following the formulation by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) on the origins of qualitative research, the study is motivated by issues relating to existing educational practice and is contextualised in practice at a number of levels. It is relevant to practice in the immediate, individual setting in which the study is conducted and to practice in the Early

Start programme which potentially, will be influenced by it. The study is also relevant to the wider context of early years practice which, potentially, will also be influenced by it. From this perspective, a research approach was required which would allow for inquiry into the fine grained aspects of language teaching and learning, as that teaching and learning occurred, in the real life context of the early years setting.

The literature on early childhood research methodologies suggests that ethnography provides the research approach required for studies which are concerned with revealing the fine grained reality of practice (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001; Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). In the literature, it is argued that ethnographic researchers often succeed in getting below the surface of large scale empirical research, to reveal the processes through which individuals and groups create and shape meaning, in a particular social setting (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001).

In the literature on qualitative approaches to research, the central aim of the ethnographer is characterised as the elucidation of what constitutes human meaning in the social context (Erickson, 1986); the interpretation of the subjective world of human experience (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The concern of the ethnographer is to provide a holistic account that includes the views, perspectives, beliefs, intentions and values of the participants in the study (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001). Within early childhood education, this approach has been adopted as a research methodology which affords insight into how children grow in understanding of experience and make sense of the world.

In a discussion on qualitative research in early childhood education, Walsh et al. (1993) describe ethnographic study as striving to understand the meanings that children and teachers construct in their everyday lives. These meanings are constructed in what they describe as *situated actions* (p.465). In defining these, they quote Bruner's (1990) notion of actions as '*situated in a cultural setting, and in the mutually interacting intentional states of the participants*' (p.19). In an ethnographic approach, actions are always defined as behaviour with meaning (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and actions are considered meaningful only to the

extent to which we can interpret the meaning intentions of the actors involved (Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993; Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001).

The reference to Bruner, is particularly useful to the argument for an ethnographic approach being proposed here. Walsh and his colleagues are proposing a face to face interactive approach as a means of interpreting the construction of meaning, as defined by Bruner (1990). Bruner's construct of language acquisition and development as the child's entry into modes of meaning, through adult-child dialogue, is a major influence on the conceptual framework for this study. In this regard, there is a direct compatibility between the view expressed by Walsh et al. (1993) and the approach being advanced here.

This perspective on ethnography as the interpretation of meaning in practice fits the purpose of this study which is concerned with interpreting the ways in which adults and children can use language as a system for the construction of meanings, at various levels of complexity, in a variety of teaching and learning contexts. This study, and the ethnographic approach employed in it, is a tangible working out of Erickson's (1986) proposition that ethnography provides a means for *investigating local meaning, situated in local action: that is, the stuff of life in daily classroom practice* (p. 156). It is concerned with the interpretation of meaning which is constructed through action, situated in the practice of an early years classroom and mediated by the multiple complexities of that particular social setting.

A Constructivist Paradigm

In a discussion on the theoretical principles which underpin research methodologies, Hatch (2002) highlights the need for researchers to identify the underlying sets of assumptions which influence their approaches to research and the outcomes they find. These assumptions turn on fundamental beliefs about the nature of knowledge (ontology), about how knowledge is constructed (epistemology), and about how we gain insight into forms of knowledge (methodology). Drawing from Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and from Guba and Lincoln (1994), Hatch provides various research paradigms as frameworks within which researchers can examine their assumptions and locate their ideas about research approaches. Among these, a constructivist paradigm, as presented by Hatch, is most compatible with the social-

constructivist theory of teaching and learning which informs this study and with the naturalistic, ethnographic approach which is adopted as the research methodology. In Hatch's interpretation, from an epistemological perspective, constructivists assume that researchers and participants join together in the co-construction of reality and, through mutual engagement, construct the subjective knowledge that is under investigation. In terms of methodology, constructivists spend extended periods of time observing participants in their natural settings in an attempt to understand how participants make sense of the world.

In an earlier discussion on the Constructivist Paradigm, Hatch (1995) argues that researchers, acting within this epistemological perspective, are logically bound to the use of qualitative methods designed to reveal how children, and the participants in children's worlds, construct their realities. He describes the role of the qualitative researcher as that of studying *children and others who influence children, in natural contexts, in interaction with other people and objects in their surroundings* (p. 130). A constructivist paradigm is compatible with the theories of teaching and learning which underpin this study and with the ethnographic approach which is adopted for the enquiry.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AS THE PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

With its focus on the interpretation of meaning, an ethnographic approach allows for, and relies on, inquiry into the contextual issues which influence both the conduct and the findings of a research study (Walsh et al., 1993). In this regard, an ethnographic approach is appropriate to the conduct of this study in that it can accommodate the range of contextual issues which impinge on the generation and interpretation of data in an early years setting

A major contextual issue influencing the methodology was the fact that the study was to be conducted by the researcher adopting a teaching role. As a result, there was an imperative to situate the work within a methodological framework which would allow for the generation of data, first hand, in naturalistic settings. Equally, the framework must accommodate to, and must allow for insight into, the experience of teaching and learning amid the complexities of an early years classroom; what McMillan and Schumacher (2001) refer to as the *total*

context, comprising the *social, temporal and spatial relationships* (p.433) operating in the research site. Accordingly, an ethnographic approach was chosen as the methodology best suited to this enquiry with participant observation as the data collection technique.

Among the most pertinent of the complexities operating in the research site are those posed by the varied abilities and needs of the children as language learners. Insights into the differentiated teaching processes which support children's individual language needs are critical to this research. The contextual challenge here was to choose a means of data collection which could be employed variously, and inclusively, at more or less complex levels, to suit the individual participants and the aims of the study. Participant observation allows the researcher to act as both teacher and researcher, adapting and differentiating the teaching strategies to suit both the varied strengths and needs of the children and the purposes of the research.

Adult Child Dialogue as Participant Observation

The rationale for using adult-child dialogue as a context for teaching and learning has been presented in the chapters of the Literature Review. In this chapter, adult-child dialogue is proposed as both the essential context for teaching and learning within the study and as the primary means of generating and collecting relevant data. From a methodological perspective, in this study, adult-child dialogue is conceptualised as a vehicle for what McMillan and Schumacher (2001) describe as *interactive, face to face research* (p. 428) and is therefore proposed as the most appropriate form of participant observation for the subject of enquiry. As a technique for the generation of data, adult-child dialogue is compatible also, in a direct, literal sense, with the view expressed by Walsh, Tobin and Graue (1993) that *meaning sought in inquiry is understood only through dialogue and negotiation between the researcher and the researched* (p. 464).

There is an additional, positive aspect to this conceptualisation of adult-child dialogue as participant observation and as the technique for the generation of data. In both the practice of adult-child dialogue, and in the orientation of this research towards exploration of meaning as constructed between adult and child, the distinction between the researcher and the research

participants becomes less clearly defined. The adult is at once both researcher and researched in that, in her contribution to the dialogue, she is simultaneously constructing meaning and providing data for interpretation. Equally, as the construction of meaning is the stuff of dialogue, the views, ideas, beliefs and values, which constitute that meaning, will emerge, for all of the participants, adult and children, through the dialogue.

In this respect also, adult-child dialogue satisfies a basic focus of ethnographic research which is to provide a holistic account of the views and perspectives, beliefs and values of those involved in the particular socio-cultural practice or context being studied (Siraj-Blatchford & Sraj-Blatchford, 2001). Within this study, it is proposed as providing a valid form of participant observation in the ethnographic tradition and as achieving fitness of purpose with the aims of the research and the focus of the research questions.

DIFFERING METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

One of the interesting paradoxes in the study is that, in the range of literatures which provides the rationale and theoretical and empirical frameworks, only a few studies used qualitative methodologies. The majority of the studies included in the Review of Literature used quantitative methodologies. Of those which provided evidence of the facilitative features of adult speech to young children, a number were longitudinal, employing predictive analysis (e.g. Masur, Flynn & Eichorst, 2005) or correlational analysis techniques (e.g. Dodici, Draper & Peterson, 2003). Others employed randomised group experimental designs (e.g. Girolametto, Verbey & Tannock, 1994).

The evidence for the effective features of adult talk provided by such studies was influential in framing the research questions for the present enquiry. However, from a methodological perspective, these studies were incompatible with the structure of the present one along dimensions of scale (e.g. numbers of participants) and timeframe (e.g. a number continued over a period of years) and, in many cases, the quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis employed, did not provide models for the fine-grained enquiry into adult-child dialogue, which is required here.

A number of the studies from the field of language intervention, reviewed in Chapter 4 of the thesis, provide evidence for effective adult talk strategies and styles of response, in early years settings. This evidence has been critical in informing the rationale and theoretical and empirical frameworks for the present research. However, as with much of the mainstream research in language acquisition and development, the studies are large scale and, in the case of those related to intervention, most employ a randomised intervention and control group design.

One small scale, qualitative study was highly significant for this research and is quoted at length in Chapter 4 of the thesis. This is Painter's study of her child's language development from the time he was two and a half years until he was five years old (Painter, 1996, 1999a, 1999b). The principal significance of Painter's study for the present one is that it affords critical insights into the role of dialogue in language development, and charts how the child's language system develops in response to the demands placed on it by the adult. From a methodological perspective however, her work differs significantly from the present study. Painter's research was conducted at home with her own child. She describes it as a diary study referring to the data collected as samples of the child's *unselfconscious conversational interactions, as they arose in everyday settings* (Painter, 1999b, p.72). The study did not have an explicit pedagogical focus as the present study has. While there are definite points of contact, from a methodological perspective, Painter's work does not provide a replicable model for this enquiry.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined the fact that, from a methodological perspective, none of the studies reported in the Literature Review could provide an exact model appropriate to the purpose and design of the present study. A further difference is the fact that, in many of the studies reported, the participants were mother-child pairs. Notwithstanding the methodological differences between the studies reviewed and the present study, the focus, across all of the literatures examined, was to identify the facilitative features of adult talk to young children and to provide a rationale for the inclusion of these features in an early language curriculum. This approach to language teaching and learning is already strongly represented in the intervention

literature, as discussed in Chapter 4. The aim of this study is to contribute further by exploring whether the facilitative features can constitute an inclusive pedagogy; a pedagogy whose theoretical underpinnings in a social-constructivist theory of teaching and learning, and whose practical application through adult-child dialogue, can provide for differentiation, to meet a range of children's individual strengths and needs, in naturalistic contexts. In this chapter, I have argued for a particular methodological stance as being appropriate to these aims.

While firmly based in the tradition of qualitative research, in methodological terms, the study does not fit easily into a discreet category. It has been argued, legitimately, that it is located in the ethnographic tradition. It can also be described as an interpretative study, as defined by Walsh, Tobin and Graue (1993), and, equally, it can be placed within a constructivist paradigm, as defined by Hatch (2002). None of these positions are opposed to each other. Each is rooted in a qualitative perspective and each is compatible with what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe as the attempt by the qualitative research community to implement a *critical interpretative approach* (p. xiv). Indeed, the term *critical interpretative approach* is posed by Denzin and Lincoln, as an umbrella term under which we can accommodate what they describe as the *competing definitions and conceptions of the field* (p. xi).

In seeking to investigate new pedagogical practices by placing the researcher in a teaching role, this study is innovative, both in the focus of the enquiry, and in the conduct of it. In these respects, it is hoped that the study will contribute new insights into the depth and complexity of teaching and learning in an early years setting and may suggest useful directions for approaches to in-depth, qualitative enquiry; what Hatch (1995) describes as *new and enriched ways* (p. 129) for thinking about social phenomena. In the following chapter, the design of the study and the procedures for the generation of data are outlined. The participants are described and ethical issues about the conduct of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER 6: DESIGN AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with exploring the facilitative aspects of adult speech to young children through the generation of data, first hand, by the researcher in a participant observer role. In the first half of this chapter, the overall context for data collection is described and the design of the study is outlined. Ethical issues about gaining access to the research setting and about the role relationships negotiated by the researcher are discussed. In the second half of the chapter, the procedures for the choice of participants, and for the generation of data, in both phases of the study, are outlined and discussed.

CONTEXT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The data for the study were collected over the course of the school year 2001-2002. During that year I attended one full morning session, each week, in an Early Start classroom, in an Infant School. The school is funded and regulated by the Department of Education and Science. It is situated in a large area of local authority housing, within Dublin's city limits. The Early Start Programme operates what is described as a dual day, where the teacher and child-care worker teach both a morning and an afternoon session to groups of fifteen children. Each session lasts for two and a half hours with a half hour break between sessions. The data for this study were collected during the Thursday morning sessions. A total of 35 morning sessions were attended over the school year.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 extended from my arrival in the Early Start class in early September until the end of that school term in late December. Phase 2 of the study extended from the beginning of January until the end of the school year in late June. In Phase 1, my concern was to develop relationships of trust and collaboration within the research setting and, from within those relationships, to gather baseline data about the children, in preparation for a more explicit teaching role in Phase 2.

The design of the study relied on the researcher gaining access to, and developing relationships with, the children and their teacher and child care worker, in the naturalistic setting of their early years classroom. Before outlining each of the phases of data collection, critical issues relating to my entry into the research setting, and the steps taken to obtain authorisation for the study and permission to work with the participants, are discussed. The ethical considerations attaching to my entry into the research setting and to the conduct of the study are addressed at each of the relevant stages in the discussion.

Gaining Access and Establishing the Research Role

To conduct the study, I needed to enter into an Early Start classroom and to create a teaching role which might vary in degree of interaction and intensity, according to the needs of the study. The challenge here was to negotiate an additional teaching role in a setting in which the class teacher and child-care worker were already in that role and were operating to an agreed plan for teaching and learning and to agreed classroom structures and procedures.

In their discussion of the nature of participant observation roles, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) describe the role I was proposing to adopt as potentially intrusive, close and personal, with the researcher's presence affecting both the social setting and the people in that setting. In these circumstances, the researcher needs to negotiate permission to create the roles necessary for data collection, establishing the research role with each group, or person, involved in the study.

The main participants in the study were the children, their teacher and child-care worker and, in my role of generating data through participation in dialogue, I was also a participant in the research. Permission to conduct the research had been granted by the Principal and Board of Management of the school, in July of 2001. This permission had come through a process of initial informal contacts and discussions with the school Principal and the class teacher and child-care worker, followed by my formal request by letter to the Principal and Board of Management (Appendix A).

In seeking permission to enter into the setting, and in establishing my research role with the professionals already working there, I explained my role as one of exploring approaches to language teaching and learning, through developing my own language teaching strategies, in dialogue with the children. I emphasised that the focus of the enquiry was my interaction with the children and that what I was seeking was permission to adopt this teaching role, along side them, in their setting. We also discussed the fact that, while the children's talk and mine were the focus of the study, my presence would impinge on the nature of their work at a number of levels and in different ways in each of the phases of the study. In this regard, we agreed that their comfort or discomfort with my presence, and the nature of my observations, would have to be an on-going consideration.

While I emphasised the fact that it was my interactions which would be the subject of analysis, I did point up the likelihood that there would be occasions when all three adults would be contributing to the adult-child dialogue, for example in whole group contexts. I asked whether we might keep open the possibility that, as the study progressed, they might be willing to have examples of these interactions with the children included in the analysis. It was agreed that we would make these judgements as the data emerged.

These negotiations were imperative from an ethical viewpoint. The study could only proceed in a context in which the teacher and child-care worker were, as far as possible, acquainted with the intentions of the researcher, and were in a position to give informed consent about interactions in their classroom. In their discussion on the effects of the researcher on the context of a study, Graue and Walsh (1995) highlight the fact that the researcher brings a particular world view and particular perspectives which will influence every aspect of the research, including how relationships are developed with participants. In their view, good interpretative research addresses the gaps between the researcher's perspectives and those of the participants. In this study, the possibility of achieving shared perspectives with the professionals working in the research setting was strengthened by the fact that a good deal of common ground already existed between all concerned. A number of goals and perspectives were already shared in that all were committed to the principles and objectives of the Early

Start Programme and all shared knowledge of the approaches to teaching and learning advocated within the Programme.

One of the central considerations in negotiating the conduct of the study was how to locate the content of my weekly episodes of teaching within the on-going planning and teaching of the Early Start curriculum by the teacher and child-care worker. In these discussions, the primary concerns were the ethical considerations of ensuring the children's well being and ensuring the compatibility of focus in meeting their learning needs and enabling their progress. We agreed on the need for close collaboration to ensure continuity and compatibility of focus, in relation to language teaching and learning, and in order to locate my teaching in the programme, in as seamless a fashion as possible. We agreed on a number of ways in which we might communicate and harmonise our mutual plans for teaching and learning during the study.

From my initial contact, the teacher's and child-care worker's responses were wholly positive towards, and supportive of, the research project. Each expressed a professional commitment to the aims of Early Start and a willingness to support a project which might enhance practice within the programme and might contribute to its effectiveness. They were concerned to accommodate to the needs I expressed in relation to the aims and conduct of the study and they made several suggestions as to how these might be met. They agreed without hesitation to allow me to observe the adult-child interactions required in Phase 1 of the study and suggested ways in which, during this phase, I might begin to assume a teaching role. We discussed how the baseline data could be collected in Phase 1 while maintaining the structure of the day and the usual activities available to the children. We also planned how I might structure the work with individuals and with small groups of children in Phase 2 of the study.

Notwithstanding the professional commitment of the teacher and child-care worker to the research project, their generosity towards it, and their concern to accommodate me in every way, they did not underestimate the challenges involved in including a third adult in a teaching role. In discussing these concerns together, we agreed that we were embarking on an innovative process together, one whose unfolding could only be partially imagined in

advance and in which communication and consultation on our individual, developing perspectives, would be critical. We agreed also that the children's well-being and the work with them would be paramount and that the stability of the class would take precedence over the needs of the study.

Relationships with Parents

The consent of the children's parents was a critically important element in the range of permissions necessary to conducting the research. I sought parental permission on two occasions, for two levels of engagement with the children. Firstly, in September, I met the parents as a group. This meeting was arranged through the class teacher and child-care worker and with the assistance of the Principal and Home School Community Liaison Teacher. At this meeting, I explained the purpose of the research and the nature of my intended role in interacting with the children over the following months. I requested permission to work with their children and to make audio and video tapes of teaching sessions. The parents were assured that their children's real names would not be used in the transcripts that would be analysed and included in the thesis and that the tapes would be used exclusively for the purposes of the study and thereafter for teaching purposes.

In November, parents were asked for permission to include their child as one of a group of nine whose talk would be the subject of more in-depth analysis than that of the larger group. On this occasion, I arranged to meet the parent(s) of the children in question. I explained my reasons for including their child in this group and gave the parent(s) a letter asking for written permission to include the child in the study (Appendix B). This letter of consent also included permission to carry out a formal assessment of the child, to make audio and video tapes of me teaching the child and to use these for the purposes of the study and for teaching purposes. I asked these parents to consider the matter over a number of days and to return the letter to either the class teacher or child-care worker.

At each of the meetings, parents were reminded of their right to withhold consent either to have me interact with their child during classroom activities and routines or to have their child included in the smaller group of participants in Phase 2. They were assured that, in such

circumstances, their child would continue in the Early Start programme and would receive all the usual attentions from the class teacher and child-care worker. They were told also that should they wish to convey reservations or concerns, in a private manner, they could speak to either the class teacher or child-care worker in the days following this meeting. They were assured also that they could have ready access to recordings of talk, involving their child, and that they could withdraw consent, express concerns, or seek consultations, at any time over the course of the study.

Experience of working in areas of socio-economic disadvantage alerts teachers and researchers to the possibility of parents feeling disempowered in their relationships with professionals who represent the education system. The literature on research methodologies also highlights this concern and points to the responsibilities of researchers in relation to the inequities of power which exist between themselves and the research participants (Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). I was aware of these considerations and every effort was made to build an authentic relationship with parents in the meetings that were held and in my informal contact with parents during the course of the study.

Parents expressed interest in, and support for, the study at each of these consultation stages. Following the initial meetings, efforts were made to facilitate parents in talking about the study as it progressed. I was present in the setting as parents and children arrived and departed each Thursdays. As my relationship with parents developed, there was an opportunity for me to engage, along with the teacher and child-care worker, in informal conversations with parents about their child and about the progress of the work.

Relationships with the Children

In their discussions on conducting research with young children, Graue and Walsh (1995) make the point that, more than any other type of interpretative research, fieldwork with young children depends on the quality of the relationship developed between researcher and participants. In their view, the goal of the researcher should be to help children incorporate the researcher into their worlds. In Phase 1 of the study, my primary concern in relation to the children was to build a relationship of trust. I was anxious to help them to feel secure

about my presence in their classroom and to enable them to enjoy interacting with me as a third, supportive and stimulating adult in their setting. In this phase of the study, this relationship was a prerequisite to the observations and interactions from which I would gather the baseline data on the children's levels of functioning in the areas of communication and language which were the focus of the study. This data would inform the teaching in Phase 2 and the selection of the group of children who would become the participants in the small group teaching contexts.

The existing structure of the Early Start day provided well for the range of contexts I required to conduct the study. The two and a half hour session was structured in terms of a series of whole and small group and individual activities. The day began with whole group circle time when adults and children conversed together, sharing news and information about events and objects and planning and choosing the small group activities that would follow. For the small group activities, a range of play choices were available to the children. Both adults engaged with the children in these activities, working with small groups or with individuals and sharing their teaching time variously, between the children, according to the agreed plan for that day. During these small group play activities, some children worked independently in groups or individually, for some periods of time, until the adult completed work with a particular group and moved to join them. These activities were followed by another whole group time when the children recalled the play activities, prepared for lunch and sat together to eat. Following lunch, the morning ended with whole group story and preparation to meet parents.

In the beginning of the first term, my participation at whole group level was as a visitor who was asking to be allowed to join the group, and to listen and respond to the teacher and childcare worker with the children. The consent requested from the children was that I be allowed to sit with them, in their circle. During these early days, all of the adults remained vigilant for signs of concern or upset about my presence. While there were no obvious signs or expressions of anxiety, children whose silence might have indicated discomfort with my presence were immediately reassured by the teacher or childcare worker moving to sit with them. As the children grew used to my visits, invitations to sit with them were offered

spontaneously and many children expressed a welcome and initiated conversation. Of those who were more reticent during the early weeks of my presence, no child ever kept a distinct distance from me or showed any obvious unwillingness to be included in the group when I was present.

When the small group and individual work was in progress, my role, usually, was to ask a child or small group of children who were working without an adult, whether I might join in their play activity. There were also opportunities for children to join me. This behaviour required sensitivity to the children's fragility or robustness. While there were a few children who would respond with a clear no, or who would tell me directly that they wanted to play with their teacher, for other children, careful monitoring was required for accurate interpretation of their responses. Lack of positive gestures or verbal response from a child, failure to engage following an attempt at sensitive persuasion, or moving off to another activity, were all interpreted as signalling lack of consent. As the children grew familiar with my presence and as our relationship developed, all of them engaged willingly with me on a sufficient number of occasions to allow for collection of the data which I required to proceed to the next phase of the study.

Choosing the Small Group Participants: Considerations and Concerns

There were two major considerations in Phase 1 of the study. The first of these was to establish relationships with the participants and to agree a procedure for both the conduct of the study and for my dual role as teacher and researcher. The second consideration was to choose the group of children who would become the participants in the small group teaching contexts in Phase 2.

The purpose of data collection in Phase 1 was to identify this group of children from within the fifteen members of the class. The concern here was to choose a group whose language competence would reflect the range of strengths and needs among the children. In Phase 2 of the study, these children would be participants with me in the small group teaching and learning contexts in which the range of dialogue strategies would be explored.

In Phase 2 also, children from this small group, sometimes as individuals, sometimes in pairs, would report back to the remaining members of the class, in a whole group context, narrating and explaining the events and ideas we had created in our small group play. In reporting back to the whole group, the children who were participants in the small group contexts would be considered as being in the role of presenters while the remaining children in the class, who were receiving the information, would be considered to be in the role of an audience.

This whole group context for reporting back would offer further opportunities for the exploration of strategies for language teaching and learning, together with the opportunity to widen the focus of data collection. The further explorations in language development would come from the use of teaching strategies to support the monologue skills of the small group presenters and, additionally, from the use of strategies to support the audience, in engaging in dialogue with the presenters about their topics. The possibility of widening the focus of data collection would come from the opportunity, offered by the whole group context, to go beyond the focus on the small group participants and to include the talk of other children in the class.

The composition of the group of participants for the small group contexts was decided through consultation with the teacher and childcare worker and as a result of my observations and interactions, in Phase 1. The composition of the group could be described as an example of purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Here information is first gathered on the variations in competence among a group of potential participants. The researcher then looks within the group for *information-rich key informants* (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 401). My concern, in relation to choice of participants, was to include children whose language competence would reflect the range of levels of competence, from greatest need to greatest strength, within the wider class group. This would allow for the exploration of the teaching strategies at varying levels of differentiation, along a continuum of strength and need.

All of the children in the class were participants in an early intervention programme which had an explicit aim of including the children who were considered to be the most vulnerable

in the community. The teacher and child-care worker already had serious concerns for one boy who appeared to be non-verbal and who was relying on gestures and sounds for communication. Two other children were identified as having serious articulation difficulties, making their talk unintelligible in most instances. Equally, a number of children were identified as able communicators.

During the early weeks of the study, I observed and interacted with the children in whole group, small group and individual contexts and initial baseline information was collected in a number of forms. Samples of children's talk were recorded and analysed, field notes were made recording children's behaviours during interactions, and levels of competence were compared to indicators on the Early Start Beginning of Year Profile of Language Development. This profile instrument, and an end of year profile, was developed by the Early Start In-Career Development team (1998) in consultation with the Early Start personnel as part of the curriculum development process which began in 1998. The profiles were constructed to assist teachers and child-care workers in developing techniques of dynamic assessment for teaching and learning. They include all of the elements of language: grammar (including phonology), semantics and pragmatics. Within the profiles, these elements are articulated as listener/speaker competence (including eye contact, turn taking, levels of engagement with topic, audibility, articulation), sentence structure and knowledge of vocabulary (grammar and semantics) and use of language for a range of purposes (pragmatics). Each profile provides a number of indicators of competence in each of these areas of language development (Appendix C).

From my observations of, and interactions with, the children, using the Beginning of Year Profile as a guide, it was clear that they were exhibiting a wide range of competences and needs and that this range could be represented in the construction of a smaller group of participants. All of the children were willing to engage with the adult in conversation on a topic, as would be expected for this age group. However, from this basic level of competence, there were variations in individual ability in knowledge and use of vocabulary and some variations in command of sentence structure.

As identified by the teacher and child-care worker, three of the children were exhibiting expressive language delay with one of these children having fewer than ten words in his expressive vocabulary and another two having serious articulation difficulties. Articulation difficulties were further compounded by problems with sentence structure, in the case of one of these children. The preliminary observations and profiling suggested that, when engaged by the adult, the majority of the children could draw on a basic store of vocabulary and basic sentence structure, to talk about first hand experience. A small number of the children combined sentences, or used extended sentences, when offering information and these children were also more explicit in their use of basic vocabulary. They were noticeable also for their willingness to engage the adult in conversation and for their ability to communicate clearly about needs and interests related to the classroom routine.

However, a number of the children were not inclined to engage any of the adults in conversation and these children had less of the basic store of vocabulary and lacked fluency in grammar, even when engaged by the adult in talk about first hand, classroom experience. Even among the most articulate of the children, there was very little evidence of what has been defined in the Literature Review as sophisticated vocabulary. Equally, these children were not inclined to elaborate at any length or to use language for more complex purposes, for example to describe the play scenes they had constructed or to explain the play roles they were adopting.

Through the combined processes of consultation with the teacher and childcare worker and my observations and profiling, nine children were chosen as the small group participants. The group included the three children who were identified as having the most serious language needs. The remaining six children were identified as representing a range of levels of competence including three children who were perceived to be among the most able communicators in the group.

While meeting the requirements of the study by including children with the range of competencies and needs was a clear consideration in deciding the composition of the group, the inclusion of the children with the greatest need would have been a prior consideration for

ethical reasons. In circumstances where a research study exploring strategies for language development was to be conducted in this class, there would be an ethical imperative to include the children with the most serious language delay and difficulties. In relation to the other six children who were included, other members of the class of fifteen would have been equally eligible to become participants in the small group context. That is, other children in the group appeared to be showing similar levels of competence. In choosing between these potential participants, factors for consideration were: the need to represent the age range within the group by including the oldest and youngest children, concern for gender balance, and the need to include children who were perceived to be robust enough to work with a new adult whom they would meet only once a week.

In considering the needs and feelings of the children who were not to be included in the small group contexts, a number of points were discussed with the teacher and child-care worker. In relation to their learning needs, I was satisfied that the children were receiving a high quality intervention by virtue of their inclusion in this Early Start class. A number of the strategies I was intending to implement were drawn from and were an extension of existing practice in Early Start. Also, as outlined above, the whole group contexts would allow opportunities for these children to be exposed to similar strategies to those I would be using with the small group participants.

The possibility that some children might experience feelings of rejection because of not being included in the small group contexts was discussed. Here the decision was that I would remain flexible about including other children in the group from time to time and would regularly include those children who continually requested that they be included.

Participants

In November of Phase 1, nine children, five girls and four boys, were chosen to be the small group participants for Phase Two of the study. As events transpired, early in Phase Two, this group of nine was reduced to eight. The attendance of one of the children was such that he was absent for five of the eight visits I made to the class between January and March. In effect, this meant that he was excluded from the small group contexts. This child was one of

the three who was considered to have significant language difficulties. During this time, he was attending school sporadically with long periods of absence. In consultation with the teacher and childcare worker, it was decided that this boy's pattern of attendance meant that, when he was present, his time would be most profitably spent renewing and consolidating his relationships with those adults who were the constant presences in the classroom.

The final eight children who were included as the small group participants were Aisling (3;4) Jennie (4;1), Nessa (3;9), Cathy (3;2), Karen (3;4), Chris (3;2), Kevin (4;2) and Tom (4;1). To build on the information I had collected through observation and use of the Early Start Profile, I conducted formal language assessments with these children in November and December of Phase 1 of the study. The ages given in brackets above are the children's ages in years and completed months on the date of testing. The language assessment used was the K-SEALS: Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1993). This test was developed in the United States and was standardised on a representative, national sample of 1,000 children aged 3 years 0 months to 6 years 11 months. This test was administered to seven of the eight children. It was not administered to Tom as the observations and profiling suggested his language was at an earlier stage of development. As no appropriate test at Tom's age level was available, the First Words Test, First Words Parent Checklist and First Words Comprehension Screen (Gillham & Boyle, 1997) were chosen as a way of obtaining information on Tom's levels of expressive and receptive vocabulary. This group of tests was standardised on a population of British children. In the absence of appropriate Irish norm-referenced assessments, the results from the tests administered give useful indications of the children's levels of competence in the areas of language assessed.

Table 6.1 Children's Scores on the K-SEALS Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills

| NAMES AND CHRONOLOGICAL AGES | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Nessa (3;9) | Aisling (3;4) | Jennie (4;1) | Chris (3;2) | Kevin (4;2) | Karen (3;4) | Cathy (3;3) |
| VOCABULARY | | | | | | | |
| Raw Score | 27 | 25 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 22 | 14 |
| Stand. Score | 109 | 111 | 99 | 109 | 92 | 102 | 84 |
| Confidence Int. | 101-116 | 102-119 | 92-106 | 101-117 | 85-100 | 93-110 | 76-93 |
| Percentile Rank | 73 (53-86) | 77 (53-86) | 47 (30-66) | 73 (50-87) | 30 (16-50) | 55 (32-75) | 14 (5-32) |
| Descriptive Category | Average | Above Average | Average | Average | Average (lower end of category) | Average | Below Average |
| Stanine | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Age Equiv. | 4;6 | 4;2 | 4;2 | 3;10 | 3;8 | 3;8 | 2;7 |
| ARTICULATION | | | | | | | |
| Articulation Survey | 20 | 20 | 20 | 14 | 15 | 19 | 4 |
| Descriptive Category | Normal | Normal | Normal | Normal | Normal | Normal | Below Average |
| EXPRESSIVE SKILLS | | | | | | | |
| Raw Score | 14 | 16 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 8 |
| Standard Score | 99 | 117 | 92 | 111 | 86 | 106 | 86 |
| Confidence Interval | 91-107 | 107-125 | 85-100 | 102-119 | 79-94 | 97-114 | 78-96 |
| Percentile Rank | 47 (27-68) | 87 (68-95) | 30 (16-50) | 77 (55-90) | 18 (8-34) | 66 (42-82) | 18 (7-39) |
| Descriptive Category | Average | Above Average | Average | Above Average | Below Average | Average | Below Average |
| Stanine | 5 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Age Equiv | 3;10 | 4;3 | 3;8 | 3;8 | 3;3 | 3;8 | 2;8 |
| RECEPTIVE SKILLS | | | | | | | |
| Raw Score | 20 | 17 | 17 | 16 | 18 | 16 | 10 |
| Standard Score | 104 | 103 | 93 | 102 | 95 | 100 | 84 |
| Confidence Interval | 95-112 | 95-110 | 86-101 | 94-110 | 88-103 | 92-108 | 77-93 |
| Percentile Rank | 61 (37-79) | 58 (37-75) | 32 (18-53) | 55 (34-75) | 37 (21-58) | 50 (30-70) | 14 (6-30) |
| Descriptive Category | Average | Average | Average | Average | Average | Average | Below Average |
| Stanine | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Age Equiv | 4;1 | 3;7 | 3;7 | 3;5 | 3;9 | 3;5 | 2;7 |

The children's scores on the K-SEALS language assessment are presented in Table 6.1. These scores are useful indicators of the children's strengths on norm-referenced tests of vocabulary, articulation, and expressive and receptive language skills. Of the seven children who were tested on the KSEALS, based on standard scores and percentile rankings, two of the children, Aisling and Chris, were placed in the *above average* category on two and one of the subtests respectively and in the *average* category otherwise. Three children, Nessa, Jennie and Karen were placed in the descriptive category *average* on all of the subtests. Kevin was placed in the *average* category on two and in the *below average* category on one of the subtests and Cathy was placed in the *below average* category on all of the subtests.

The test scores also give an indication of the diversity of strengths and needs within the group of seven children who were tested on the KSEALS. Nessa, Aisling and Chris were the highest scorers on the vocabulary subscale, each scoring in the seventies for percentile rank, and, with the exception of Nessa's score on the expressive skills subscale, these children were the highest scorers on each of the remaining subtests. Aisling had the highest scores overall and she and Chris both scored in the *above average* descriptive category for the expressive skills subtest with percentile rankings of eighty seven and seventy seven respectively. Cathy's scores place her in the *below average* descriptive category on each of the subtests, with percentile rankings of 14, 18, and 14 on the subtests for vocabulary, expressive skills and receptive skills and a below average articulation score. Between the three highest scoring children and Cathy whose scores are lowest, Jennie, Kevin and Karen received standard scores and percentile rankings which place them in the *average to lower end of average* categories, in the main, with a *below average* category on one subtest in Kevin's case.

In response to Cathy's scores on the K-SEALS, I tested her on The First Words Test (Gillham & Boyle, 1997), which is a test of expressive vocabulary, standardised for children aged between eighteen and thirty six months. On this test, Cathy achieved a score which placed her at or above the 50th percentile for a child aged thirty two months. On the First Sentences Test for children aged between twenty four and thirty six months, (Gillham & Boyle, 1997), where she was required to describe what was happening in a series of

illustrations, out of a possible twelve responses, eight of Cathy's could be scored as *appropriate and meaningful* (Gillham & Boyle, 1997, First Sentences Test: Record Form B). Of these, six were three word sentences and two were four word sentences. An example of Cathy's four word sentence is where, in response to an illustration of a child blowing out candles, she said, *The bey go whoo* (The boy goes whoo) and in a three word utterance, in response to an illustration of a mother washing a girl's hair, Cathy said, *watch the hair* (wash the hair). On this test, these responses would be assessed as being in a category of severe delay for a child aged thirty six months. In an informal interview with Cathy's mother, her view was that Cathy's speech was mostly at a three and four word level and that, at this level, she understood Cathy most of the time. She said that Cathy did use some five word utterances but that these were difficult to understand.

In November of Phase 1 of the study, Tom was aged four years one month. On the First Words Test (Gillham & Boyle, 1997), which I administered to him in November, he achieved a raw score of nineteen which placed him at or below the 5th percentile for a child aged thirty months. On the First Words Parent Checklist from that test, which was completed during an informal interview with Tom's mother, Tom achieved a score which placed him just above the 10th percentile for a child aged twenty four months. On the First Words Comprehension Screen from the same test (Gillham & Boyle, 1997), he achieved a raw score of seventeen out of a possible nineteen. This score placed him in the range described as at the 15th percentile and above, for children aged between twenty two and thirty months where the ranges given were, below the 5th percentile, 5th percentile, 10th percentile and 15th percentile and above.

The children's achievement scores on the standardised tests of language development indicate the range of strengths and needs among the eight small group participants. Tom and Cathy were exhibiting significant levels of language delay relative to their chronological ages. For the remaining six children, the KSEAL scores show three of the children, Aisling, Nessa, and Chris, in the average to upper end of average category with Chris and Aisling scoring in the above average category for one and two subsets respectively. The remaining three children, Jennie, Kevin and Karen are placed in the lower end of the average categories for all three subsets. Together, the children were an appropriate group of participants with

which to explore the range of teaching strategies and their differentiation to match the characteristics of children with a variety of learning needs.

GENERATION OF DATA IN PHASE ONE

When the children who were to be the participants in the small group were selected, I continued to look for information on their levels of language competence until the end of Phase 1 of the study, in December of the school year. Using the Early Start profiles as a reference guide, data were generated in a variety of conversational contexts. These were conversations during whole group story time and lunch time, small group conversations based on picture storybooks and puppets, small group conversations during play with blocks, with play-dough and in the home corner, and conversations with individual children based on picture storybooks and in play contexts. These contexts were both adult and child initiated. Adult initiated contexts included story, circle time, and small group contexts which were constructed deliberately to provide insights into children's knowledge of listener-speaker relationships, sentence structure, vocabulary and language use. Child initiated contexts included play with blocks, with play-dough and in the Home Corner. In these contexts, I joined the children to converse with them for the same assessment purpose.

The adult initiated small group contexts, which could include up to four children, were deliberately constructed to include members of the group of eight children whose language was a particular focus. The child initiated contexts afforded opportunities for me to join these children as they played individually, together in pairs or small groups, or with other members of the wider class group. My inclusion in these contexts resulted either from an invitation to me from the children or a request from me to be allowed to join in their play. For Cathy and Tom, I structured a number of contexts in which I could talk with them, individually, and, where possible, I availed of opportunities to join each of them in play contexts which they had initiated.

These conversations were recorded and transcribed for analysis. In addition, the Early Start Beginning of Year Language Profile was completed for each of the eight children. The data

generated through conversation with the children and through profiling, were augmented by the data obtained from the administration of the standardised tests described above.

GENERATION OF DATA IN PHASE 2

Phase 2 of the study extended from January 2002 to June 2002 during which period I made 17 visits to the Early Start classroom. In this phase of the study, in keeping with the research questions, I was concerned with generating data on the development of children's language competences through the use of a range of differentiated teaching strategies. Adult child dialogue was both my teaching strategy and my primary technique for data collection. This dual strategy was to be used first in small group and individual contexts with members of the group of eight children who are described above. Secondly, the strategy was to be used in whole class group contexts in which the small group participants would act in the role of presenters to the remaining class of children.

Small Group and Individual Contexts

The small group and individual work was carried out during class small group activities time. As the children and adults discussed the range of options available for small group activity time, the group or individual child with whom I hoped to work was invited to play with me. One of my primary concerns was to allow sufficient time with each of the individuals and small group participants to generate the data required for the study. The small group activity time allowed for at least two activities. Accordingly, my usual plan was to work with at least one group of three or four children, and individually, with either Cathy or Tom, on each visit, alternating between the groups and between Cathy and Tom, each week. Frequently, there were occasions when it was possible to include a third activity. Here I decided variously how to use the time, depending on concerns for the needs of individual children, on a concern to develop a particular topic with a particular group, or, on the circumstances pertaining on the day.

Notwithstanding my concern to give adequate attention to working with all of the eight children, there were, of necessity, additional factors which influenced the conduct of the small group and individual contexts. For example, while absenteeism was not a serious factor

for the remaining eight children in the group, children were absent for some of my visits. Equally, there were a few occasions when members of the group expressed a preference to work with their teacher or childcare worker rather than with me. Together with these intermittent uncertainties, there was the constant concern to give adequate attention to Cathy and Tom as the children with the greatest levels of language delay and difficulty. On occasions when children were unavailable, the sequence of the work or the composition of the groups was rearranged. During Phase 2 of the study, I worked with the group of eight children in small group and individual contexts as described above, on 17 occasions. The data were recorded initially using audio and later using video recorders.

Whole Group Contexts

The whole group contexts in which data were generated were circle time which occurred first thing in the morning, recall time which occurred immediately following small group activity time, and story time which was the final session of the morning. Recall time was the context in which I supported members of the group of eight, to engage in monologue style presentations about the activities we had engaged in, and the narratives we had created, during the small group and individual activities. In Phase 2 of the study, during these sessions, I took the lead teaching role. The teacher and child-care worker sat in the circle with the children and contributed to the topic, supporting me and the children.

In this context, I was interested in generating data from two sources. Firstly, I was concerned with exploring the teaching strategies which would support the monologue skills of the children who were reporting on the outcomes of their earlier dialogues with me. Secondly, I was interested in exploring the kinds of dialogues which the children who were receiving this information would enter into with the presenters.

Initially, the talk that was generated during these recall sessions was recorded on audio tape. This talk included the contributions of the teacher and childcare worker and this had been agreed in Phase 1 of the study. As we progressed through Phase 2 of the study, the teacher and childcare worker suggested that these sessions should be video taped. This was

something we had discussed as a possibility for Phase 2 and had agreed would be considered, as the process unfolded.

The other whole group contexts in which data were generated were circle time and story time. During circle time, the teacher was in the lead role and my role and the role of the childcare worker was to sit with the children in the circle and to add to the dialogue, supporting the teacher and the children.

The story session was the final one of the morning and here I was usually in the lead role with the teacher and childcare worker in the support roles. Data from both the circle time contexts and the story contexts were recorded, initially on audio tape, and on video also, in the second half of Phase 2 of the study.

Diary notes which were kept by the class teacher were another source of insight into the children's language development during the weeks of Phase 2 of the study. These were notes documenting and reflecting on significant aspects of the language use of the eight small group participants, on days other than the day of my visit. The data generated in the small group, individual and whole group contexts, were also influenced by my prior planning and by the plans of the class teacher. These plans were documented throughout Phase 2 of the study.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the design of the study has been outlined and a range of ethical issues about the conduct of research with young children in context, have been discussed. The procedures for the choice of participants have been outlined and the methods through which data were generated in both phases of the study have been discussed. In the following chapter, the analysis of the data in each of the two phases of the study is described. The categories and codes for analysis are explained and provided and the organisation of the data in Phase Two of the study is described.

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of a range of adult talk strategies in supporting children's acquisition of the language system and in developing their use of that system, at particular levels of complexity, with specific emphasis on their abilities to construct narratives and explanations. Data were generated and collected in two phases of the study. In this chapter, the focus for data analysis and the methods of data analysis in both phases of the study are outlined. The organisation of the data for analysis, in Phase 2 of the study, is also described.

DATA ANALYSIS IN PHASE 1 OF THE STUDY

The purpose of data collection in Phase 1 of the study was to establish baseline information on the existing levels of language competence of the eight small group participants. The data from this phase of the study afford insights into these children's knowledge and use of the language system in Phase 1 of the study, including insights into their existing skills in the use of narratives and explanations.

Focus of the Analysis

In Phase 1 of the study, the children's talk was analysed for evidence of competence in Listener-Speaker Relationship, Meaning Content, Sentence Structure and Language Use. In acquiring the language system, children have to acquire the elements of language: grammar, phonology, semantics and pragmatics. They have to understand and use language as a structured, rule governed system of sound sequences, as a meaning system constructed through the use of explicitly chosen words and combinations of words, and as a communicative system, relying on particular conventions such as audibility and clear articulation, and relying also on knowledge of how to adjust one's talk, to ensure understanding of purpose and intent, in any particular social context.

These elements or components include both the receptive and expressive dimensions of language. They are interactive and are integrated in speech utterances.

The interactive and interdependent nature of the elements or components of the language system has been characterised in models of language acquisition as interaction between the *structure* or *form* of the language including the phonology or sound system, the meaning *content* of the language and the pragmatic *use* of language (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Wiig & Semel, 1984; Cole, 1995). This conceptualisation of language in terms of *structure*, *content*, and *use*, provides a useful way of describing and analysing acquisition of the language system within a curriculum.

The Early Start curriculum focuses on the development of the child as a creator and communicator of meaning, acquiring and using the language system to engage with meaning at increasing levels of complexity. In relation to planning, teaching, and monitoring children's acquisition of the system, the Early Start curriculum articulates language acquisition as outlined above. That is, it outlines statements of desired learning outcomes and provides guidelines for teaching and learning contexts through which children will be enabled to develop knowledge and use of the grammatical structure of the language, knowledge and use of the meaning carrying vocabulary of the language and knowledge and use of language for a range of purposes.

In language use, which includes all of the pragmatic aspects of language, it is possible to focus on the children's competencies as listeners and speakers. That is, it is possible to develop their understanding and use of the conventions of communication including appreciation of meaning intention in particular social contexts, turn taking, sincerity of communicative intent and purpose. In the Early Start curriculum, these aspects of language use, which have to do with the development of communicative competence, have been characterised as knowledge of the Listener-Speaker relationship. This has been included, as an additional element or, component, in language teaching and learning in Early Start. Within the Listener-Speaker component also, it is possible to include a focus on aspects of the phonology of the language which impinge on communicative competence. Such aspects include audibility and articulation.

Codes for Analysis

Within the Early Start Beginning and End of Year Profiles, the elements of language are articulated as listener-speaker competence (including eye contact, turn taking, levels of engagement with topic, audibility, articulation), sentence structure and knowledge of vocabulary (grammar and semantics) and use of language for a range of purposes (pragmatics). The profiles provide a number of indicators of competence in each of these areas of language development (Appendix C). The indicators focus on both the receptive and expressive dimensions of language and they are grounded in a view of language acquisition and development as constructed through conversation, in the social context.

In Phase 1 of the study, the Early Start Beginning of Year Profile was used as a guide to interpreting children’s competencies in the elements of language and as a way of coding this competence in their utterances. To allow for the management of coding, the profile indicators were grouped according to the language element they represent. In this grouping the indicators for Meaning Content and Sentence Structure were combined. Each group was then collapsed into a set of codes for the element(s). Table 7.1 shows the elements of language (with Meaning Content and Sentence Structure shown together), the ways in which the indicators are grouped, according to the element(s) and the sets of codes, and their abbreviations, which were derived from each group.

The Early Start profile does not include an indicator for assessing children’s use of narration and explanation. These skills were to be an explicit focus for the strategy use in Phase 2 of the study. In Phase 1, it was important to assess the extent to which skills of narration and explanation were already in place for the children. Accordingly, the code Narrate/Explain (n/e) was added for the analysis of Language Use. This code is included under Language Use, in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Elements of Language, Indicators and Codes

| Element of Language | Indicators | Codes and Abbreviations |
|--|--|--|
| Listener/Speaker Skills | Give/keep eye contact | Turn Taking (tt) Attends (att) Speaks to Topic (spkt) Speech Clear (spcl) Speech Immature (spimm) |
| | Show interest in talking to an adult | |
| | Initiate conversation with adults | |
| | Initiate conversation with other children | |
| | Wait with interest while adult responds | |
| | Listen to adult and gives appropriate response | |
| | The child is audible | |
| | Has clear articulation | |
| | Adopts the appropriate manner of speech | |
| | | |
| Meaning Content and Sentence Structure | Does not rely on gesture and inexplicit terms | Explicit Vocabulary (expv) Inexplicit Vocabulary (inexv) Mature Structure (mstr) Immature Structure (immst) |
| | Can use full sentence structure | |
| | Is not inclined towards one word response | |
| | Can be coherent and explicit in making simple requests | |
| | Can be coherent and explicit in giving some item of information, i.e. .has appropriate vocabulary, structures information in sentences with logical sequence | |
| | Can/will give own name | |
| | Can sing/say a number of nursery rhymes/songs | |
| | Can follow a simple instruction | |
| | Can give a simple instruction | |
| | Can handle a book appropriately | |
| | Can name main body parts | |
| | Can listen attentively while adult names common items in a picture book or game | |
| | Can take turn and name these items | |
| | | |
| Language Use | | Name (n) Inform (inf) Request (r) Instruct (i) Complain (c) Narrate/Explain (n/e) |
| | Can/will name a number of own toys | |
| | Can give a simple instruction | |
| | Can make a complaint | |
| | Can say what it is he/she is doing in relation to activities, games, toys, can say what he/she would like to play with. | |

DATA ANALYSIS IN PHASE 2 OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the analysis in Phase 2 of the study was to explore the relationship between the use of a range of language teaching strategies and the children's development of vocabulary, sentence structure and more complex forms of language use, including the use of decontextualised language in expository talk and in the construction of narratives and explanations. The exploration included investigating the differentiated use of the strategies in supporting the development of the eight children whose language was the specific focus of attention.

Of interest here was how the strategies might be used appropriately to support two children who were still acquiring basic elements of the language system and to challenge the remaining six children towards more sophisticated modes of meaning making. Accordingly, in Phase 2 of the study, teaching and learning contexts were structured for the purpose of generating data on the levels of meaning being constructed by the children when that construction was being contributed to, and scaffolded by, the adult's use of specific language teaching strategies.

Focus for Analysis

The data from Phase 2 of the study represent a series of episodes of conversation in which meaning is jointly constructed between myself and Tom or Cathy on a one-to-one basis, and between myself and various members of the remaining group of six children, in small group situations. There are also episodes where these children and I are in conversation with the remaining members of the class, with the Teacher and Childcare Worker also contributing.

In Phase 2 of the study, a major focus of concern was to use these conversational contexts to generate expository talk, narratives and explanations, in dialogues between the adult and the children and in the presentation of information by individual children, in monologue form. Expository talk, narratives and explanations are described as discourse skills. In the dialogue and monologue formats in the study, the adult's role was to support and contribute to these complex forms of meaning making, through the differentiated use of the teaching strategies.

Discourse skills are characterised by the use of decontextualised language; language through which children attend to and construct linguistically presented information rather than rely on physical or observational experience as a support for meaning making. The critical factor for learning is that in engaging in discourse, children are using language as a symbolic and conceptual system to construct context free ideas.

The teaching strategies were established from the range of literatures which identifies the facilitative features of adult speech to young children. These literatures were reviewed in the chapters of the Literature Review and the rationale for adopting the facilitative features, as a repertoire of strategies for language teaching and learning, was presented. The repertoire of strategies identified includes strategies which support children's acquisition of the elements of the language system. These strategies are: achieving and maintaining joint attention on a topic; responding contingently to the child's utterance both temporally and in terms of semantic content; mapping words and sentences to the child's initiation and perceived meaning intention; questioning children to clarify and to extend meaning; repeating, recasting and expanding upon the child's utterances and also, in keeping with the intervention literature, prompting the child for particular forms of response.

Equally, the repertoire includes strategies for developing children's use of decontextualised language and discourse skills. These strategies include the foregoing and extend them to include: extending and elaborating on the topic; questioning for information, description and reflection; challenging for reasoning and explanations; rehearsing children in the presentation of information; scaffolding children's presentation of information by prompting. In Phase 2 of the study, these strategies were used, in the dialogue and monologue formats, in an attempt to match the differentiated needs of the children in their acquisition of the language system and also to support their development of the expository and narrative skills outlined above. The relationship between the use of these strategies and the children's acquisition of the language system, and development of discourse skills, is the focus for analysis of data in Phase 2 of the study.

Analysis of Teaching Strategies and Children's Talk: Categories and Codes

In Phase 2 of the study, the analysis was concerned with identifying the adult strategy use, analysing the nature and quality of the children's utterances, and attempting to discern whether the strategies have a pedagogic influence and what the nature of that influence might be. To identify the teaching strategies, the adult utterances were coded for the range of facilitative features, now described as teaching strategies, identified in the previous section. To assist the coding and to attempt to track the relationship between the strategy use and the children's development in the different elements of language, the strategies were first clustered into three categories of analysis: Fine Tuning, Modelling and Discourse Enabling. These categories are designed to reflect the areas of language development which the strategies within each one are expected to support. That is, the strategies within the category Fine Tuning are linked to the development of the children's listener-speaker skills. The strategies in the category Modelling are linked to vocabulary and grammatical structure and the strategies in the category Discourse Enabling are linked to the development of discourse skills. While the strategies have been clustered into separate categories, these categories are not presented as mutually exclusive. As all of the elements of language, listener-speaker skills, vocabulary, grammar, and language use are inter-related and are integrated in any one utterance, so too the categories which relate to those elements are inter-related and a number of the strategies could be located in each.

The strategies included in the category Fine Tuning are: cueing for joint attention (CJA), responding with joint attention (RJA), prompting for joint attention (PJA), questioning for joint attention (QJA) and adjusting the comprehension level (ACL). These strategies would be expected to support the development of the children's listener-speaker skills of turn taking (tt) and speaking appropriately to the topic (spkt). The strategies included in the category, Modelling are: prompting (P), repetition (Rep), questioning (Q), recasting and expanding (R/E), topic continuation (TC) and topic elaboration (TE). These strategies would be expected to support the children's use of explicit vocabulary (exv) and complex sentence structures (cmpxst) and would be expected also to support them in contributing to the topic and in elaborating on it (elt). The strategies included in the category, Discourse Enabling are: contributing to/developing expository talk (C/DE), contributing to/developing narrative

(C/DN), and questioning for explanations (QE). These strategies would be expected to support the children in engaging in expository talk (et), in constructing narratives (cn), and in explaining events and experiences (exp). The categories and codes for analysis for both the children's talk and the use of the teaching strategies are included in Table 7.2.

In each of the transcripts, the adult's talk was examined and coded for the strategy use and the children's talk was examined and coded. The major focus for analysis was any possible relationship between the strategy use and the nature and quality of the children's listener-speaker skills, their vocabulary and sentence structure and how these were employed in the use of decontextualised language, and in the use of explanations, during expository talk and in the construction of narratives.

Organisation of Data for Analysis

During Phase 2 of the study, 27 episodes of discourse were recorded and transcribed for analysis. These were organised as constituting either expository or narrative discourses. The narratives were further organised as narratives constructed through play during the morning sessions, or narratives arising from discussions of picture storybooks.

In the generation of data for the study, the conversational contexts were often deliberately structured to provide episodes of talk between myself and the eight children and to provide follow on episodes in which the topics discussed, in the earlier sessions, were recalled to the whole class group. As would be expected, this structure yielded episodes of conversation which are linked by topic. Over the course of the study, as a new topic emerged or was introduced, it might be discussed over a series of episodes, in both small and whole group contexts. The development of a topic by the children, across conversational contexts, is one of the areas of interest in the analysis of the data. Equally, in the generation of data, there were episodes of talk when a topic was discussed and the conversation was concluded.

Table 7.2 Categories and Codes for Analysis of Children's Talk and Teaching Strategies

| Children's Talk | | Teaching Strategies | |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Categories for analysis of the children's talk and sub-elements of language in each | Codes for children's use of the elements of language | Categories for analysis of the teaching strategies and strategies included in each | Codes for teaching strategies |
| Listener Speaker Skills | | Fine Tuning | |
| Turn Taking | tt | Cueing for Joint Attention Responding with Joint Attention | CJA RJA |
| Speaking to topic | spkt | Prompting for Joint Attention | PJA |
| | | Questioning for Joint Attention | QJA |
| | | Adjusting Comprehension Level | ACL |
| Vocabulary Knowledge and Sentence Structure | | Modelling | |
| Use of explicit vocabulary | expv | Prompting | P |
| Complex sentence structure | cmpxst | Repetition | REP |
| Elaborating on a topic | elt | Questioning | Q |
| | | Recasting | R |
| | | Expanding | E |
| Mature structure | mstr | Recasting and Expanding | R/E |
| | | Topic Continuation | TC |
| | | Topic Elaboration | TE |
| Complex Language Use | | Discourse Enabling | |
| Engaging in expository talk | et | Contributing to/Developing Expository Talk | C/DE |
| Constructing narratives | cn | Contributing to/Developing Narrative | C/DN |
| Explaining events and experiences | exp | Challenging for Explanations | CEX |
| Using decontextualised language | dcntxt | | |

Within the two modes of discourse, expository and narrative, the episodes which were linked by topic were grouped into sets. The remainder of the data are presented as single, discrete episodes of talk. The transcripts were grouped to correspond with this structure and were analysed according to the categories and codes which are outlined in the previous section.

For expository discourse, the analysis yielded two sets of episodes which were linked by topic and seven single episodes of discrete conversation. The number of episodes within each set varied. In all, the episodes of expository discourse yielded seventeen transcripts. Table 7.3 shows the number of episodes of expository discourse, both sets and single episodes, which were transcribed and the contexts in which the episodes occurred.

Table 7.3 Linked and Single Episodes of Expository Discourse in Phase 2

| | Contexts, Numbers of Episodes and Number of Transcripts | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Episodes in One-to-One Contexts | Episodes in Small Group Contexts | Episodes in Whole Group Contexts | Number of Transcripts |
| Sets of Linked Topics | | | | |
| Postman Hedgehog Elephant | | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Lion, Horse and other Animals | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Total Linked | | | | 10 |
| | | | | |
| Single Episodes | | | | |
| Being Teacher | | 1 | | 1 |
| Being Leader | | | 1 | 1 |
| Nessa's Dog | | | 1 | 1 |
| Baby's Chair | | | 1 | 1 |
| Carpet Cleaning | | | 1 | 1 |
| Pancakes | | | 1 | 1 |
| Tom's Elbow | | | 1 | 1 |
| Total Single | | | | 7 |
| Total Linked & Single | | | | 17 |

Table 7.4 Linked and Single Episodes of Narrative Discourse in Phase 2

| | Contexts, Numbers of Episodes and Number of Transcripts | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Episodes in One-to-One Contexts | Episodes in Small Group Contexts | Episodes in Whole Group Contexts | Number of Transcripts |
| Sets of Linked Topics | | | | |
| Teddies in the Playground | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Baby Who Wouldn't Go to Bed | | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total Linked | | | | 8 |
| | | | | |
| Single Episodes | | | | |
| Not Me Said the Monkey | | | 1 | 1 |
| Going to Mullingar | | | 1 | 1 |
| Total Single | | | | 2 |
| Total Linked & Single | | | | 10 |

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the focus for data analysis in Phase 1 of the study has been identified. The rationale for the choice of codes for analysis of the children's talk has been outlined and the codes have been provided. The focus of data analysis in Phase 2 of the study has been identified and the rationale for the categories and codes for analysis of both the children's, and the adult's talk, has also been outlined. The categories and codes have been provided. The organisation of the data has been described and the numbers of episodes of talk and the contexts in which they occurred have been documented. In the following chapter, the findings for Phase 1 of the study are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS IN PHASE 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings for Phase 1 of the study are presented and discussed. The data afford insights into the levels of language competence being displayed by the eight children who would be participants in Phase 2 of the study and before the strategy use for Phase 2 was introduced. The baseline information on their acquisition and use of the language system is presented and analysed according to the levels of competence they showed in the four elements of language: Listener-Speaker Competence, Sentence Structure and Meaning Content and range of Language Use. The transcripts quoted are numbered from 1 to 17. In quoting from the transcripts, here and in subsequent chapters, each utterance is referenced with the name of the speaker followed by the number of the transcript, then by a dot, followed by the number of that utterance within the transcript.

LISTENER-SPEAKER COMPETENCE

The data from Phase 1 of the study show that, in their first term in the Early Start programme, all of the eight children had developed basic knowledge of the Listener-Speaker relationship. Of the nine indicators on the Early Start Beginning of Year Profile which record competence in Listener-Speaker skills, four of the children: Jennie, Nessa, Aisling and Karen, received a *yes* on eight of the indicators and two of the children: Chris and Kevin, received a *yes* on seven of the indicators. Cathy received a *yes* on five of the indicators and Tom received a *yes* on three. None of the children received a *yes* on the indicator for *initiates conversation with other children* and Kevin, Chris, Cathy and Tom all received a *no* on the indicator for *clear articulation*.

On the Profile, a *yes* entry indicates that this behaviour was observed regularly, was habitual for this child, and was considered to be characteristic of the child's listener-speaker behaviour. An entry of *not always* indicates that, while it was usual for the child to show this behaviour, lapses were observed. An entry of *some evidence* indicates that this behaviour was observed but was not habitual and was not considered characteristic of the child's listener-speaker behaviour.

Cathy's entries on the Profile show that a number of key skills were in place and that she was also showing *some evidence* of a number of skills. Equally, Tom received a positive entry of *some evidence*, for a number of key indicators, e.g. *initiates conversation with the adult; listens to the adult and gives appropriate response*. The nine indicators that relate to Listener-Speaker competence and the children's entries for each are included in Table 8.1.

Attending and Speaking to a Topic

All of the eight children were intentional communicators and were showing an understanding of the communicative function of language. This is clear from the ways in which all of the children engaged in communication, at some level, with the adults. In these communications, all of the children showed evidence of understanding the basic conventions of eye contact and turn-taking and an ability to speak to a topic over a short number of turns. These skills were well in place for six of the children in the group and were also in evidence in communications with Tom and Cathy who were the children with the greatest needs.

The Listener- Speaker skills discussed above: attention to a topic and responding appropriately to a topic over a number of turns, were present for Jennie, Aisling, Nessa, Chris, Kevin and Karen in Phase 1 of the study. For these children also, their speech was, in the main, audible, well articulated and clearly understandable. Kevin displayed some minor articulation difficulties and, occasionally, Chris's speech had a muffled tone. However, these could be attributed to minor, surface level immaturities which did not have any seriously inhibiting effect on their communication of meaning.

For these six children, the listener/speaker skills were in evidence in both small group and whole group contexts.

In a whole group, lunchtime conversation (*Transcript 8*), Karen, Kevin, Chris, Jennie and Nessa all show their capacity to speak to a topic by responding appropriately to questions relating to their food. Jennie also initiates a conversation in which she draws attention to her yoghurt: *Anne look which yoghurt I have (Jennie, 8.39)*. Over a number of turns, it is established that Jennie has strawberry yoghurt. Here the children show some small evidence

of paying attention to, and being influenced by each other's topics as Kevin enters the conversation contributing to this same topic, ...*mine is strawberry too* (Kevin, 8.46).

Another small, early example of children influencing each other's conversations occurs in an impromptu conversation before the start of a small group activity (*Transcript, 12*). Here, Aisling tells us that she has painted *a big crocodile* (Aisling, 12. 6). Kevin then interjects to ask if we are going to read the stories I have brought. However, when my response is to call the children's attention to Aisling's comment on painting, Kevin takes up that topic, telling us that he painted a crocodile as well, *I bainted (painted) a big crocodile* (Kevin, 12.14) and Jennie also attends and contributes to this topic: *I painted a dinosaur and a crocodile* (Jennie, 12.15) ...*and I painted a row boat* (Jennie, 12.19).

For both Tom and Cathy, transcripts show conversations with me in which each child willingly attends to a topic and takes a number of turns, appropriately, in responding to that topic. In one conversation, which was adult initiated and based on a picture storybook, Cathy contributes sixty nine turns (*Transcript 1*). A number of her utterances are indecipherable and the majority are one word responses and show a number of phonological difficulties. However, in the context of conversations based on materials which were concrete and present, the majority of Cathy's responses are decipherable and can be said to be appropriate to the topic (*Transcripts, 1, 2, 3*). One of the features of these conversations is the number of times Cathy finishes correctly a sentence from the picture storybook which had been started by me.

These responses show Cathy's abilities to attend to the topic, to process information and to engage in appropriate turn taking. Field notes show that she was always enthusiastic in her responses to my initiatives and more significantly still, that she sometimes initiated conversation with me, greeting me and calling my attention to something she was wearing or inviting me to share a game or a book. Notwithstanding what appeared to be serious phonological difficulties which resulted in much of her speech being difficult to understand, Cathy's interest in and enjoyment of conversation was a noticeable strength in her learning style.

In Phase 1 of the study, one of the difficulties experienced by Tom was a short attention span. In the early part of the Autumn term, this inhibited his ability to attend to a topic for more than a short number of turns. However, he was very willing to engage in communicative exchange. In a conversation recorded during play in the Home Corner, (*Transcript 4*), Tom is in the role of Daddy and is responding to my requests for food. The majority of his responses are at a one word level and, except for the words *yeah*, *no* and *me* which are clearly decipherable, a number of his words are decipherable only in that their sounds approximate to a word which is predictable from the context, e.g. *fi* (*five*), *wha* (*what*), *bebe* (*baby*).

In spite of his expressive difficulties, Tom showed great interest in communication and good understanding of the requirements of the listener/speaker relationship. In the instance quoted above, he attended to the topic and contributed twenty five turns, while remaining in role. While he did not take any conversational initiatives in that instance, and all of his utterances were in response to requests from the adult, the majority of the responses can be said to be appropriate to the topic. One noticeable development in Tom's communicative behaviour during Phase 1 of the study was that, over time, he began to initiate communications with the adult. Here he was relying on sound and gesture, for example by bringing me a book or toy, taking my hand and making a range of accompanying sounds (*Transcript 6*,). However, he was clearly communicating his meaning intention that the adult should join him to play with these toys.

A noticeable feature of both Cathy's and Tom's Listener-Speaker behaviours was their disinclination to initiate or to respond in a whole group or small group situation. The skills identified above emerged in one-to-one conversations with the adult. An example of their reticence in group situations occurs in one extended sequence lasting at least thirty five minutes, in which the whole group is involved in listening and responding to story (*Transcript 9*). While Nessa, Aisling, Jennie, Kevin, Chris and Karen all contribute at least two utterances spontaneously, with some children contributing a number of times, Cathy and Tom are silent for the majority of the session. In a sequence from this session, where the

children are discussing how they tasted bread and honey and peppermint tea, all of which feature in the story, a number of the children are contributing spontaneously, commenting on whether they liked the food. Cathy contributes only in response to being addressed by the teacher, saying, *I dn ike bed* (I didn't like bread) (Cathy, 9.175). When we both attempt to engage her further, she repeats *dn ik*. Further responses are *no* and a shake of her head to indicate *no*. On a number of occasions in Phase 1 of the study, I had recorded in field notes that Cathy did not enjoy being invited to respond in the whole group context and that she seemed subdued and inhibited by it.

In the instance quoted above, Tom contributes once, early in the story, when the teacher is referring to leaves and to the farmer's barn. He points to the barn and makes a series of sounds. In this instance, we are unable to understand his meaning intention and the teacher responds by interpreting it as what she thinks he may be saying. While there were difficulties of communication here, the positive point is that Tom did contribute spontaneously and did attempt to address the topic, albeit in an inarticulate way.

Initiating and Sustaining a Conversation

Jennie, Aisling, Nessa, Chris, Kevin and Karen were also more adept than either Cathy or Tom, at initiating conversation with the adult and at sustaining a conversation by contributing to the topic. That is, in speaking to a topic, they not only responded to the adult's points, but sometimes, however minimally, contributed in such a way as to add to the development of the topic. There were also some instances when they initiated topics and two instances when the children's contributions determined the direction of the conversation. One instance of child initiated conversation was recorded during a play sequence with play-dough, when Aisling invited me to sit down and have some of the cake she was making. One of the interesting features of this transcript (*Transcript 14*) is that the topic of conversation is largely controlled by Aisling with the adult responding to the child's conversational initiatives (*14.12-27*).

In another example (*Transcript 16*), Karen, Chris, and Kevin respond to, and then mainly lead, the topic which was originally introduced by the adult. The discussion is based on a

picture storybook in which a little girl, Lily, engages in some interesting pursuits, with a different activity depicted on each page (Beck, 1999). In the context of an analysis of Listener-Speaker competence, the children’s major contribution here is that their views on the topic become the central focus of the conversation and enable the adult to affirm and adopt this focus and to challenge the children further in relation to it. Another interesting feature of this conversation is that, again here, there is some evidence of the children listening to and influencing each other’s topics.

As the children describe Lily’s behaviour, Kevin contributes an interesting observation in immediate response to a question posed by Karen, ... *Why did she go out in her sleepin’ suit?* (Karen, 16. 8), *She’ll get lethered* (Kevin, 16. 9). As the conversation continues, Karen does not take up Kevin’s prediction but contributes her own idea which is that Lily might be *kidnapped* (Karen, 16.13). In turn, Kevin disagrees with Karen and reiterates his original idea (Kevin, 16. 11-15).

Table 8.1 Indicators for Language Competence from Early Start Beginning of Year Profile

| Indicators for Listener-Speaker Competence | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Jennie | Aisling | Nessa | Chris | Kevin | Karen | Johnny | Cathy | Tom |
| Give/keep eye contact | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Not always | Not always | Not always |
| Show interest in talking to an adult | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Initiate conversation with adults | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some evid |
| Initiate conversation with other children | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Wait with interest while adult responds | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Listen to adult and gives appropriate response | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some evid | Yes | Some evid |
| The child is audible | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Has clear articulation | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |
| Adopts the appropriate manner of speech | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid |

| Indicators for Grammatical Structure and Meaning Content | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Does not rely on gesture and inexplicit terms | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | No | No | No |
| Can use full sentence structure | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |
| Is not inclined towards one word responses | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | No | No | No |
| Can be coherent and explicit in making simple requests | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |
| Can be coherent and explicit in giving some item of information, i.e. has appropriate vocabulary, structures information in sentences with logical sequence | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | No | No | No |
| Can/will give own name | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes Attempt | Yes Attempt | Yes Attempt |
| Can/will name a number of own toys | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some evid | Some evid | No |
| Can sing/say a number of nursery rhymes/songs | Some evid | Some evid | Yes | Some evid | No | Some evid | No | No | No |
| Can follow a simple instruction | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Can give a simple instruction | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Can handle a book appropriately | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Some evid | Yes | Some evid |
| Can name main body parts | Some evid | Some evid | Yes | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid |
| | Jennie | Aisling | Nessa | Chris | Kevin | Karen | Johnny | Cathy | Tom |
| Can listen attentively while adult names common items in a picture book or game | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Can take turn and name these items | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Indicators for Language Use | | | | | | | | | |
| Can say what he/she would like to play with. | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes Attempt | Yes Attempt | Yes Attempt |
| Can say what it is he/she is doing in relation to activities, games, toys | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | Some evid | No | Some evid | No |
| Can make a simple request | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Can make a complaint | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No |

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE AND MEANING CONTENT

The data from the transcripts for Phase 1 of the study show that, in their first term in the Early Start programme, Nessa, Jennie, Aisling, Karen, Chris and Kevin have adequate vocabulary and sentence structure to engage in short and simple conversations, on a number of real life, everyday topics. The Early Start Beginning of Year Profile has fourteen indicators for assessing Grammatical Structure and Meaning Content. On the evidence of the transcripts from Phase 1 of the study, Nessa received a *yes* on eleven indicators, Jennie, Aisling Chris, Kyle and Karen received a *yes* on nine, Cathy received a *yes* on six and Tom received a *yes* on two indicators. The fourteen indicators for competence in Meaning Content and Grammatical Structure and the children's entries for each are included in Table 8.1.

For all six children who were more verbal than either Cathy or Tom, the positive outcomes were mainly for the indicators of basic skills such as, *has basic sentence structure, can follow/give a short instruction, can/will give own name, can/will name own toys*. None of the children received an unqualified *yes* for the items which focused on being coherent and explicit and on giving more elaborated accounts of a topic. It is also interesting to note that only Nessa received an unqualified *yes* for the indicator which focused on children's abilities to recite nursery rhymes.

Basic Vocabulary and Sentence Structure

In a number of whole group, small group and individual child-adult conversations, the children name toys, clothes and body parts, presents, and items of food and they identify pets and some other animals. They sometimes volunteer short comments on these topics and they join in repeating phrases from familiar stories and rhymes.

A notable feature of the transcripts is that, in the conversations on the topics of food, toys, clothes and presents, the children's talk is characterised by one or two word utterances and by vocabulary which would be typical of the basic vocabulary set of children in the eighteen month to three year old age group. That is to say, the nouns, verbs, pronouns and prepositions included in the children's talk, are typical of those included in tests and checklists of expressive vocabulary for children aged between eighteen and thirty/thirty six months

(Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Thal, Bates, Hartung, Pethick & Reilly, 1993; Gillham, Boyle & Smith, 1997).

In the previous section, there were some examples of the children initiating and contributing to topics, in Phase 1 of the study. However, from the perspective of an analysis of grammatical structure and meaning content, the data show that the children use vocabulary and sentence structure, predominantly, to respond to and support a topic rather than to elaborate on, or to extend meaning about it. That is, in conversation with the adult, the children use the names for basic objects and construct short utterances to comment on them. However, there are few examples of the children elaborating on a topic by offering descriptive detail about attributes or characteristics of an object, or of them combining sentences or using a complex sentence to extend meaning on a topic.

A transcript from September of Phase 1 of the study (*Transcript, 15*), gives some insight into the children's use of vocabulary and ways of combining words, and into the levels of meaning they construct in their engagement with a topic. In the context of a game, the children are opening flaps in a picture book and naming the *presents* concealed underneath....*I wonder what it is Kevin? What do you think is in this present? (Anne, 15. 15), Em...a tiger (Kevin, 15.16), Might be a tiger (Anne, 15.17), Might be me in a picture with me Dad (Kevin, 15.18)*. In a later sequence, Nessa and Jennie continue the game....*Are you ready? One, two, three, open the box...oh? (Anne, 15.52), Paint (Nessa, 15.53), Paint (Anne, 15.54), Paint? (Jennie, 15.55) Is it paint for painting the wall? (Anne, 15.56), No! (children together, 15.57), Paint for...painting (Jennie,15.58), Paint for painting a picture...is it? (Anne,15.59)*.

In this transcript, it would have been reasonable to expect some spontaneous comment from the children. However, the conversation is largely in the mode of a question and answer session. My initiations are mostly of a questioning nature and the children's responses are mainly characterised by one word utterances. In this context, I was concerned to develop a conversational format and tried to avoid a strictly interrogational mode of closed questioning, by framing my initiations as invitations and comments, e.g....*Do you want to open it up and*

see what it is? (Anne, 15.3),I wonder what it is? Kevin what do you think is in this present? (Anne, 15.15), and later in the conversation, by modelling possible styles of response, it's a bouncy ball (Anne, 15.38), ...Oh! a beautiful big green present with a big green bow on it (Anne, 15.67). However, it was difficult to draw more than one or two word responses from the children or to motivate them to change the character of their responses to a more expansive style.

While the children do show knowledge of a basic store of vocabulary; *teddy, blocks, tiger, ball, paints*, there are only two examples of spontaneous comment by them and these two comments are the only utterances which might be characterised as extensions of meaning about the topic: *Ok, Kevin is going to open the present, right? Just Kevin, ok? (Anne, 15.5), 'Cos it's his birthday (Karen, 15.6).* Later on in the conversation, in response to me wondering what might be in the present, Kevin speculates...*Might be me in a picture with me Dad (Kevin, 15.18).* These extensions are also examples of more complex sentences and they mark the exceptions from the one and two word utterances which predominate in the transcript.

The format of the session quoted above was essentially that of naming objects in a picture book where each object was displayed in isolation on a page. While this format helped in assessing children's knowledge of a basic store of vocabulary, and was perceived to be an appropriately engaging and challenging context for this early part of the children's first term, it is likely that it also contributed to children's inclination towards the use of one and two word utterances. More detailed illustrations might have been more stimulating and might have prompted richer responses from the children. However, in field notes from the early weeks of the term, I have also recorded the children's tendency towards one or two word utterances, for example, in making requests of the teacher or child-care worker or in commenting in a play context.

Notwithstanding this habitual tendency towards short utterances, there are some instances when children use full sentence structures. This evidence comes both from structured situations when the children are required to repeat a given line from a story, and from less

tightly structured conversations, where the children are talking about their own experiences but are having their contributions supported or *scaffolded* by the adults. In early October of Phase 1, Jennie shows her ability to repeat the full sentences from a picture storybook which has a question and answer format, *What do we sing about the animals?* (Anne, 7.1), *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?...Is it that?* (Jennie, 7.2), *I think so yes* (Anne, 7.3), *He sees the Red Bird* (Jennie, 7.4).

In a less structured situation, in the whole group lunch context (Transcript 10), the class teacher is encouraging Nessa to repeat a sentence she had used earlier, ...*Tell them what you told me* (Grace, 10.3), *That's Cruella's dog* (Nessa, 10.4). Later in this sequence, the teacher provides an opportunity for Kevin to construct information in a sentence, *Will you tell the boys and girls what's going to happen tomorrow* (Grace, 10.46), *I'm gonna be the leader* (Kevin, 10.47).

In transcripts from October (*Transcript, 1*), and December (*Transcript, 2*) of Phase 1 of the study, Cathy names most of the animals in a picture storybook without difficulty. In this context, the conversation was based on a picture book which required the child to repeat two sentences for each double page spread, where each sentence was the same except for the substitution of the name of the two new animals which appeared each time a page was turned. An example of the sentences is *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a red bird looking at me*. The advantage here was that in spite of Cathy's articulation difficulties, I could assess her naming of the animals and I could judge the extent to which she was approximating to expressing each word in the sentences. In the December transcript, we are also playing the lift the flap game which was discussed above in relation to the other children.

In these transcripts, Cathy shows good knowledge of the words for the animals in each picture book: *Bear, bird, cat, frog, dog, horse, fish, monkey, crocodile*, although her pronunciation is impaired in a number of cases, e.g. *nake (snake)* (Cathy, 2. 8), *croclile (crocodile)* (Cathy, 2.6). She also recognises the varying colours of the animals. Her sentence structures are immature in that she repeats only part of each sentence on each occasion and while each sentence has eight words, the longest sentence that Cathy repeats unaided, has

four words. Her difficulties with phonology also inhibit the sense of her utterances and, even in the context of the predictable text of these picture books, some of Cathy's utterances are indecipherable (*Cathy*, 1.22); (*Cathy*, 2.32, 34 & 85). Nonetheless, she is very expressive throughout the transcripts, and while her responses are predominantly one and two word utterances, she does chorus along with me for parts of many of the sentences, in one case singing along for five of the words (*Cathy*, 1.84.) She also attempts to construct some simple sentences e.g. *I like duck* (*Cathy*, 2.45), *I like hawse (horse)*, (*Cathy*, 2.51).

During Phase 1 of the study, it was difficult to hold Tom's attention long enough to engage with him in the kinds of contexts described above. On a number of occasions, he joined a small group context for a few moments but usually, he did not engage with the conversation and soon left to take up another activity. Transcript One records a number of interactions with Tom in October of Phase 1, when he joined Cathy and me in the conversation about the picture book, which was discussed above: *Hello Tom...do you remember my name?* (*Anne*, 1.85), *Dom bu* (*Tom*, showing a toy bus, 1.86), *The bus...Tom, I'm Anne* (*Anne*, 1.87), *I Anne* (*Cathy*, 1.88), *Anne* (*Anne*, 1.89), *Wha?* (*Tom*, 1.90), *What's my name?* (*Anne*, 1.91), *Ay* (*Tom*, 1.92), *Yes, Anne* (*Anne*, 1.93), *What's your name?* (*Cathy*, 1.94), *Anne* (*Anne*, 1.95), *Bu* (*Tom*, 1.96), *Blue horse* (*Anne*, 1.97), *Bu* (*Tom*, 1.98), *Blue horse Tom, Cathy is singing, listen to her singing... Cathy will you sing for Tom?* (*Anne*, 1.99).

Here Tom displays his appreciation of the listener-speaker relationship as discussed in the previous section. However, his verbal expression is seriously inhibited and he is relying on sounds and gestures to communicate his meaning intention. At times, in context, his meaning can be construed and there is evidence that the sounds he is using are appropriate to some of the words he intends, e.g. *bu* for *bus* (*Tom*, 1.86), and *bue* for *blue* (*Tom*, 1.98). Later in that session, Tom peeps into the book corner as we are looking at the illustration of the dog and he shouts a communication ...*Eh...ay...a do...a gog...wha wha wha wha* (*Tom*, 1.136), and later again, when I ask Cathy to show me the dog's tail, he returns and runs in pointing to the tail and saying *Deee* (1.154).

While Tom had serious expressive difficulties, his teacher and child-care worker were confident that his receptive language was much more advanced. They felt that Tom had a

good understanding of the communicative life of the Early Start classroom and that, although inhibited by a short attention span, he participated, receptively, in much of the verbal exchanges between the adults and the children. Two transcripts (*Transcripts, 4 & 5*), which record conversations with Tom during play sessions in the Home Corner, show his receptive understanding to be far in advance of his expressive abilities.

The first transcript dates from October of Phase 1 and it includes Jamie who had articulation difficulties but whose verbal abilities were far in advance of Tom's. What is significant about the transcripts is that they show Tom's receptive understanding of my comments, his understanding of the topic that is being played out and his ability to contribute, albeit through sound and gesture rather than words. *Daddy? (Anne, 4.2), Wha? (Tom, 4.3), Can I have sausages and beans please? (Anne, 4.4), Yeah (Tom, 4.5, Tom brings me play food) Thank you...sausages and beans (Anne, 4.6) Ank (Tom, 4.7), On my plate (Anne, 4.8), Yeah (Tom, 4.9), And can the baby have em, milk please?...thank you...thank you...what's this, sausages? (Anne, 4.10), Yeah (Tom, 4.11), And beans? (Anne, 4.12), No!...pointing to the baby and miming drinking (Tom, 4.13), Milk and beans? (Anne, 4.14), Yeah, (Tom, 4.15).*

Elaborating on a Topic

In supportive contexts, the children sometimes construct longer utterances. However, beyond an initial utterance, they do not tend to expand upon the topic, spontaneously, even though they have further information about that topic. In Phase 1 of the study, it was unusual to hear extended sequences of sentences, or the use of complex sentences from the children. Usually, expansions on topics came as a result of prompting by the adults and even in these supportive contexts, the children's utterances were often minimal or fragmented and the meaning they constructed often lacked a continuous thread of coherence.

A conversation on the topic of Cruella, is an example of the kinds of structures the children were inclined to use. It affords some insights into the possibility that lack of facility with more complex structures may have been inhibiting their expression of meaning intention. Cruella is a character in a children's story and, on the previous day, the children had attended a play featuring Cruella and a range of other characters. During the lunch session, Nessa had been reminded of Cruella by the picture of a Dalmatian dog on one of the lunch mats. This

had prompted her to point to the mat and say to the teacher, *I think of Cruella*. When the teacher asked her to repeat her sentence for the other children, *Tell them what you told me*, (Grace, 10.3), she was hoping that Nessa would continue this line of thinking and would find words to explain how the mat had reminded her of Cruella and would include something about the nature of her thoughts on the character. However, when she comes to repeating the topic, rather than engaging in the more complex construction of meaning that her teacher had been hoping for, Nessa simply says, *that's Cruella's dog* (Nessa, 10. 4). It may be that Nessa had forgotten or had no wish to continue with her original meaning intention and simply changed her focus. However, such disinclination to elaborate on topics, and to expand meaning through the use of complex sentences, was a noticeable feature of the children's talk.

In the conversation, in spite of the first hand experiences which the children had had with the characters in the play, being asked to construct meaning about those experiences, a day later, seems to have posed a serious challenge to the children. In the examples that follow, while Nessa and Jennie do speak to the topic, neither child offers any sequences of coherent sentences and the conversation relies heavily on prompts from the adults,...*Nessa wants to tell Anne something about Cruella, I think she was a lovely lady* (Grace, 10.28), *She's not a lady, she's...* (Jennie, 10.28a), *Tell Anne what kind of a lady Cruella was* (Grace, 10.29), *Black spots* (Nessa,10.30), *Was she a kind, happy lady?* (Grace, 10.31), *Was she gorgeous?* (Tessa, 10.32), *No!* (Children together, 10.33), *I'm afraid of her* (Jennie,10.34), *Scary* (Nessa, 10.35), *Scary* (Grace,10.36), *Oh she was very scary, was she?* (Anne,10.37), *I hate witches*, (Chris, 10.38).

In the same episode, Kevin gives one short sentence in response to the teacher's invitation to tell what will happen. Through further questioning and prompting, it emerges that he can describe four other jobs that will be his responsibility as leader (10.51-67). However, this information is difficult for the teacher to extract and in his articulation of it, Kevin again reverts to short, two and three word utterances which limit the coherence of the account: *What jobs will you do?* (Grace, 10.52), *The placemats* (Kevin, 10.53), *What will you do with the placemats?* (Grace, 10.53), *Put them on the table* (Kevin, 10.54) ...and you'll have

another job to do when you'r leader? (Grace, 10. 55), Ring the bell (Kevin, 10.56), Why will you ring the bell (Grace, 10.57), Tidy up time (Kevin, 10.58), Good man, you'll sing the tidy up song won't you? (Grace, 10.59)...

Sophisticated Words and Phrases

Some of the strengths and also some of the gaps in the children's vocabulary knowledge, and in their abilities to construct meaning on a topic, are apparent in a transcript from December of Phase 1 (*Transcript, 9*). In this context, the teacher is retelling a picture story to the whole group of children. The story is set on a farm, it has a Christmas theme and the children have heard it, previously, on a number of days. Prompted by the teacher, Nessa describes the Farmer's house as, *a red house (Nessa, 9.4)*, and in response to a question about the number of windows, Kevin says, *no, e yony (only) got one (Kevin, 9.9)*. In the sequence that follows, the teacher is focusing the children's attention again, on the word, *barn*. This has been a new word for the children and the teacher is reinforcing their learning of it: *Look, this looks like a big house but is it called a house? (Grace, 9.12), No (Children together, 9.13), No, what was the word for it? (Grace, 9.14), The farmer (Kevin, 9.15), The? (Grace, 9.16), The farmer house (Kevin & Brendan, 9.17), Well that's the farmer's house and that's the?... (Grace, 9.18), Barn (Kevin, 9.19), Barn (Grace, 9.20), The barn Kevin, well done! (Anne, 9.21), Now, does the farmer sometimes live in the barn? (Grace, 9.22), No (Children together, 9.23), Who lives in the barn? (Grace, 9.24) Who lives in there Katie? (Anne, 9.25), All the animals (Jennie, 9.26), All the animals (Karen, 9.27), All the animals, (Grace & Anne, 9.28).*

The teacher also revises the words *fork* and *stool* which the children do not readily recall and the phrases *bread and honey* and *peppermint tea* which they do recall along with the experiences the teacher provided of tasting bread and honey.

As the story continues the children name various animals, *pig, horse, cow* and the teacher supports them in recalling the phrase, *blanket of snow*, which she had also emphasised in the earlier story sessions. The teacher helps the children to recall each animal that is covered with the blanket of snow. The children name the *cow*, the *sheep* and the *pig* again and then the teacher helps them to recall *rooster* which is another new word: *...Who is the last animal*

in the barn? (Grace, 9.276), A chicken (Kevin, 9.277), Is he a chicken? (Grace, 9.278), A hen (Chris, 9.279), Like a hen... (Grace, 9.280), Is he the Daddy one? (Anne, 9.281), He is and we have a special name for him? (Grace, 9.282)....He's a roo? (Anne & Grace, 9.283), We call him a?...Rooster ... (Grace, 9.284).

As the final section of the story is retold, Nessa and Chris contribute to the topic with some good command of vocabulary and sentence structure: *...He nearly forgot to do something (Grace, 9.331), Decorate the tree (Nessa, 9.332), He nearly forgot to decorate the tree, what will the farmer put on the tree? (Grace, 9.334), Decorations (Nessa, 9.335).* In a later section, Chris encapsulates the meaning in a full sentence *...tell the animals what the farmer is up to (Grace, 9.354), Tell the animals Chris (Anne, 9.356), He's goin' to decorate the tree (Chris, 9.357).*

It might not be unexpected that young children from an urban setting would be unfamiliar with some of the more sophisticated vocabulary included in a farmyard story. The children did know the names of the more common farmyard animals and they used other common words spontaneously and appropriately, e.g. *house, window, chair, tree*. Observation of this session would suggest that six of the eight children at least, understood and could use these kinds of words appropriately. There was some evidence too that the children were acquiring the more sophisticated words from the story that the teacher had been concentrating on, e.g. *barn, stool, fork, rooster, feathers*, and that some were beginning to use the more complex sentence structures she had been emphasising and modelling, *blanket of snow; decorate the tree*. A number of points are of interest here.

The transcript shows that the more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structures identified above did not appear to be in the children's existing expressive repertoires and that the story was important in providing this exposure. However, the use of specific teaching strategies appeared to be critical to the children's acquisition. Even with modelling and repetition by the adult, and the support of the story context, the children appeared to be struggling to assimilate the words and phrases and in need of continued exposure and support, both within, and beyond, the story context.

COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE USE

The evidence from the transcripts shows that, in Phase 1 of the study, Jennie, Aisling, Nessa, Chris, Kevin, Karen, and Cathy could use language to name common objects, to name and comment on items of food in their lunch packs, to describe simple actions and experiences, to make simple requests, to give simple instructions or directions and to make simple complaints. While Tom was not forming lexico-grammatical utterances, there were instances of him using the communicative function of language to make a request, e.g. in response to my direction in the play corner to ask Jamie for the jelly *Ask him for the jelly (Anne, 4.26)*, *Eh, eh (Tom, 4.27, looking at Jamie and holding plate towards him)*, to give a direction, e.g. in a play context, directing me to feed the baby by miming drinking from the baby's bottle and making slurping sounds (*Tom, 5.3*), and to communicate his choice of play activity or book (*Tom, 6.3-6*).

On the Early Start Beginning of Year Profiles, seven of the eight children received a *yes* on three of the four indicators for assessing language use. Tom received a *yes* on one of the indicators: *Can say what he/she would like to play with*. In this instance, a *yes* is interpreted to mean that Tom will attempt to use language appropriately, for this purpose. This qualifier also applies to Cathy's *yes* entry for *Can say what it is he/she is doing in relation to activities and games*. The indicators for Competence in Language Use and the children's achievements in relation to them are included in Table 8.1

Construction of Narrative and Explanation

In the data from Phase 1 of the study, there are two instances which are interesting from the perspective of analysis of narratives and explanations. The first instance occurred during a whole group lunch session. The children wore name badges and these were usually removed by Tessa and the other adults, as the lunch session drew to a close. The conversation quoted here (*Transcript 8*), begins when Tessa is out of the room for a short while and one of the children, Donnie, suggests taking the badges off. The class teacher reinforces his suggestion with a great sense of fun...*Oh! that's a good idea (Grace, 8.53)*, and she asks who will tell Tessa to look for the badges on the boys and girls. Chris is delighted and shows his

understanding of what's being suggested ...*That's a trick...that's a trick (Chris, 8.56), That's a trick! Will I help ...Will I help to take all the badges off? (Anne, 8.57)*. The story is supported by both adults taking badges off and commenting, *Cathy will I take your badge off?...Chris is next...What will we say to Tessa? (Anne, 8.60), Take off our badges (Chris, 8.61)*. Following further, similar comment, I ask Aisling, *And what will Tessa say?...What will she say Aisling? (Anne, 8.67), Where's the badges? (Aisling, 8.68)*. The children's conversation continues and different topics are mentioned as all of the badges are removed, then Tessa returns and the children begin to call out to her, shouting and laughing...*Take off my badge, take off my badge (Children together, 8.72)*.

What is of interest here is that the children are using language to articulate an idea and to develop it into a meaningful scenario, involving characters and actions, and having an imaginative or make believe element. Through language, some children, supported by the adults, have brought the others into a make-believe situation, and they then use language to draw Tessa into the pretence. There are elements of story here and it would be an easy step to re-create this scenario purely through language and to tell it as a story at a later stage.

In a sequence, from December of Phase 1, Tom found a way to dictate a new, personal narrative and to help me to express it in words for him (*Transcript, 6*). In a one-to-one context, sitting in the book corner, Tom chose a book about Santa Claus and immediately began to initiate a different story from the one depicted in the book. He used the illustrations to prompt me and began by pointing to the sky in the picture. *Oh!, ook....sy (Tom, 6.12), Up in the sky?...Who's this? (Anne, 6.13, pointing to the illustration of Santa), A me (Tom, 6.14, closing eyes, putting his hands under his head, making sleeping sound), Santy? (Anne, 6.15), A me (Tom, 6.16, repeating sleeping mime) He's coming when you're asleep? (Anne, 6.17), Yeah (Tom, 6.18), What will he bring? (Anne, 6.19), bike (Tom, 6.20)*. In this way, with Tom making sounds, using the word *bike*, and using the illustrations to prompt me, and with me mapping words on to what I perceived to be his meaning intention, we constructed the story together.

These two examples of the children's emerging uses of narrative and explanation suggest that in Phase 1 of the study, the children, including those with serious language needs, were already being initiated into elements of narrative and to the use of language to explain and to predict.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR PHASE 1

The findings for Phase 1 of the study show a number of strengths for the children in Listener-Speaker competence. All of the children showed evidence of understanding the basic conventions of eye contact and turn-taking and an ability to speak to a topic over a short number of turns. While Cathy and Tom both had serious expressive language difficulties, for both children, the essential condition of comprehension, of cognitive and social understanding of meaning intention, were in place. Both children were intentional communicators and they understood intention in others. For Tom, in Phase 1 of the study this competence had not developed to expression in lexico- grammatical speech and he was still reliant on sounds and gestures as his principal means of communication. Notwithstanding this serious delay in his development, he was an active communicator showing many strengths which could be developed. Cathy was using lexico-grammatical speech albeit that her communicative intentions were inhibited by difficulties with the phonology of the system and difficulties with sentence structure.

In assessing the measure of the strengths shown by the children in Listener-Speaker skills, in Phase 1 of the study, it is important to consider that the levels of communicative competence, shown by the majority of the children, can only be regarded as the minimum levels of competence to be expected from children, at this stage of development. In November of Phase 1 of the study, the eight children ranged in age from 3;2 to 4;2. The literature on language acquisition locates the achievement of communicative competence, for typically developing children, in the second half of the child's first year (Carpenter, Nagell and Tomasello, 1998). By age three, children are well established in the skills of intersubjective understanding and communication and now have enough of the vocabulary and grammar of the system in place to allow them to be able conversational partners (Bates & Goodman, 1999). From the perspective of Listener-Speaker competence, the skills that were in place,

for the eight small group participants in Phase 1 of the study, left all of the children well placed to engage in the adult-child dialogues which were to be the contexts for teaching and learning in Phase 2.

The evidence from Phase 1 of the study shows that six of the eight children have command of the basic sentence structure and have the vocabulary knowledge to converse on everyday aspects of the topics of food, toys, animals and presents. The data also shows that six of the eight children can use language for basic purposes of giving their names, making a basic request or complaint, giving basic items of information and indicating choice of toys or activity. For Cathy and Tom, these language uses are inhibited by their expressive difficulties.

Notwithstanding the abilities of the majority of the children to converse with the adult on everyday topics, the findings show that, in these conversations, the children are using one and two word utterances and are drawing on a basic pool of words which would be typical of the basic vocabulary set of children in the eighteen months to three years age group (Fenson, Dale, Reznick, Thal, Bates, Hartung, Pethick & Reilly, 1993; Gillham, Boyle & Smith, 1997). The children are not generally inclined to elaborate on a topic by offering descriptive detail or by extending the meaning through the introduction of related topics. This in turn results in less construction by the children of complex or extended sentences.

The data for Cathy and Tom show that they had significant levels of expressive language delay and difficulty. The transcripts show that the comprehension skills of both children are far ahead of their expressive skills and that they are combining words or sounds. Cathy was aged three years and two months in November of Phase 1 of the study. The transcripts show that she had a good number of the basic common words, from the range of topics discussed above, in her expressive vocabulary. They also show examples of her constructing simple sentences of three and four words in which the word order is correct and the meaning remains intact.

Notwithstanding Cathy's strengths, her vocabulary is restricted to a basic set of common words and her sentences display considerable immaturity in length and in the fact that she

both omits and truncates words. She has particular difficulties with phonology which result in many of her spontaneous utterances being indecipherable. This could sometimes obscure her problems with sentence structure since the fact that she was omitting words was often masked by her articulation difficulties.

The data from Phase 1 of the study show a serious delay in Tom's development of expressive vocabulary and combining of words in sentences. In November of Phase 1, Tom was aged four years and one month. The transcripts show him to be using less than ten words with only one or two instances of discernible use of sound combinations which might approximate to the combining of words.

These findings indicating poor use of vocabulary beyond the common store of basic words, inadequate elaboration of meaning, and infrequent use of complex sentence structures, echo research with similar populations of children at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage. There is a body of evidence linking variation in amount and quality of children's vocabulary, and in complexity of sentence structure, to the socio-economic status of the children's family. In the studies outlined in the Literature Review it was seen that children from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage typically have smaller vocabularies (Hart & Risley, 1992; Hoff-Ginsberg & Tardiff, 1995; Arriaga, Fenson, Cronan & Pethick, 1998), containing less sophisticated words (Hart & Risley, 1992; Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001), and produce complex sentences at a later age (Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995; Arriaga, Fenson, Cronan & Pethick, 1998). This body of research attributes differences in the rate, amount and complexity of language development, in children from families which are socially-economically disadvantaged, to differences in amount, quality and style of adult input.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the findings from Phase 1 of the study have been reported and analysed. The findings support the focus for the generation and analysis of data which was to come in Phase 2. This focus was on the use of a repertoire of adult talk strategies to develop the children's skills in expository and narrative discourse. In the next three chapters, the findings for the

relationship between the use of these strategies and the children's development of these skills are presented and discussed. In the following chapter, the findings for the use of Fine Tuning strategies are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 9: FINDINGS IN PHASE 2 FOR EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE WITH FINE TUNING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

The findings from Phase 2 of the study are presented as findings for the use of the range of teaching strategies in the collaborative construction of expository talk on a range of topics, and in the collaborative construction of narratives. In this and subsequent chapters, initial capital letters are used for naming the categories of adult talk and the specific strategies within each category. In this chapter, the findings for the use of Fine Tuning strategies, in the construction of expository talk, are presented and discussed.

The findings from Phase 1 of the study show that, in relation to Listener-Speaker awareness, the children were willing to participate in adult-child dialogue. The Fine Tuning strategies used in Phase 2 of the study were: Responding with Joint Attention, Cueing, Prompting and Questioning for Joint Attention, and Adjusting Comprehension Levels. The focus of attention here was whether these strategies could further develop the children's skills in turn taking, and in initiating, sustaining and developing topics, to produce the extended conversations, and to build the linguistic structures, necessary for discourse. There was also a concern as to whether the Fine Tuning strategies could help to focus the children on more complex language uses, such as reflecting on, and reasoning about, experience, which were the focus for meaning making in Phase 2 of the study. Further, there was a concern to explore whether the Fine Tuning strategies could be differentiated to build on the strengths of each of the eight children, in terms of listener-speaker knowledge, and to meet their needs and enable each to move towards more complex modes of meaning making.

The findings for the relationship between the adult's use of the Fine Tuning strategies and the children's development of these language skills are presented here. The analysis and discussion of the findings run concurrently with the presentation. Various types of main and sub-headings are used to structure the presentation and the discussion. The main headings refer to the relationship between the strategy use and the children's individual and collective skills, as listeners and speakers. One set of subheadings refers to the major topics in the

discourses. In a second set the children's names are used. Here the children are discussed, in pairs, in terms of how the Fine Tuning strategies were differentiated to meet their needs. The transcripts quoted from are numbered from 17 to 33.

FINE TUNING FOR DIALOGUE

The analysis of expository discourse in Phase 2 of the study shows that together, the adults and the children attended to and discussed a range of topics at length and at considerable levels of complexity. The range of topics included people from the everyday world of work such as the postman, the builder and the fireman, jungle animals such as the elephant and lion and also pets, and classroom activities such as painting and making pancakes. The adult-child dialogues also prompted children to recall dreams, fears and memories, and to retell personal experiences.

The coding for the use of Fine Tuning strategies during expository talk shows that these strategies are strongly in evidence throughout. All of the 17 transcripts show the use of Fine Tuning strategies of Responding for Joint Attention, Prompting for Joint Attention, Questioning for Joint Attention and Cueing for Joint Attention. There is also evidence, in a number of transcripts, of the adult Adjusting the Comprehension Level of the talk, to make meaning more accessible for the children.

Communication is rooted in the inter-personal or intersubjective mode of meaning and the necessary conditions for intersubjective understanding are turn taking, intentionality, and relevance in relation to a speaker's contribution (Bruner, 1996). All of the transcripts for expository discourse (*Transcripts 17-33*) show the adults employing the Fine Tuning strategies of Responding so as to establish joint attention and turn taking with the speaker, and Questioning and Prompting to negotiate the speaker's meaning intention and to establish relevance. The use of these strategies can be seen in the following example from Transcript 17: *That's my present, (Chris, 17.1), Is that your present? (Anne, 17.2), Yeah and there's paint in there (Chris, 17.3), Oh? there's paint in there? (Anne, 17.4), Yeah, there's loads of paintin' in there (Chris, 17.5), And what are you going to do with that paint? (Anne, 17.6).*

Additional Fine Tuning strategies are used in response to the requirements of supporting discourse in small and whole group settings. In these contexts, together with supporting the needs of the primary speaker, the adult deliberately employs strategies aimed at including the other group participants in the discourse. Here the transcripts show the use of Fine Tuning strategies which Prompt the listeners to attend, Cue the listeners as to the salient points in the speaker's talk, and make the talk more accessible to the listeners by Adjusting the Comprehension Levels: *Cathy, do you hear what Chris says? The postman is bringing a present, Kevin have a look... The postman is bringing a present and Chris, tell her what's in the present (Anne, 17.8).*

The findings outlined above can be characterised as the use of Fine Tuning strategies by the adult to create and support dialogue as a context for language teaching and learning. Strategies which create and maintain joint attention with a speaker, those which cue listeners and those which prompt them to achieve joint attention and to respond with relevance to a topic, can be described as strategies which attempt to fine tune the dialogue context. They are an attempt to create a maximally supportive climate for the speaker; to scaffold his/her route to expression. Equally, they are an attempt to create the optimal conditions for the listeners, mediating their understanding and encouraging their collaboration.

Within a curriculum, understanding, based in joint attention and intention in relation to a topic, is a prerequisite condition for extending children's range of meanings. Additionally, the conditions for the social construction of meaning through dialogue: turn-taking, intentionality and relevance, must be in place. In Mercer's view, for a teacher to teach and a learner to learn, both partners need to contribute to creating a shared framework of understanding (Mercer, 2002). He describes talk as the principal tool for creating this framework and he is clear that it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the dialogue keeps *minds mutually attuned* (p. 143). In keeping with Mercer's view, the strong presence of Fine Tuning strategies throughout the transcripts can be interpreted as strategy use to enable dialogue and to create the conditions for collaborative discourse.

The evidence for the fine tuning strategies supporting dialogue, as a context for language teaching and learning, is important to the study's aim of providing an inclusive pedagogy. In the literature review, it was argued that language learning proceeds along a continuum and that an inclusive pedagogy is one which recognises this continuum and which differentiates to achieve an appropriate match between the teaching and the characteristics of the learner. From this perspective, fine tuning can be interpreted to mean sensitive adaptation of the strategies, in response to individual children's contributions, to attempt to achieve what the intervention literature describes as a maximally responsive environment (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006; Warren, 2000).

The transcripts show that the fine tuning strategies supported all of the children in constructing meaning on a topic. They also show that individual children had both similar and different needs in terms of the kinds and amounts of Fine Tuning support they required in speaking to, and developing a topic, and in presenting that topic to an audience. All of the children needed support in focusing on, and in sustaining, a topic over a sufficient number of turns to build a linguistic structure and to allow for discourse on that topic. At an individual level, children needed support along a continuum of ability from learning the meanings and functions of objects, during talk about highly contextualised topics, to communicating ideas in decontextualised language. Findings for the relationship between the use of the Fine Tuning strategies and the children's individual and collaborative contributions to discourse are outlined in the following sections.

FINE TUNING FOR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLABORATIVE MEANING MAKING

The transcripts for expository discourse (*Transcripts 17-33*) show a relationship between the adult's use of Responding, Prompting and Questioning for Joint Attention and the children's individual abilities to elaborate on and to develop topics. Equally there is a relationship between the use of Cueing, Prompting and Questioning for Joint Attention and the children's abilities to attend to and to contribute to each others topics. In a set of transcripts which are linked by three, recurring topics: the postman, the elephant and the hedgehog (*Transcripts 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24*), the strategies identified above are used to support the children in developing the topics, individually and collectively, across a number of contexts.

In this set of transcripts, the discourse is prompted by my introduction of a matching picture card game in a series of small group contexts. The cards depict a range of people, animals, toys and everyday objects which should be familiar to children in this age group. Here the intention was to provide a stimulus which had the potential for talk at a range of levels of complexity including basic naming and describing, and more complex uses such as making associations, explaining functions, speculating about possible difficulties and suggesting solutions. The findings for the levels of meaning constructed between the adult and the children in relation to these topics are outlined and discussed in the following chapter. The findings presented in this chapter are for the relationship between the adult's use of Fine Tuning strategies and the children's abilities to initiate, respond to, and to develop topics individually, in collaboration with the adult, and collectively, in collaboration both with the adult and with each other.

In relation to this set of transcripts, in the small group contexts, the discourse is between myself and two groups of children. In the first group, Chris, Karen, Cathy and Kevin discuss the pictures with me. In the second group the children are Nessa, Aisling and Chris. At a later stage, children from each of these groups present information on these topics to the whole class group.

The Postman

In the first episode with group one, as we are discussing an illustration of a postman carrying a parcel, Chris introduces the idea that this postman is bringing him a present (*Chris, 17.1*). This idea is sustained and developed in two subsequent episodes (*Transcripts 18 and 19*) and is finally presented to the whole class group in a supported monologue format (*Transcript 21*). In episode one also, I introduce the topics of the elephant (*Anne, 71.43*) and the hedgehog (*Anne, 17.145*). These topics are discussed by this group in this and in a subsequent episode (*Transcript 19*) and the elephant is the subject of a later presentation by Kevin to the whole class group (*Transcript 21*). For group two, the topic of the hedgehog is introduced by me and is discussed in the small group context (*Transcript 22*) and followed

through in the whole group context (*Transcript 24*), with all three children making a contribution.

This set of transcripts records a process in which meaning was constructed and reconstructed across the small and whole group contexts. The Fine Tuning strategies enabled the process by requiring that speakers elaborate on topics, and extend them, beyond an initial introduction, to build an account that could be discussed and reflected upon in the existing context and could then be reported, to another audience, with continued opportunity for discussion and reflection. In the discourse on the postman and the parcel (*Transcript 17*), Chris initiates the topic and elaborates on it immediately, giving me an opportunity to prompt for further meaning and explanation: *That's my present (Chris, 17.1), Is that your present? (Anne, 17.2), Yeah and there's paint in there (Chris, 17.3), Oh? there's paint in there? (Anne, 17.4), Yeah, there's loads of paintin' in there (Chris, 17.5), And what are you going to do with that paint? (Anne, 17.6)*. Chris's response to this question is a further elaboration of the topic and it is established that he will use the paint to paint his wall blue (*Chris, 17.7*).

In the second episode (*Transcript 18*), the postman topic is raised by me. This initiation is a deliberate prompt to explore whether and how Chris will reconstruct the familiar topic and to provide an opportunity for him to further articulate his idea. In his reconstruction, he keeps the main focus of his original account and he elaborates still further, again giving me an opportunity to challenge him to develop the topic through explanation: *There's a postman bringing me a present...walking down the street to my house and putted it ...in the post box (Chris, 18.74), Did it fit in the post box? (Anne, 18.75), No (Chris, 18.76), Oh, there was a problem. Karen...Cathy...When the postman came with the present, there was a problem. Tell them what the problem was (Anne, 18.77)*.

In Fine Tuning for Chris, who is adept at initiating and contributing to a topic, the strategies of questioning and prompting can be used to support him in maintaining intentionality and relevance but also to challenge him to use his lexico-grammatical knowledge to construct a considered response, involving reasoning and explanation. In this context, the strategies are used to encourage Chris to take on the semantic style described by Painter (1999a) as a

cognitive stance (p.75). As the conversation continues and the linguistic structure builds, the strategies of Responding, Prompting and Questioning enable the negotiation of meaning on Chris's topic and they support the maintenance of coherence in arriving at a resolution.

The strategies also support Chris in reflecting on the postman's behaviour and in constructing logical semantic relations about his actions: *Em...He pushed the present in the post box and it didn't fit...so he opened the door and...(Chris, 18.78), It was locked (Kevin, 18.79), Yes, it was probably locked, so he had to? (Anne, 18.80), He had keys...and he (miming opening door with a key) put the ...an' he...(Chris, 18.81), Oh, the postman had keys? And did he use them to open the door? I thought he was going to ring the bell or knock...and then your Mammy could open the door. What do you think happened Chris? (Anne, 18.82), Yeah, he ringed, he ring a dinged dinged ...he ringed my bell (Chris, 18.83), Kevin, this boy is telling you a story and it's his turn...are you listening? Go on Chris, he rang the bell...(Anne, 18.84), And my Ma woke up and runned down stairs and opened the door and the postman gived the present to her ...the present to my Mammy...and I bounced and I opened the present and then there was...loads of paint (Chris, 18.85).*

This excerpt is an example of how the strategies work in the dialogue context, to scaffold the child's construction of meaning, at quite a complex level. This level requires the use of the symbolic function of language in ways which move the children on to modes of meaning making which were not in evidence in their spontaneous talk in Phase 1 of the study, when their talk was rooted in concrete, tangible events and experiences. Prompted by the original picture, Chris is creating a scenario which may or may not be rooted in actual experience but which is now being constructed independently of context and is reliant on language alone. His interpretation of the picture is a novel one and is not based in shared knowledge. He is having the experience of constructing decontextualised meaning for an audience and the demand on his listeners is that they must attend to linguistically presented information which goes well beyond the physical prop of the picture. Further, there is an added layer of complexity at work in that Chris is not just telling an item of information but is being required to build his interpretation through engaging in some level of deductive reasoning. Here the child is being asked to engage in what Bruner calls the arguments of action (Bruner,

1996). This is the style of discourse which is believed to move children towards the cognitive and semantic styles which support learning within a curriculum (Halliday, 1993; Bruner, 1996; Bernstein, 1990; Painter, 1999a).

The final revisiting of the topic is when Chris presents all of the accumulated ideas to the whole class group (*Transcript 21*). The excerpt from this presentation, quoted below, shows that the adult's Fine Tuning strategies are important in maintaining the conditions of joint attention between the speaker and the audience. The strategies are also used to help the child to reconstruct the idea, by reminding him of key stages in its original development (*Anne, 21.48*), and to keep his focus on the topic through to its satisfactory resolution (*Anne, 21.64*). There is an additional use which is that the prompts sustain the mode of meaning at a level of complexity which requires reasoning and explanation, for example where the prompt keeps the focus on the problem with the present being brought by the postman, and requires Chris to explain it. In these uses of the strategies, the adult can also be said to be engaged jointly, with the child, in the reconstruction of this topic to the audience. An additional aspect to the Fine Tuning here is that, in the joint construction, as well as acting to support the listeners and speakers in all of the ways outlined above, the adult's contributions help to demonstrate the level of engagement and the style of reflection required for the discourse.

Excerpt from Transcript 21

40 Anne: ...Chris do you remember what you were going to say (*whispering prompt to Chris, will you tell them about the postman?*)

41 Chris: Yeah

42 Anne: Chris has a lovely picture to show you and Chris is going to tell you something special about the picture, now (*to the children*) are you ready? (*whispering again to Chris*). Chris tell them all about your present

43 Chris: Em...the postman's bringing me a present

44 Children: Some laughter

45 Anne: You tell them go on...

46 Kevin: The postman bringing him...

47 Chris: Em...bringin' me a present and it... can't...it

48 Anne: And there was a problem about the present

49 Chris: Em...the present

50 Garry: It won't be a lorry

51 Chris: Won't fit in the post box

52 Grace & Tess: Aw! (*Gasp of concern*)

53 Chris: So...he ringed the bell and my Ma comed down stairs and opened the door

54 Karen: How would'nt he reach them stairs?

55 Chris: And the postman gived the ...present to my Ma

56 Tess: Ah!

57 Chris: *And I goed down stairs...runned down stairs and ...opened the present and ...it was loads a paint*
 58 Children & Adults Together: *Oh!*
 59 Grace: *Oh beautiful!*
 60 Anne : *(whispering this prompt to Chris) Tell the children what you'r going to do with the paint*
 61 Chris: *Goin' to paint my door and paint my wall...*
 62 Children: *A ha ha!*
 63Chris: *Blue!*
 64 Anne: *He's going to paint his wall blue...ah Chris... Wasn't that a wonderful story?*
 65 Grace: *A great story*
 66 Tess: *I loved listening to that story*
 67 Anne: *Did you like listening to that story Tess?*

The topic of the postman was initiated and developed by Chris and, as can be seen from Transcript 21, a topic that began in expository discourse was constructed, over time, and in collaboration with the adult, into quite a coherent narrative. In this case, in the initial episodes, the other small group participants, Kevin, Karen and Cathy, did not contribute significantly to the construction of the narrative and the transcripts show them to be in a mainly listening role as the topic was developed. In episode one, following Chris's initiation, the discussion of the topic continues over a further twenty utterances. Here, along with maintaining the topic, the focus of the adult strategies is to engage the remaining group members with Chris's idea.

Transcript 17 shows the adult Cueing, Prompting and Questioning the children, to achieve and to maintain joint attention with Chris: *Cathy, do you hear what Chris says? The postman is bringing a present. Kevin, have a look...the postman is bringing a present and Chris, tell her what's in the present (Anne, 17.8)*. While none of the children contributes in any significant way to elaborating the topic, their responses show that they are attending to it and are engaging with Chris's idea: *...but Cathy, what did Chris say is in here? (Anne, 17.18), A painta be (Cathy, 17.19) ...I'm not paintin' on me wall 'cos I have none a that (Karen, 17.23).....What colour is he going to use? (Anne, 17.24), Blue (Karen & Kevin, 17.25)*. One of the strengths of the dialogue context is that, providing the strategies are used to mediate the meaning for the listeners and to ensure comprehension, the listeners benefit from hearing Chris's use of decontextualised language and from hearing the adult demonstrate a style of reflection: *I thought he was going to ring the bell (Anne, 18.82)*.

In Phase 2, the findings show the children developing a greater awareness of each other's contributions than was in evidence in Phase 1. Early in Phase 2, there is evidence of the children beginning to be influenced by each others' topics (Transcripts 21 & 19) and there is good evidence that levels of engagement with each others' ideas increase as Phase 2 progresses with good collaboration in evidence by May of Phase 2 of the study (Transcripts, 40 & 41). The findings show that Fine Tuning strategies are centrally important in developing this awareness and in fostering it, over the course of Phase 2 of the study, to promote the collaborative meaning making that emerges.

The Hedgehog

The findings for the use of Fine Tuning strategies during the various discourses on the topic of the hedgehog, again illustrate the role these strategies have in helping children to attend to a topic, to sustain it, and to speak with relevance over a long number of turns. The discourse on this topic also shows evidence of the strategies supporting the children in attending to and in influencing each other's contributions. The dominant Fine Tuning strategies here are Prompting for Joint Attention and Responding for Joint Attention.

In the transcripts, individual children build on the adult prompts to develop the topic: *Who has a hedgehog ...who is creeping in the grass? (Anne, 17.147), ...I have him (Chris, 17.148) ...Tell her (referring to Cathy) what he's doing (Anne, 17.164), ...Creeping in the grass...finding food (Chris, 17.167).* The adult interprets the speaker's contributions and re-iterates them for the listeners but is also stimulated by the speaker's prompts and builds on them with further contributions: *Oh Chris that's wonderful...Karen, I don't think you heard him. He said, he's a hedgehog, creeping in the grass, finding food. Did you hear what Chris said? And Chris, do you know what else? I want to tell you something...Kevin, I want to tell you something special about him, Karen and Cathy look, Chris, he has spikes on his back...(Anne, 17.169).* Again here, meaning is constructed in a process which relies on turn-taking, underpinned by intentionality and relevance. The Fine Tuning strategies enable the children and the adult to maintain these key elements and to engage together in the process.

When the topic arises again in a further episode with this group of children (*Transcript 19*), Karen's description of the hedgehog includes the prompts given by both myself and Chris in the original episode: *A hedgehog (Karen, 19.62), And tell us what he's doing (Anne, 19.63), He's crawlin' in the grass ...for food (Karen, 19.64)*. When I respond by reminding the group that it was Chris who gave us that idea, Chris is prompted to elaborate again and my strategy of Responding with Joint Attention affirms his contribution and repeats it for the listeners : *And he's smellin' (Chris, 19.66), And he's smelling (Anne, 19.67)*. When I prompt Karen and the listeners again by recalling all of the descriptions to date, Karen elaborates with her new contribution: *Karen that's wonderful, he's a hedgehog and he's crawling in the grass sniffing and looking for food (Anne, 19.69), And he wants his mammy (Karen, 19.70), And does he want his mammy as well? (Anne, 19.71)*.

In yet another episode in which Chris is a member of a group with Nessa and Aisling (*Transcript 22*), following prompting, Chris reconstructs the description of the hedgehog, keeping the original elements: *Look at this fellow, what did we say about him? He's? Do you remember we said, he's? (Anne, 22.210), Creeping (Chris, 22.211), He's creeping along in the ? (Anne, 22.212), Grass...he smells ...food in the grass (Chris, 22.213), Chris says he smells food, maybe he's looking for something to? (Anne, 22.214), Eat (Aisling, 22.215)*. Later in the episode, Nessa uses a similar style of description: *The hedgehog went...sniffin' in the grass with...a flower and grass (Nessa, 22.227)*.

The Elephant

The discourse on the topic of the elephant continued over three episodes. Two of these were in small group contexts (*Transcripts 17 & 19*) and the third was with the whole class group (*Transcript 21*). A similar process to that discussed above is in evidence in this discourse with similar findings for the use of the Fine Tuning strategies. In the initial episode, the topic is discussed only briefly when the adult prompts at different levels, in an attempt to enable the child to elaborate on the topic: *Kevin tell us about him...look Kevin, he's very big and he has a trunk...he has a long trunk (Anne, 17. 45), He says whooo (Kevin, 17.46), Does he roar like that? That's your one Kevin (referring to illustration of elephant), (Anne, 17.47)*.

The topic is raised again in the context of preparing to report back from the small group to the main class group (*Transcript 19*). Using an illustration and a toy elephant, in this episode I am prompting Kevin to recall the previous description of the elephant: ... *Kevin, when we're sitting on our cushions today, will you tell the children about the elephant? (Anne, 19.11), Yeah (Kevin, 19.12), What will you tell them? (Anne, 19.13), I have the elephant (Kevin, 19.14), Will you tell them he's big and he has a ...? What has he got? (Anne, 19.15), A big (Chris, 19.16, making the shape of a trunk with his arm), A long trunk (Anne, 19.17), Trunk (Karen, 19.18), What has he got Kevin? (Anne, 19.19), A long trunk, A Trunk (Karen & Kevin together, 19.20). Over a further fourteen utterances, Kevin, (19.30), Karen, (19.32), and Chris (19.33), all repeat this phrase and Cathy attempts to say the name (19.24).*

The presentation to the whole class group offers an opportunity for Kevin to combine all of the information on the elephant in a coherent account. The transcript, from which the relevant excerpt is quoted below, shows how the Fine Tuning strategies support his construction of the account. They help to maintain joint attention between him and his audience. Equally, they are an attempt to accommodate Chris's interjections by adjusting the comprehension levels of his contributions to fit with the focus of Kevin's account. The excerpt also shows that two interjections from Nessa in the audience, which were relevant and interesting and, potentially, could have contributed richly to the discourse, are lost among the other voices (*Nessa, 21.71; 21.94*).

Two other contributions from the audience are interesting in how they influence the topic and provide an example of meaning constructed collaboratively. These contributions begin with two questions from the class teacher who is also in the audience (*Grace, 21.99; 21.101*). Her second question is answered from the audience by Garry. Kevin then follows immediately with an elaboration which could be said to build on Garry's response. In this short section of the transcript, the format of the discourse could be said to have changed from supported monologue, to dialogue, with the class teacher, Kevin and Garry as participants. In this dialogue, the listener/speaker roles shift between the presenter and the audience. The topic is developed between them and the audience members' contributions influence the resolution of the topic:

Excerpt from Transcript 21

66 Anne: ...and look at what Kevin is going to show you
67 Kevin: The elephant
68 Nessa: I know it's an elephant
69 Grace: Sean let's listen
70 Anne: Now are you ready Kevin? Tell them all about it (whispers prompt to Kevin). First tell them his name. This is the?
70a Kevin: This is the elephant
71 Nessa: That's his tusks
72 Anne: And? (pointing to his trunk)
73 Cathy: Is a elephant
74 Nessa: Tusks
75 Anne: He has a ?
76 Nessa,
Chris& Aisling together: Trunk
77 Kevin: A trunk
78 Chris: (makes a roaring elephant sound)
79 Anne: And Kevin, tell the children the story you told me about ...what does the elephant do with his trunk?
80 Chris: (Makes a roaring sound)
81 Anne: That's the sound he makes but what does he do?
82 Kevin: (to Anne) What?
83 Anne: (whispering prompt to Kevin) He sucks the water with his trunk
84 Kevin: He sucks all the water
85 Anne: With his?
86 Kevin: Trunk
87 Anne : Will you show the children...
88 Grace: How does that happen?
89 Kevin: Mimes the action
90 Anne: He's putting his trunk into the water and lets' hear the sound, when he makes...when he sucks the water up
91 Chris: Making a roaring sound again
92 Anne: No when he sucks the water Chris?...Remember the sound you made
93 Children: All miming and making sucking sounds
94 Nessa: I know how elephants get ...a bath
95 Anne: Oh that's a lovely sound...And then what does he do with the water
96 Kevin : Mimes the elephant putting water in mouth
97 Anne: Tell us...he puts it into his
98 Kevin: Mouth
99 Grace: Why does he put it into his mouth Kevin?
100 Kevin: Cos he does
101 Grace: But what does he want the water for?
102 Garry: For a drink
103 Kevin: He's thirsty (thirsty)
104 Grace: Ah!
105 Anne: Probably, he's thirsty...Kevin that was wonderful...
106 Tom: Making sounds
107 Anne: Look Tom, el-e-phant (singing and marking the syllables by clapping) will we clap his name everybody?
108 Grace: Yes
109 Anne with children: El-e-phant (clapping syllables with children joining in)...

This excerpt also shows the use of the strategies to Fine Tune the context to include a range of contributions, including Tom's one contribution in the form of a vocalisation. Here Tom's initiation is acknowledged and the discourse is adjusted so that he can be included in the collective contribution of singing and clapping the elephant's name.

BUILDING LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

The findings for the Fine Tuning strategies presented so far show how they supported the children's production of extended discourses on a topic and helped them to engage with those topics at levels requiring reflection and explanation. Intrinsic to these processes is a further one in which the Fine Tuning strategies helped to develop understanding of how to give the appropriate information on a topic and how to structure that information. Here the concern was to identify the salient information on the topic such as principal character, name or class of object, and the defining attributes, actions and functions. In addition, there was the concern of organising or ordering this information in a coherent account whose structure moved from the general to the specific. These skills are regarded as key aspects of expository discourse and their presence in children at age five has been linked to achievements in reading and writing at age eight (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer Wolf, 2004).

In the discussion on the postman, which is a child initiated topic, having Responded and Prompted to acknowledge and to establish the child's topic: *That's my present (Chris, 17.1), Is that your present? (Anne, 17.2), Yeah and there's paint in there (Chris, 17.3)*, the adult then Prompts the child to improve on the structure of the account by identifying and beginning with the main actor: *Will you hold it up so that they can see Chris? (referring to picture of Postman) Tell them who is in your picture (Anne, 17.6)*. For Chris, this small prompt is enough and he goes on to identify the critical features of the account and to relate them to each other in a logical sequence. Subsequently, the adult strategies are used to reiterate these discourse competencies for the listeners, emphasising the critical units of information, their relation to each other and the manner of ordering them to re-construct a coherent account. The adult cues provide another opportunity to hear a clear, well ordered account of who gave what, the contents of what was given and what will be done with the contents: *Cathy, do you hear what Chris says? The Postman is bringing a present, Kevin,*

have a look...The postman is bringing a present and Chris, tell her what's in the present (Anne, 17.8)and Chris said, when he gets that paint, when he opens up his present and takes out the paint, he's going to? (Anne, 17.20).

This skill of identifying and organising the relevant semantic elements in an oral account or narrative is considered to be a precursor to understanding what is described as control of text level macro structures, in written discourse (Peterson & McCabe, 1994). An example of text level macro structure in expository texts is the way in which information is *funnelled* from the general to the specific (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer Wolf, 2004, p.125).

Experience of producing oral discourses, both expository and narrative, can help children to understand text-level macro structures such as how different kinds or genres of information are organised in written discourse and how to interpret and integrate the important semantic elements of a text, for overall understanding (Griffin et al., 2004).

The conversations on the topics of the hedgehog and the elephant are deliberate attempts to develop the children's understanding of how to speak to, and to comprehend a topic, in the ways outlined above. Here the topics are adult initiated. The Fine Tuning strategies have the deliberate focus of helping the children to identify the critical units of information such as appropriate reference in terms of name or class of object, and defining attributes, actions and functions. They also have the specific focus of helping the children to organise this information within a coherent structure.

In Transcript 17, the topic of the hedgehog is introduced with his name and a description of an action: *Who has a hedgehog? (Anne, 17.145), I have him (Chris, 17.146), Who is creeping in the grass (Anne, 17.147)*. This topic is new to all of the children in the group and the name of the animal is repeated a number of times and is associated with a familiar action, *creeping in the grass*. Here the Fine Tuning strategy is to Adjust the Levels of Comprehension to ensure understanding, as a prerequisite for introducing further new information about the hedgehog. When the children are engaged and the topic has been further elaborated by Chris, who says the hedgehog is *finding food (17.167)*, the information to date is repeated with the adult Cueing all of the important elements and Expanding upon the account by including the

hedgehog's important and defining characteristic spikes: *Oh Chris that's wonderful...Karen, I don't think you heard him. He said, he's a hedgehog, creeping in the grass, finding food. Did you hear what Chris said? And Chris, do you know what else? I want to tell you something...Kevin, I want to tell you something special about him. Karen and Cathy look, Chris, he has spikes on his back.....spikes on his back. Will you remember that about him Chris? (Anne, 17.169).*

There is some evidence that this use of the Fine Tuning strategies does help the children to know how to speak to a topic by focusing on the important semantic elements and by sequencing those elements with increasing specificity. For example, when we return to the topic of the hedgehog in a later dialogue session, Karen takes on the style of description we used in the earlier episode: *...Tell us then, what will you say? (Anne, 19.61), A hedgehog (Karen, 19.62), And tell us what he's doing (Anne, 19.63), He's crawlin' in the grass...for food (Karen, 19.64).*

The transcripts of the conversations on the topic of the elephant (*Transcripts 17, 19, & 21*), also show the adult Questioning, Prompting and Cueing for Joint Attention in ways which focus on building semantic sequences comprised of names, then attributes, then actions or functions of attributes. Again here, these strategies are used in both the dialogue contexts and the supported monologue contexts, to support the children's understanding and development of semantic structure: *What will you tell them (Anne speaking too Kevin, 19.13), I have an elephant (Kevin, 19.14), Will you tell them he's big and he has a? What has he got? (Anne, 19.15), A big (Chris, 19.16, making the shape of a trunk with his arm), A long trunk (Anne, 19.17), Trunk (Karen, 19.18), What has he got Kevin? (Anne, 19.19), A long trunk, (Karen & Kevin together, 19.20).*

During the discourse on the elephant with the whole class group, quoted in the previous section, there is some evidence of Kevin, Nessa and Chris attending to the appropriate sequencing of the main semantic elements albeit that their contributions are heavily scaffolded by the adult's Cueing and Prompting strategies. Following Kevin's introduction of

the topic by naming the elephant, these children's contributions are all about relevant attributes.

FINE TUNING FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

A central concern in the analysis of the strategy use was whether the strategies could be differentiated to match the characteristics of the children as learners and to build on their strengths and support their individual needs. The data show that individual children had both similar and different needs in terms of the kinds, and amounts, of Fine Tuning support they required in speaking to and developing a topic, and in presenting that topic to an audience. In this section, findings for the differentiation of the Fine Tuning strategies, for pairs of children within the group of eight, are discussed.

Chris and Nessa

From the examples quoted above, it can be seen that Chris is adept at and enjoys contributing to and developing a topic. Equally, from the postman sequence, there is good evidence that Chris can use decontextualised language to create an imaginary scenario and that he can explain issues and reason about his chosen topic, in response to challenges from the adult. The data show similar findings for Nessa. In both the small group and whole group contexts, she shows herself to be an attentive listener who frequently contributes relevant information (*Nessa, 21.68 & 71*) and can develop a topic by introducing relevant and interesting ideas: *I know how elephants get ...a bath (Nessa, 21.94)*.

Like Chris, Nessa can use decontextualised language to recreate and recount experiences for uninformed listeners. Her recall of a dream is an example of this and also an example of her ability to use the representative function of language to interpret the nature of the experience both to herself and to third parties: *Who has the castle? (Jennie, 23.178), Me (Nessa, 23.179), And teacher, could you ask her anything else about that castle? (Anne, 23.180 whispering prompt I wonder who lives in there?) Who lives in there? (Jennie, 23.181), Who is it? (Anne, 23.182), The king of the castle (Nessa, 23.183), Oh it could be....Nessa has the castle where the king lives...and the castle has flags flying on top (Anne, 23.184), I know 'cos I saw a king of the castle...I'd a dream of a king of a castle (Nessa, 23.185)*.

The Fine Tuning strategies that best support Chris and Nessa seem to be Responding and Prompting strategies that challenge them to articulate ideas explicitly and coherently, and those that scaffold their development of decontextualised thinking, through Prompting and Questioning for reflection and for deductive reasoning. The strategy of Adjusting the Level of Comprehension is relevant also for Chris and Nessa. This strategy enables the adult to interpret the children more clearly to themselves, helping to clarify their ideas. It also enables the adult to mediate these children's ideas for those listeners in the group who are less able communicators.

Kevin and Karen

The findings show that Kevin and Karen are willing participants in dialogue. For these two children, the Fine Tuning strategies of Prompting, Questioning and Cueing for Joint Attention, help them to attend to a topic and to speak to it over a long number of turns (*Kevin, Trans. 17, 18, 19, &21; Karen, Trans. 17, 18, 19*). Within a supportive context of prompts, questions and cues, Kevin also attempts to develop the topic in ways which are relevant and interesting (*Kevin, 17.64-87; 18.5-56*). Neither Kevin nor Karen has the same command of vocabulary and sentence structure as Chris and Nessa and both need Prompting and Questioning to establish meaning intention and to achieve joint attention with their listeners. These strategies also help to develop their understanding of the need for explicitness so that listeners can appreciate the relevance of their contributions. For both Kevin and Karen, their lack of explicitness requires that the adult supports them by Adjusting the talk of each, to meet the comprehension needs of their listeners.

The transcripts also show that within the dialogue context, Kevin is beginning to use decontextualised language to report information (*Trans. 17*) but also to communicate about experience and about his interpretation of that experience (*18.5-56*). In the second example, Kevin is attempting to communicate meaning which does not rest in shared experience and which relies on the representative function of language. The findings show that the Fine Tuning strategies help him to sustain his idea and to communicate his meaning intention.

The transcripts show that Karen's communication of meaning is still largely rooted in reporting and commenting on, everyday, first hand experience. She also needs Cueing and Prompting to attend to and to collaborate with others (*Trans. 17 & 18*). The transcripts show that for Karen, the Fine tuning strategies were differentiated to keep her attending and contributing to topics, her own and those of others, and to Prompt for relevance and explicitness (19.55-64).

Aisling and Jennie

Aisling and Jennie are also able communicators and can contribute relevant information on a topic. On the standardised tests administered in Phase 1 of the study, Aisling had some of the highest achievement scores of all of the eight participants. However, both are reticent and Jennie needs particular emotional support. For these children, together with the strategies outlined above, careful Questioning, Prompting and Responding are needed to elicit their contributions, and sensitive Cueing and Prompting of their listeners help to motivate the girls and persuade them to engage.

Two sequences from Transcript 23 show this use of the strategies to support Aisling and Jennie in using their communicative abilities to attend to, and to develop, a topic.

Nessa, Aisling, Jennie and I are playing the picture card game. In a development of the earlier format, the girls are each having turns at being the teacher. We have been joined by Grace, the class teacher: *Who has the hedgehog?* (Nessa, 23.150), *I do* (Aisling, 23.151), *Who?...wait now, she has to say more than that, hasn't she?...who is?...Look at what he's doing and tell her about it...who has the hedgehog who is?* (Anne, 23.152), *Sniffin' in the grass* (Nessa, 23.153), *Oh! he's sniffing in the grass...and tell her a little bit about his...* Nessa, look (pointing to the spikes) ...about the... (Anne, 23.154), *Who has the hairy spikes on him* (Nessa, 23.155), *Oh, he has the hairy spikes on him* (Anne, 23.156), *I have* (Aisling, 23.157), *Now, we want to hear what Aisling's going to say* (Anne, 23.158), *The hedgehog* (Aisling, 23.159), *And what else?...teacher (referring to the child in role), wait 'til she tells you a little bit more* (Anne, 23.160), *I don't know what them is* (Aisling, 23.161), *They're called spikes* (Anne, whispering prompt 23.162), *Spikes* (Aisling, 23.163), *And will*

you tell teacher what he's doing? (Anne, 23.164), Sneaking in the grass (Aisling, 23.165), He's sneaking in the grass, and Nessa said he was sniffing in the grass...(Anne, 23.166).

When Jennie is in the teacher role, she needs prompting to persuade her to extend her utterances and to communicate all of the information that she has about the topic: *(We're ready teacher (Anne, 23.171), Who has the dog with the basket on 'im? (Jennie, 23.172), I have the dog in the basket (Aisling, 23.173), It's this (Jennie, 23.174, showing picture), And I heard you saying it, I have the dog in the basket, but will you tell teacher? Can you think of anything else to tell teacher about that basket or about what you see there, Aisling? (Anne, 23.175), A red pillow (Aisling, 23.176), Oh! the doggie is sleeping on the red pillow. Will you give it to her teacher? Wasn't she very good? (Anne, 23.177).*

There is evidence in the transcripts for expository discourse that when prompted, both Aisling (*Transcript 22*) and Jennie (*Transcript 25*) can use decontextualised language to report some items of factual information which is new to their listeners. However, unlike Chris and Nessa, Aisling and Jennie rarely initiate or develop a topic spontaneously and developing a conversation with them requires careful scaffolding by the adult. For both of these girls, the Fine Tuning strategies were important in drawing them into conversations and in sustaining these conversations with them. Equally, the strategies were important in challenging these girls to build linguistic structures which required greater complexity in terms of language use and cognitive engagement, than their habitual style of communication allowed.

Cathy and Tom

The findings for the use of the Fine Tuning strategies in supporting Cathy and Tom show that all make a contribution to these children's listener speaker roles in both the dialogue contexts and in their presentations of information on a topic.

In the early weeks of Phase 2 of the study, Cathy participated in the small group dialogue contexts. These transcripts show the adult using Responding, Prompting and Cueing strategies to establish and maintain joint attention and to support Cathy's contributions to the

topics. They also show the adult attempting to mediate understanding by repeating and emphasising utterances and by Adjusting the Comprehension Levels of her own, and the children's talk: *Cathy, do you hear what Chris says? The postman is bringing a present... the postman is bringing a present and Chris, tell her what's in the present (Anne, 17.8).....But Cathy, what did Chris say is in here? (Anne, 17.18), A painta be (Cathy, 17.19), Paint, ...and Chris said, when he gets that paint, when he opens up his present and takes out the paint, he's going to? (Anne, 17.20), Open (Cathy, 17.21), He's going to open the present and take out the paint...(Anne, 17.22)*

Achieving and maintaining joint attention is a critical aspect of dialogue. Cathy's articulation difficulties can impair her communication of meaning intention and can inhibit understanding for her listeners. The strategy of Adjusting Comprehension, as in the example below, *(Anne, 17.57)* allows the adult to check for joint attention and intention with Cathy, and to establish the topic: *Who has the pear with the snail on it? (Anne, 17.51), ...Townysnail (Cathy, 17.54, meaning intention unclear), Cathy, where is it? (Anne, 17.55), Othere (Cathy, 17.56, sounds like over there), Look Cathy, pear (Anne, 17.57, showing and telling), Pear (Cathy, 17.58), Good girl...(Anne, 17.59).*

Cathy can lose concentration and can sometimes appear to have comprehension difficulties. The use of the Fine Tuning strategies is important here in recognising Cathy's focus of attention, following her lead on the topic and responding to and building on her contribution: *Who has the pussy cat ...with (Anne, 17.33), Me...I like pussy cat (Cathy, 17.34), And look what the pussy cat has, a pink ball (Anne, 17.35), I like pussy cat (Cathy, 17.36), And I like pussy cats too (Anne, 17.37).*

The transcripts (17, 19 & 21) show good evidence that the Fine Tuning strategies enable Cathy to engage with a topic over a long number of turns, that they support her inclusion in discourse and enable her to contribute with relevance to building a linguistic structure, albeit that her contribution is at a one or two word level. Equally, the adult use of the strategies supports Cathy in presenting information to an audience by Cueing the audience for her and by Adjusting the Levels of Comprehension for the audience, through recasting her utterances

as clearer statements: *Okay are you ready? This is Cathy's special picture (Anne, cueing the whole class group to listen to Cathy's presentation, 21.118), A pears a snail (Cathy, 21.119), Ah look! (Grace, 21.120), A pear with a snail on it! (Anne, 21.121).*

The transcripts show that Tom was extremely interested in engaging with the adult. His turn-taking skills were in place. He could attend to a topic over a number of turns and he could indicate understanding. He could also contribute although, in the main, he was reliant on sounds and gestures. In an episode from January of Phase 2, (Transcript 20) Tom and I are naming a set of toy animals. The adult Responds to the child's initiations and Cues and Prompts him, supported by the physical props of the animals. The transcript shows Tom's enjoyment of conversing with the adult in a one-to-one context. He attends and speaks to the topic over a long number of turns albeit relying on vocalisations and gestures. At this time in the study, the focus for Tom was on developing his expressive vocabulary. This transcript shows the role of the Fine Tuning strategies in achieving and maintaining joint attention with him as a necessary context in which to model the target words and phrases which were the focus for teaching and learning.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR FINE TUNING STRATEGIES

The findings presented in this chapter show how, as listeners and speakers, the children can be enabled to attend to and speak to a topic and to sustain and develop that topic in ways which require commitment and sincerity of purpose and which preserve the conditions of turn taking and relevance. The Fine Tuning strategies are used to create a climate of inter-subjectivity wherein adults and children are interested and appreciative of, each others contributions and in which they influence those contributions and explore and develop topics together.

The strategies support the children in identifying and ordering the key semantic elements in a topic, to build a coherent discourse. Further, the findings show how the use of the strategies in dialogue contexts can enable the children to begin to consider and to talk about, aspects of a topic which go beyond the immediate or the visible. By so doing, the children go beyond the inter-subjective mode of meaning and begin to enter modes which are interpretative and

propositional (Bruner, 1996) and are based in decontextualised thinking. With these levels of engagement, the children are operating in discourse modes and are building on and moving from the levels of talk which were in evidence in Phase 1. In that Phase, the children's topics and conversations were rooted, predominantly, in everyday experience of the physical world and their contributions were short and often lacking in structure and coherence.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the findings for the use of Fine Tuning strategies, in developing the children's expository discourse skills, have been presented and discussed. The Fine Tuning strategies enable the children to achieve intersubjective understanding with the adult, and with each other, and to maintain conditions of turn taking, relevance and sincerity, which are the requirements of dialogue. Within this climate, the children are supported further in contributing to and developing topics in an expository discourse mode. In the following chapter, the findings for the use of Modelling strategies, in developing expository discourse, are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 10: FINDINGS IN PHASE 2 FOR EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE WITH MODELLING AND DISCOURSE ENABLING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings for the use of Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies, in developing the children's skills in expository discourse, are presented and discussed. The Modelling strategies used were: Prompting, Repetition, Questioning, Recasting and Expanding. The Discourse Enabling strategies were: strategies of Continuing the Topic and Elaborating on the topic. Here the focus of analysis is to identify the relationship between the use of these strategies and the children's abilities to elaborate on experience and to go beyond naming the elements of experience, to categorising these and to identifying the criteria for classification. The concern here also was to enable the children to use language as a tool for reflection; for thinking about experience and for attempting to explain it in terms of causal relations.

The analysis and discussion of the findings run concurrently with the presentation. In this chapter, the main headings refer to the relationship between the strategy use and the children's knowledge and use of the elements of discourse. In a set of subheadings the children's names are used. In these sections, the findings on the differentiation of the strategies are discussed. Four of the children are discussed as a group, two are discussed as a pair, and two are discussed individually. The transcripts quoted from are numbered from 17 to 33.

MODELLING TO DEVELOP VOCABULARY AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

The transcripts for Expository discourse (*Transcripts 17-33*) show the multilayered functions of adult-child dialogue in language teaching and learning. Together with a focus on the rules of dialogue and the structures of discourse, a fundamental concern, in all of the episodes of talk, is the development of the children's abilities to create and to communicate meaning, through developing their knowledge of vocabulary and command of sentence structure. In

the two sets of transcripts on the topics of elephant and the hedgehog, quoted in Chapter 9, there is also an emphasis on developing the vocabulary for the topics, including that used for describing attributes and characteristics, and there is an emphasis on enabling the children to use this vocabulary in constructing and combining sentences.

The transcripts show the use of Direct Prompting to teach words: *Look Kevin, he's very big and he has a trunk...he has a long trunk (Anne, 17.45); Look, who has the hedgehog? (Anne, 17.145)*. They also show the use of Repetition within and across episodes, to increase familiarity with these words, and Questioning, to encourage their use: *What will you tell them? (Anne, 19.13), I have the elephant (Kevin, 19.14), Will you tell them he's big and he has a? ...What has he got? (Anne, 19.15), A big (Chris, 19.16), A long trunk (Anne, 19.17), Trunk (Karen, 19.18), What has he got Kevin? (Anne, 19.19), A long trunk (Karen, 19.20), A trunk (Kevin, 19.20)*.

In the episode just quoted, from Transcript 19, where the elephant is being discussed for the second time, the words, *long trunk*, are a focus of attention for as many as twenty utterances and are elicited again, by Direct Prompting, during the presentation to the whole class group. These processes of exposure to the new words, with repeated opportunities for their application, and use, in meaningful contexts, are evident also in the teaching of unfamiliar words like *hedgehog* and *spikes*.

The use of verbal strategies such as Prompting, Repetition and Questioning supported by physical prompts such as the use of the toys and illustrations, in contexts where the children use the words for meaningful communication, is consistent with research on adult support for children's vocabulary acquisition (Weizman & Snow, 2001). Vocabulary development is rooted in adult-child interaction. Children acquire their first words in contexts of inter-subjective understanding where behaviours are routine and familiar and meaning is highly predictable (Bruner, 1983; Tomasello, 1992; Snow, 1999). Research on children's vocabulary development in the preschool years has linked size of children's vocabulary to amount of adult input (Hart & Risley, 1995) and to children's exposure to sophisticated, or less frequently used words, during adult-child conversations in the home (Beals, 1997), and

in the preschool classroom (Dickinson, Cote & Smith, 1993). Sophisticated vocabulary has been defined as words which do not fall within the bank of 3,000 words which have been identified as those most commonly used with young children (Weizman & Snow, 2001). Research with young children at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage has identified both density of input of sophisticated vocabulary by adults and the quality of the interactive scaffolding within which information about word meaning is presented, as supportive of children's vocabulary acquisition (Beals, 1997; Weizman & Snow, 2001).

There is evidence of the Modelling strategies supporting vocabulary development and also sentence structure in a set of three transcripts (26, 27, 28) on the topic of animals. The first two of these record the dialogue in small group contexts and the third records presentations to the whole class group. In these transcripts, the focus is on developing the children's knowledge of the word animal as a category name and on building their knowledge of the vocabulary of animal attributes. There is an additional focus which is to develop the children's understanding and knowledge of how to elaborate on a topic in discourse, by naming a habitat and by describing attributes and characteristics, in an extended description of, and commentary on, the animal. Finally, a focus on enabling the children to present the information in coherently structured sentences is also an integral part of the work.

In Transcript 26, following work in which the children have had direct focus on naming animals and their attributes, the adult is using the attribute words to provide a series of prompts which the children have to interpret. The adult is also modelling a style of description. In the game, toy versions of the animals being described are hidden until the children guess the names and then the animals are lined up in sequence: *He is very big and strong, now wait and listen...He lives...in the (Anne, 26.5), Jungle (Kevin & Anne together, 26.6), He has ...loads and loads of hair and its called a mane...he growls (Anne, 26.7), And he's a tiger (Kevin, 26.8), And he's very fierce (Anne, 26.9), A tiger (Jennie, 26.10), A monkey (Nessa, 26.11), Oh! a monkey doesn't have a mane, Nessa (Anne, 26.12), A lion...a lion (Jennie, 26.13).*

When the children guess the name, the animal is produced and the descriptions are rehearsed again: *Jennie, what did I say about him?* (Anne, 26.19), *Em... very big and he growls* (Jennie, 26.20), *Big and stripes* (Kevin, 26.21), *Oh! not stripes Kevin, I didn't say that, I said he's big and he lives in the ?* (Anne, 26.22), *Jungle* (Jennie & Kevin, 26.23), *I said he gr...?* (Anne, 26.24), *Growls* (Jennie, 26.25), *He has lots of..?* (Anne, 26.26), *Hair* (Jennie, 26.27), *And he's called a... ?* (Anne, 26.28), *Lion* (Jennie, 26.29), *Yes, and what's his hair called?* *There's a special name for his hair...a...?* (Anne, 26.30), *Black* (Jennie, 26.31), *Mane...and he's very...?* (Anne, 26.32), *Cross* (Jennie, 26.33), *Cross and...?* (Anne, 26.35), *Fierce* (Nessa, 26.36), *Yes, fierce. The daddy lion and Jennie guessed didn't she? ...* (Anne, 26.37). The children then have turns being teacher and describing their animals. Their descriptions are scaffolded by Prompts, Questions and Repetitions and their contributions are also Recast and Expanded to model sentence structure.

The following extract shows how the strategies support the development of vocabulary knowledge with direct Prompting of words, with Prompting and Questioning for prior knowledge and with Repetition for further exposure to the words and to pool and structure the information. The Repetitions also come in the form of Recasts and Expansions which model both the structures of the sentences and the linguistic forms which maintain coherence between the sentences, e.g. *He's a big animal who lives in the? ...jungle... and he has a horn on his? ...nose*. Further, in the Direct Prompting for vocabulary knowledge, and in the structuring and elaboration of information in Recasts and Expansions, the children hear and are enabled to use the criteria for classification of the animals, for example as elephant /not elephant. In this process, children are developing understanding of both sense and reference; simultaneously naming and developing the conceptual understanding attaching to those names.

Excerpt from Transcript: 26

63: Anne: ...not a crocodile Katie, now listen again to what she said about him, he's a big animal who lives in the?

64: Karen: jungle

65: Anne: And he has a horn on his?

66: Jennie: nose

67: Anne: a horn on his nose, what colour is he?

68: Jennie: Black

69: Anne: He's black, is he in our story, Not Me Said the Monkey?

- 70: Jennie: *yes*
 71: Anne: *Oh! He's in our story everyone*
 72: Nessa: *a monkey*
 73: Anne: *Ah no! Listen Nessa, he's a big animal with a horn on his nose*
 74: Katie: *a monkey*
 75: Anne: *Is it a monkey?*
 76: Jennie: *no*
 77: Anne: *No, listen now, an elephant doesn't have a horn, an elephant has a?*
 78: Jennie: *trunk*
 79: Anne: *Yes an elephant has a trunk*
 80: Nessa: *a rhino*
 81: Anne: *Oh now! Look he's under Jennie's jumper. Is Nessa right? Tell us his name.*
 82: Karen: *A rhinosra..*
 83: Anne: *A rhi-noc-er-os (emphasising and clapping the individual syllables)*
 84: Anne: *Gillian you were wonderful telling us about him. You told us he's big and that he lives in the jungle and that he has a horn on his nose, when you told us that, we knew he was a rhi-noc-er-os*
 85: Kevin: *Look that ones drowin (growing)' (pointing to the little horn)*
 86: Anne: *He has a little one and big one, he has two horns. I forgot about that. He has a big horn and a little one that's growing Kevin says. Rhi-noc-er-os, (singing and clapping) well done*
 87: Nessa: *Rhi-noc-er-os (singing and clapping, repeating exactly the tune and syllable stress)*

The extract shows how the use of the strategies can enable what Painter (1996) describes as a process of change in the child's meaning potential, both cognitive and linguistic. She argues that, in dialogue, children can be enabled to construct utterances that go beyond their current meaning potential. These collaboratively produced texts can constitute a challenge to the child's current system and can cause it to extend in order to accommodate to the new possibilities for meaning making. Painter's analysis of teaching and learning in dialogue is consistent with, and represents an application of, Vygotsky's notion of Zone of Proximal Development.

In a very interesting follow up to the episode from which the extract is quoted above, the children showed good evidence of ability to adopt the style of meaning making which was being modelled and in which they too were collaborating. The episode (*Transcript 26*) had ended with us singing a familiar song about the elephant:

*Hey, hey Mr. Elephant, your trunk is very long,
 Hey, hey Mr. Elephant your legs are very strong,
 Hey, hey Mr. Elephant your eyes are small and bright,
 Hey, hey Mr. Elephant,
 Your tusks are shining white.*

Following a few repetitions of the song, Nessa began, spontaneously, to sing the first line again, substituting *lion* for *elephant*. This began an episode of collaborative meaning making to build a linguistic and melodic structure which lasted over 26 utterances (*Transcript 27*) and which resulted in the composition of a new song about the lion, modelled on the structure of the original. In this episode, my strategies were principally those of supporting the topic through Fine Tuning; Prompting and Cueing for Joint Attention and to sustain the topic. In the main, it is the children who are responsible for the construction of meaning here and they use appropriate vocabulary to describe the lion. I did use some Modelling in the form of Recasts and Expansions to enable greater clarity and to elaborate meaning. However, as can be seen from the transcript, in this episode of co-construction of meaning, the adult was mainly in the support role with the children in the lead:

Excerpt from Transcript 27

1. Nessa: Hey, hey Mr. lion
2. Anne: Sing that lovely song again Nessa. Hey, hey Mr. Lion
3. Nessa: Your hair is very long
4. Anne: Long, is it? Is that what we'll say about it? Kevin, listen to this lovely song. Hey, hey, ... will we call it his hair or will we call it his mane?
5. Jennie: Mane
6. Anne: Your mane is very long. What else will we say about him?
7. Nessa: You have a bright nose.
8. Anne: Hey, hey Mr. Lion, you have a? ...
9. Nessa and Jennie: Bright nose
10. Anne: Oh lovely! bright nose (all the children joining in). What else will we say about him? Jennie has an idea. Hey, hey Mr. Lion your?
11. Jennie: Eyes are shining bright
12. Anne: That's gorgeous, your eyes are shining bright
13. Nessa: You have a shaky tail
14. Anne: You have a shaky tail, ...for shaking all the flies away! Karen, what will you sing about him?
15. Karen: You roar
16. Anne: Oh! You roar and
17. Karen: Do tricks (standing the toy lion up on his back legs)
18. Anne: You roar and do hand stands. Oh gosh! Such a lovely song, will we sing it for Grace? (Class Teacher). What will you say about him Kevin? Will you tell us what else to sing about the lion Kevin and we'll sing it for Grace and the children?
19. Kevin: He can do tumbles and tricks
20. Anne: Hey, hey Mr. Lion, you can do tumbles and tricks.
21. Karen: Mr. Elephant
22. Anne: Ah Karen! we're singing about Mr. Lion, will you hold him and tell us something about him. Hey, hey, Mr. Lion. You feel...lovely and...
23. Karen: soft
24. Anne: lovely and soft is he?
25. Karen: yeah.
26. Anne: Oh! Such a lovely song, I'm going to sing it for Grace, will you help me?
27. Kevin: Yeah, for Grace

In the third episode on the topic of animals (*Transcript 28*), the four children who were involved in the first two episodes are making their presentations to the whole class group and singing the song they have composed. The transcript begins with Jennie describing the lion which she is hiding from the children. The child's reconstruction here is supported by Modelling strategies of Prompting for elaboration on the topic and Direct Prompting for the unfamiliar words: *He lives in the jungle and he's big ... (whispering prompt to Jennie), and tell them what he has (Anne, 28.65), A big hair (Jennie, 28.66), Which is called a?... (whispers to Jennie) a mane (Anne, 28.67), Ma... (Jennie, 1.68), A mane (Anne, whispers prompt again, 28.69), A mane (Jennie, 28.70), Oh! A mane (Grace and Tessa, 28.71, teacher & child-care worker)*. There is some good evidence in the transcript of the children using the vocabulary which has been focused on in the earlier episodes e.g. *growl (Jennie, 28.75), fierce (Nessa, 28.88; Jennie, 28.89), He has a trunk and ...tusks (Kevin, 28.147)* and of them using the super ordinate category name appropriately: *Kevin, is this a little boy or girl or is it an animal? (Anne, 28.142), A animal (Kevin, 28.143)*.

Recasting and Expanding strategies are used to expand upon the children's short, sometimes one word, utterances: *Fierce and eat you (Chris, 28.85), Grumpy (Jennie, 28.86), Fierce (Nessa, 28.88), Fierce (Jennie, 28.89)*, and to model how the information can be combined for an elaborated style of response: *He's grumpy and fierce and he might eat you (Anne, 28.90)*. The Prompting and Questioning strategies are used not just to help the children to map words on to the relevant units of meaning but also to help them to sequence these units in order, from the super ordinate category of class name, to the individual attributes and functions which are the criteria for identifying the animal within that category: *Kevin, is this a little boy or girl or is it an animal? (Anne, 28.142), A animal (Kevin, 28.143), Who lives in the? (Anne, 28.144), Jungle (Kevin, 28.145), Right and tell us, he has?... (Anne, 28.146), he has a trunk and...tusks (Kevin, 28.147), What can he do? (Anne, 28.148), Suck up the water (Kevin, 28.149)*.

Here again, the strategies are helping to develop the children's knowledge of both the language system and discourse structure. At the same time, the children are enhancing their knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of the system and being initiated into a style of

language use which relies on explicit vocabulary, and a more complex sentence structure, to communicate meaning which is relevant to the topic. For discourse structure, the adult strategies are helping the children to build semantic coherence by supporting them in sequencing the information carrying sentences into a logical structure and by modelling the linguistic forms which maintain coherence between the sentences, e.g. *It is an animal who lives in the jungle and he has...* (Transcript28). These are the language skills which are considered necessary for oral discourse (Snow, 1998; Hickman, 2003) and the presence of these skills in children at age five, has been linked directly to their reading comprehension and to their skills in written narrative, at age eight (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer-Wolf, 2004).

SUPPORTING CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The findings for the Modelling strategies outlined above also reinforce earlier points on how the strategies support the children's conceptual development. In scaffolding the children in the use of language as a tool for representing and processing information, as in the examples quoted so far, the strategy use is also contributing to their understanding of categories and of criteria for identification and classification within categories.

In this way, the children come to understand, for example, that the elephant and the rhinoceros belong to the same category and can have the same habitat, but are distinguished by their different attributes.

Bruner (1996) describes representation as a process of construction and both a linguistic and a cognitive endeavour. In naming, describing and reflecting upon various phenomena, the children are constructing meaning through a process in which they are simultaneously acquiring language and conceptualising experience, at various levels.

ENABLING THE USE OF DECONTEXTUALISED LANGUAGE AND EXPLANATIONS

The use of decontextualised language marks a critical stage in children's understanding of how language functions as a symbolic system and is considered to be a precursor to their understanding of how meaning is represented in texts (Snow & Tabors, 1993; Halliday, 1993;

Bruner, 1996; Snow, Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Griffin et al., 2004). The transcripts for expository discourse show good evidence of the adult strategies supporting the children's development of decontextualised language, across a range of episodes of dialogue and supported monologue.

A further strategy that enables children to move towards understanding and constructing decontextualised meaning, is the use of definitions by the adult, where the adult Prompts to explain word meaning by reference to other words rather than to physical objects.

Two of the linked episodes quoted above (*Transcripts 26, 27*), show examples of the adult explaining word meaning in this way: *He has...loads and loads of hair... and it's called a mane (Anne, 26.7), A nose like a horn (Anne, 26.51)....No, listen now, an elephant doesn't have a horn, an elephant has a? (Anne, 26.77), Trunk (Jennie, 26.78), Yes an elephant has a trunk (Anne, 26.79)*. Equally, in one of the discrete episodes of talk (*Transcript 22*), at a point where the children and adult are singing about a train, the adult introduces the new word *funnel*, by Prompting the children with a definition: *...Yes and the smoke is coming out of the chimney ...you know you don't really call this a chimney ...you call it a funnel. Isn't that a hard word? (Anne, 22.158)*.

The work described already on the use of the strategies to develop children's knowledge of categories and criteria for selection, is related to the work on definitions. Both kinds of focus develop children's understanding of words as meaning carrying units which can define, and also, can influence, the meaning of other words: *e.g. A monkey (Nessa, 26.72), Ah no! listen Nessa, he's a big animal with a horn on his nose (Anne, 26.73)*.

A transcript of a dialogue which occurred in the whole class setting, in April of Phase 2, shows good evidence of the children taking on the style of description which the adult has been modelling in previous episodes. It also shows the children working with definitions and responding to the adult Prompts and Questions with the explicit, decontextualised language that is required:

Excerpt from Transcript 25

1. Anne: *I'd love to know who's in there. Don't tell me his name, don't tell me. Could I guess?*

Would you tell me something about him? ... Could you tell me...

1a Aisling: *He's tiny*

2 Anne: *Oh! Aisling told me something about what size he is*

3 Jennie: *And he's black and white*

4 Anne: *Oh! And that's what colour he is. Now I know what size he is, Aisling says he's tiny*

5 Nessa: *No he's brown and white*

6 Aisling: *No, actually, black*

7 Grace (teacher): *Well you see we had the little animals and our dog is black and white and in the book he's brown and white*

8 Anne: *Oh! I see. Now, I know he's tiny and I know he has colours on him. Does he have anything that wags or swiches?*

9 Nessa: *Yeah! His tail*

10 Anne: *Oh! He has a tail and could you tell me something that you could do with him? Like, could you em...could you....play with him?*

11 Kevin: *Or take him for a walk?*

12 Grace: *Now! There you are!*

13 Anne: *You could take him for a walk!*

14 Grace (teacher): *There's something you could do!*

15 Anne: *I think I know what it is.*

16 Kevin: *Or pet him, or let him lick you*

17 Anne: *Kevin says you could take him for a walk, you could rub him or pet him or he might lick you.*

18 Kevin: *I have a dog in my house*

19 Brendan: *Or you could feed him.*

20 Anne: *Oh! So he has to eat food? I think I know who it is.*

21 Nessa: *A dog*

22 Anne: *Wait now, will I guess?*

23 Grace (teacher): *Well don't guess yet Anne, because do you remember Nessa, yesterday you told us something you can do with your pet?*

24 Tessa (child-care wk): *Oh! Yes Nessa that's right!*

25 Grace (teacher): *And you can do it with this pet too.*

26 Anne: *Oh! Something you can do with this pet?*

27 Nessa: *Throw the ball and he can catch it with his mouth*

28 Anne: *Oh! Now we have all these things that this pet can do, will I start again and tell you everything you told me?*

DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF 'TELLERS AND KNOWERS'

Decontextualised language is rooted in understanding of language as a meaning carrying system which does not rely on shared understandings for the communication of information. In turn, this understanding is related to children's perceptions of themselves as potential 'tellers and knowers' of information (Halliday, 1993, p.102). The transcripts for expository discourse show good evidence of the use of the adult strategies to encourage the children to communicate information which is new to their listeners, and good evidence of the strategy use in supporting both the speakers and the listeners in the construction of this information.

In the episodes of talk which have been discussed already, there are many examples in which the use of the Prompting strategy can be said to be affirming of the children as potential informants. The various uses which affirm the children as contributors include direct Prompting to elicit information from a speaker for his/her listeners, for example, to elicit information about the animals they are describing: *tell us something about him; what else will you say about him?*; *yes, tell everybody*, and Prompting by way of invitation to recount a story or event: *And will you tell them all about it? Will you tell them the lovely story?* (Anne, 19. 9), and to affirm the value of the speaker's contribution for both speaker and listeners: *Cathy do you hear what Chris says?* (Anne, 17.8); *Karen, Kevin is telling you a wonderful story* (Anne, 18.37). In these examples, the Prompting strategy can be said to contribute to the children's perceptions of themselves as having information which is useful and interesting to listeners and as having the linguistic skills to communicate it to them.

The transcripts for expository discourse show that all of the eight children are willing informants albeit that some are more reticent and needing of encouragement than others. The transcripts also show that the adult strategies support the children in using decontextualised language to relate information on a range of topics, which are both adult and child initiated. Those initiated by the children include recounts of real events (*Transcripts 25; 30; 31; 33*) and accounts of experiences which originated in children's dreams (*Transcripts 18 & 24*) and in their imaginations (*Transcript 17*), and also, accounts which perhaps have a basis in both real experience and the imagination (*Transcript 18*). The whole group episode recorded in Transcript 25, from which the opening excerpt has already been quoted above, is an example of how the children can inform and entertain the adults, and each other, with very engaging accounts of information which they alone possess.

In the episode, we have been describing a puppy. Cathy is prompted by the topic to recall her own puppy and to recount sad and happy memories of him. Her contribution prompts Nessa and Jennie to contribute. In turn, these contributions prompt Kevin to respond and this response injects a new level of meaning making into the discourse. The transcript shows how the adult strategies scaffold these *tellings*; Prompting for vocabulary, and Recasting and Expanding utterances in the usual way but also supporting the children as story tellers. This

support is given by the adult accentuating the focus on the characters the children identify and the events they recall, and by helping to mediate the affective and cognitive elements in the children's accounts. The adult strategies act to support the children in doing justice to the meaning content of their accounts, and to maximise the quality of the experience for the listeners:

Excerpt from Transcript 25

- 36 Cathy: *It's my puppy*
37 Grace (teacher): *Tell Anne his name*
38 Anne: *You have a puppy Cathy? Oh lovely.*
39 Cathy: *It's Tiny.*
40 Anne: *Cathy has a puppy called Tiny.*
41 Cathy: *An he'd up in Heben (Heaven)*
42 Anne: *He's up in Heaven? Oh it's a sad story. You know I noticed your face was very sad*
Cathy and I was wondering why is Cathy's face so sad? Well he's up in heaven now. He
might be running and chasing the ball up in Heaven?
43 Cathy: *Tiny tated (chased) the pussy cat, Tiny tate the pussy cat.*
44 Anne: *Is that what happened to him? Tiny chased the pussy cat out on to the road?*
45 Cathy: *On the path*
46 Anne: *He chased the pussy cat out on to the path? Oh I see..*
47 Grace: *Did you want to hear about a game that Nessa plays with her dog?*
48 Anne: *I'd love to hear about it*
49 Grace: *Tell everybody.*
50 Anne: *Tell us and then we might play the game at home with our dogs.*
51 Nessa: *Em.. I hold his paws and then twirl him, (laughing).*
52 Anne: *Like a dancing partner, Nessa!*
53 Jennifer: *Jake runned away on me.*
54 Anne: *Ah did he Jennifer, will we just finish this happy story ?...*
55 Grace: *You can tell your's in a minute Jennifer*
56 Anne: *Nessa holds her puppy's paws and dances with him, do do do do (miming dancing*
and singing)
57 Tessa (child-care worker): *And Nessa, does he like it?*
58 Nessa: *Sometimes he runs away from me*
59 Grace: *I'd say he does! (adults and children laughing)*
60 Anne: *Sometimes he doesn't like it and he runs away. He thinks, I don't want to dance with*
Nessa today. And Nessa do you say anything when you're dancing? Do you sing any
music for him?
61 Nessa: *No*
62 Anne: *You just dance is it? And has he any other tricks?*
63 Donnie: *Dogs...dogs don't dance*
64 Anne: *Do they not Donnie? Dogs don't dance?*
65 Donnie: *They walk*
66 Cathy: *Ring a Rosy... Tiny...he caught he tail...by he (his) tail...*
67 Anne: *What happened Cathy?*
68 Cathy: *Tiny*
70 Cathy: *Yeah, he Ring a Ring a Rosy*
71 Anne: *He plays ring a Ring a Rosies does he?*
72 Cathy: *Yeah*
73 Grace: *And you were holding his tail ?.*
74 Cathy: *An he tail in the gaden (garden)*
75 Anne: *Out in the garden and were you holding him by the tail?*

76 Cathy: (Nodding in agreement)
 77 Anne: *Out in the garden, playing ring a ring a rosies?*
 78 Grace: *And Jennifer will you tell Anne what happened to your dog?*
 79 Jennie: *He ran away on me....Jake did*
 80 Anne: *Oh dear! and Jake was his name?*
 81 Jennie: *But you know my Dad's goin a find 'im*
 82 Grace: *Oh good*
 83 Anne: *Oh right and bring him home again. What will you say to Jake when your Daddy brings him home?*
 84 Jennie: *Em.. Dance!..*
 85 Anne: *Oh you'll ask him to dance!! Don't run away again Jake Stay here and dance and have fun with me.*
 86 Jennie: *And I'll kiss him*
 87 Anne: *Ah yes*
 88 Jennie: *And a hug*
 89 Anne: *Yes a hug, and remember what Kevin said? ...*
 90 Kevin: *No you don't tiss (kiss) dogs.*
 91 Anne: *Do you not Kevin?*
 92 Kevin: *Its 'orrible*
 93 Anne: *Wait now, Kevin is telling us something.*
 94 Kevin: *You tant (can't) tiss (kiss) dogs tos ('cos) ...tos ...you do you det gurms (germs) in your belly and it's 'orrible (horrible).*
 95 Anne: *Oh goodness, mmm, I see*
 96 Tessa (child-care wk): *Oh!..germs in your belly*
 97 Anne: *You might get germs in your tummy. You told us what to do with the dog didn't you Kevin?*
 98 Kevin: *Rub 'im only*
 99 Anne: *Yes, pet him.*
 100 Grace: *And look at Kevin's face. You can tell by his face that it wouldn't be a good idea!*
 101 Brendan: *You could pet a dog.*
 102 Anne: *You could Brendan, that's right.. Oh those were wonderful stories*

This transcript is an example of how the adult strategies are Discourse Enabling. Together with Fine Tuning for Joint Attention in a number of ways, and Modelling language input through Prompting for vocabulary and Recasting and Expanding sentences, Prompts and Questions help to sustain the children's topics. Further, Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies encourage the children to expand on the topics but also signal genuine interest and commitment from the adults and attest to the fact that the children's contributions are prompting the adults to reflect and comment, e.g. *I hold his paws and then twirl him (Nessa, 25.51), Like a dancing partner, Nessa! (Anne, 25.52); He's up in Heaven? Oh it's a sad story. You know, I noticed your face was very sad Cathy and I was wondering why your face was so sad (Anne, 25.42).*

In this way, the adult strategies are collaborative in nature and purpose and serve to co-construct meaning with the children. They are also interpretative and in their responses to,

and elaborations on, the children's accounts, the adults help to demonstrate the relationship between reflection and comment and how this relationship is articulated. In this regard, the strategies help to develop the children's understanding of themselves as speakers who not only inform their listeners but who also influence how those listeners think and feel about the information.

Transcript 33, records an interesting example of attempted decontextualised meaning making from Tom. The transcript shows him to be engaged with the topic as an active listener. In this episode, he is prompted by the topic to make his own contribution. Kevin has been explaining that he had not wanted to come to school earlier that morning because he had been feeling sick. Following Prompting and Questioning by Grace, the class teacher, it is established that Kevin has a sore throat. Following some discussion on whether Kevin would go to the doctor, Tom makes it clear, by gesturing and sounds, that he wants us to look at his elbow:

Excerpt from Transcript 33

32 Grace: Do you know what? Tom wants everybody to look at his?...What do you call that part of you? (showing elbow)

33 Nessa: Elbow

34 Grace: Elbow...tell them to look at your elbow...elbow...what happened?

35 Tom: faw (meaning intention unclear but interpreting as fall)

36 Anne: Did you fall?

37 Tom: Nods his head to say yes

38 Anne: Tom, did you?

39 Grace: Aw!

40 Anne: Did you? Did you fall? Let me see your elbow...aw, is it...Tom, is it sore?

41 Tom: Nods his head to say yes

42 Anne: Is it?...sore?

43 Grace: And were you running or jumping?

44 Tom: mm...no

45 Grace: Were you running

46 Tom: no

47 Grace: Or jumping?

48 Tom: No

49 Grace No? What happened when you fell?

50 Tom: No...de (showing elbow)

51 Grace: Show me, show me what you were doing when you fell

52 Tom: Hi ...ay

53 Anne: Oh you hurt your elbow...Tom hurt his elbow

54 Tom: y...y...mm...

55 Grace: Did that happen out in the garden?...In the garden or in... the kitchen? Where did you hurt your arm?...Outside in the garden?

56 Anne & Grace together: Poor Tom

In attempting to give his account, Tom is very disadvantaged by his serious difficulties with expressive language. As has been discussed above, decontextualised meaning relies on the explicit use of language to provide for what Painter (1999a) describes as the linguistic creation of context. Tom's motivation to contribute to the discourse; his willingness to be an informant and to communicate on a topic which is unknown to his listeners, affords some insight into the sharp disjuncture which exists between his understanding of the nature and purpose of communication and his ability to express himself in lexical-grammatical terms.

Notwithstanding Tom's expressive difficulties, the adult strategies of Cueing and Prompting for Joint Attention, e.g. *Tom wants everyone to look at his elbow*, Questioning, *What happened?*, Prompting for vocabulary e.g. *elbow* and Recasting and Expanding, e.g. *Oh you hurt your elbow...Tom hurt his elbow*, help to affirm him as an informant, to establish his meaning intention, and to articulate the main point of his account for his listeners. In these respects, the adult strategies enable him to be included in the discourse, as a teller of information, as he clearly desires.

CHALLENGING FOR REFLECTION AND EXPLANATION

A number of the transcripts show good evidence of the adult strategies being used to challenge the children for explanations and for the use of decontextualised language for reflection on information and experience (*Transcripts: 17;19;23; 24; 29; 30; 31*). The strategies are also used to scaffold the children in these uses of language. In the series of episodes of talk on the topic of the hedgehog, there are a number of instances when the adult strategies are used to challenge the children for reflection and explanation. This focus is apparent from the first episode: *...Do you know why he has spikes? (Anne, 17.173), Why? (Chris, 17.174), In case Mr. Fox tries to eat him. What would happen if Mr. Fox tries to bite the hedgehog with his teeth? What would happen to Mr. Fox? (Anne, 17.175).*

In a subsequent episode (*Transcript 19*), the subject of the spikes prompts further consideration and explanation from Kevin: *If he turns around like this (taking the toy hedgehog and turning him upside down), under there I able to rub (Kevin, 19.84), ...He*

hasn't got spikes on his tummy sure he hasn't Kevin? And that's a great idea...you could rub him underneath and it wouldn't hurt you Karen (Anne, 19.84).

The process of first discussing topics and explaining issues in the small group dialogue context and subsequently presenting this information to the whole group, in a supported monologue context, offers the children opportunities to formulate and reformulate explanations, and repeated opportunities to articulate them in decontextualised language. In the following extract, towards the end of a small group episode, the adult is preparing the children to recount explanations to the whole group: *Would somebody be able to tell Grace (class teacher) about what would happen if Mr Fox tried to eat Mr. Hedgehog? (Anne, Trans. 23.166), He will stick in his throat and it...it...em his body 'il and he'll run back home (Nessa, 23.167), And what about the spikes that he has on his back? (Anne, 23.168), It'll scrape 'im (Jennie, 23.169), They would scrape Mr. Fox, wouldn't they and Mr. Fox would have to drop the hedgehog (Anne, 23.170).*

In a subsequent episode, Aisling recalls this scenario for the whole group and she explains the outcome, with some help from Chris and Nessa: *And Aisling, will you tell the children something very sad that nearly happened to the hedgehog in the book? (Anne, 24.24), He nearly...eat him (Aisling, 24.25), Who nearly eat him? (Anne, 24.26), Fox (Chris, 24.27), Fox (Nessa, 24.28), The fox nearly eat ... (Anne, 24.29), And but the ...hedgehog hurt him (Aisling, 24.30), What did the hedgehog do? He did two things. First of all he? (Anne, 24.31), Hurt him (Aisling, 24.32), He hurt him but what was the first thing he did? (Anne, 24.33), Curled up in a ball (Aisling, 24.34), The hedgehog curled up in a little ball. He curled up like a little ball. Mr. Fox came creeping along in the snow and he tried to bite the hedgehog, didn't he Chris? (Anne, 24.35), Yeah (Chris, 24.36), But Aisling knows what the hedgehog did. The hedgehog did two good tricks, what did he do Aisling? (Anne, 24.37), He hurt him first and then he crawled up in a ball (Aisling, 24.38).*

DIFFERENTIATING THE STRATEGIES

The findings for expository discourse show that, for the majority of the eight children, the adult strategies can support them in the use of explicit vocabulary and in combining sentences to present a coherent discourse on a topic. For Cathy and Tom, both of whom have serious language delay and difficulties, the strategies support their development of vocabulary and basic sentence structure. They also support their inclusion in discourse and their contributions to it. The strategies support all of the children in communicating information which is not shared with their listeners. Further, within a discourse structure, the strategies can prompt the children to reflect upon experience and to attempt to reason about experience. Through the strategies, the adults provide models of this level of language use for the children and scaffold their entry into these modes of meaning making. In the following sections, the strategies are discussed with reference to how they support individual children within the group of eight.

Chris, Nessa, Aisling and Jennie

For these four children, the ability to converse in everyday terms, on a range of topics, was already in place. However, all of these children needed to develop their knowledge of the more sophisticated words associated with each of the topics that were discussed. Equally, they needed experience of, and support with, combining sentences and using complex sentence structures to articulate meanings at greater levels of complexity. The strategy of Directly Prompting new words while providing opportunities for their use, and the strategies of Recasting and Expanding utterances, again in contexts where the children will have opportunities to use the complex structures, provide for direct examples and also provide models for a style of language use which these four children can accommodate to.

An interesting observation in the use of the strategies with these children is that, in keeping with findings from intervention research (Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek and Fischer, 1995), their relatively more developed language skills seem to leave them well placed to benefit from Recasts and Expansions which build on their existing structures, e.g. *Look at all that paint on him...look at all the paint on him! (Chris, 22.122), Where is it Chris? (Anne, 22.123), There, paint on his face (Chris, 22.124),His face is*

painted white, he's wearing make-up because he (Anne, 22.125), That's girls (Nessa, 22.126), He works in the circus. But clowns wear make-up too don't they? And they play, he plays music in the circus. Chris, will you tell... (Anne, 22.127), I have make-up (Nessa, 22.128), Will you tell Nessa and Aisling about that picture (Anne, 22.129), He's in the circus, playin' music and wearin' make-up (Chris, 22.130).

As discussed in the Literature Review, the intervention literature distinguishes between prompts for elicited responding, e.g. *what are you playing with?* and prompts for elicited imitation, e.g. *say, I'm playing with the building blocks*. The transcripts for expository discourse show that, in the main, these four children can elaborate well on a topic within an adult support structure of elicited responding, e.g. *Now tell us where he lives and what he looks like (Anne, 28.199), He lives in the jungle (Nessa, 28.200), Yes (Anne, 28.201), He has fur (Nessa, 28.202), Yes (Anne, 28.203), He's ...black (Nessa, 28.204)*. However, Prompts which stop short of requiring imitation but which are more directive than the prompts for elicited responding described above, do enable these children to harness and use newly developing, elaborated styles of description, e.g. *Hey, hey Mr. Lion, (Jennie, 28.105), Your...eyes are? (Anne, 28.106), Shining bright (Jennie, 28.107), Shining bright ...Hey ... (Anne, 28.108), Hey Mr. Lion you have ... (Jennie & Anne together, 28.109), What did you say about him?...You have? (Anne, pointing to the mane on the toy lion, 28.110), A big soft mane (Jennie, 28.111), A big soft mane (singing the line), ...that's what Jennie said about him... (Anne 28.112).*

The findings suggest that these Prompting strategies support the children by giving clear direction about the field of information or category choices that are necessary to a topic while at the same time, Cueing the children to the fact that they have this information, and offering them an opportunity to use it appropriately. Further, as in the example from Transcript 28 quoted above, while directive, the Prompting strategies are also collaborative in nature; communicating a sense of co-construction, and affirming and giving equal weight to the child's contributions to the discourse. In this regard, the findings suggest that this use of the Prompting strategies provides parameters which enable the children to use both their existing language resources and those which they are newly acquiring, to construct creative responses

to a topic. The findings suggest that this use of the Prompting strategies is effective for both adult and, as in the example quoted above, child initiated topics.

As the following example from Aisling shows, these children are also able to respond well to less structured strategy use, as in the use of Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies from the adult, e.g. *I have the white castle with the blue roof and the flags flying and the Princess lives there (Aisling, 22.112), Does she live in the castle and is her name Princess Aisling? (Anne, 22.113),Yeah.....me ma calls...me down...after me comin' down...when Neil comes home...he calls me little Princess (Aisling, 22.116), He calls you little Princess because you are a little Princess aren't you? (Anne, 22.117), Yeah (Aisling, 22.118).*

Karen and Kevin

Karen and Kevin could converse on everyday topics and were very willing to initiate conversations with adults. With the other four, these two children were also well placed to benefit from the use of the strategies as discussed above. However, Karen and Kevin had some additional needs as language learners and some differentiation of the strategies was useful in attempting to address these.

Karen's talk was inclined to be characterised by short utterances and inexplicit vocabulary. With the other children, she does respond well to the prompts for elicited responses, as described in the previous section, e.g. *...Karen what will you sing about him? (Anne, referring to the lion, 27.14), You roar (Karen, 27.15), Oh!, you roar and ... (Anne, 27.16), Do tricks (Karen, 27.17).* However, she can also need very tightly focused support at times. Adult strategies that combine both elicited responses and elicited imitation can help in keeping her focused on the kind of information that is required in a particular teaching and learning situation. In the following example, very specific responses are elicited from a very tightly structured field of choice and a Prompt for elicited imitation is used to help Karen to see the style of response that is required: *Is he big or small (Anne, 28.225), Big (Karen, 28.227),Tell the children he's big (Anne, 28.228)Tell them he has a horn on his nose (Anne, whispering prompt to Karen, 28.231),... Close your eyes (Chris, 28.232), No*

open your eyes now and listen to Karen (Anne, 28.233), He has a horn on his nose (Karen, 28.234).

One of the considerations for Karen is whether her language is supported appropriately in the small group contexts. The transcripts show that she contributes fewer utterances than other members of the group in many of the small group episodes. Karen was a most friendly and emotionally robust little girl and was not in any way inhibited by the conversational contexts. However, she was less inclined to initiate conversation than other members of the group and while she would respond to initiations from the adult and would often comment on other children's contributions, typically, her responses were minimal. In a teaching and learning context where one of the adult's concerns is to follow children's leads and build on their initiations, Karen could be allowed to go unchallenged and to remain relatively silent.

On the other hand, her contributions show that she is listening to the discourses and that she is learning from the adult's modelling and from the contributions and communicative styles of the other children in the group. In the following example, in her description of the hedgehog, she combines information which has been contributed by me and by Chris in an earlier episode: *Now Chris, will you tell Karen what...what did you?...She has to tell the children about the hedgehog (Anne, 19.59), I know (Karen, 19. 60), Do you? Well what will you say? (Anne, 19.61), A hedgehog (Karen, 19.62), And tell us what he's doing (Anne, 19.63), He's crawlin' in the grass ...for food (Karen, 19.64).* A recommendation for Karen would be to vary teaching and learning contexts for her and to ensure that she would have opportunities to converse on a one-to-one basis with the adult, as well as being included in small group contexts.

Kevin contributes a great deal in both the small group and whole group contexts. He initiates topics (*Transcripts 17 & 18*), and on a number of occasions, his contributions to existing topics provide a new stimulus and a new direction for the talk (*Transcripts 25 & 28*). He is highly motivated as a communicator and his observations (*Transcripts 25 & 28*) and accounts from personal experience (*Transcripts 71 & 18*), enliven many of the episodes.

Kevin was well placed to benefit from the strategies discussed already for Chris, Nessa, Aisling and Jennie. However, he has a less well developed command of vocabulary and sentence structure than these children, and a slight articulation difficulty. He needs the adult to collaborate closely with him, interpreting his meaning intentions and mapping language for him through carefully structured Prompts and Recasts and Expansions, where the Prompts include both elicitation and imitation. He is also supported by Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating contributions from the adult.

Kevin has interesting information to convey and he is also beginning to reflect on experience and to reason about it. The adult supports are critical in enabling him to be a more effective communicator. In the excerpt quoted below, this range of strategies is used to collaborate with Kevin in articulating his meaning intention:

Excerpt from Transcript 17.

63 Anne: ...and Kevin look at them...they're yellow shiny boots and we wear them when it's raining don't we? Karen look at the yellow shining boots

64 Kevin: Ya don't

65 Anne: Do you not?

66 Kevin: No...in work

67 Anne: You wear them to work do you?

68 Kevin: Yeah

69 Anne: And what work do you do when you're wearing those boots Kevin?

70 Kevin: Em...in muck

71 Anne: Oh you wear them...did you hear what he said Karen?

You wear these boots if you have to work in the muck...I wonder ...what job? Who does that job?

72. Karen: Me Da

73 Kevin: My Daddy does

74Anne: What job is that Kevin? What does he have to do when he's working?

75 Karen: I don't know

76 Kevin: Build

77 Anne: Oh did you hear Karen

78 Karen: What

79 Anne: You weren't listening, Kevin tell her, my Daddy is a ?

80 Kevin: Workin' builder

81 Anne: He's a working builder...tell...Kevin's daddy...Kevin I didn't know that...Cathy

82. Kevin: A workin' builder

Tom

In the early weeks of Phase 2 of the study, the focus for Tom was on exploring the use of the strategies to develop his expressive vocabulary. This work was conducted in short sessions

and on a one-to-one basis, with the emphasis on following Tom's focus of interest when using concrete play objects.

The transcripts show the Prompting strategy being used to model words for Tom, to directly elicit responses e.g. *Look Tom, horse, who is it?*, and to directly elicit imitations, e.g., *Look Tom, horse, you say it*. The strategy was differentiated so that, at first, single words of one, two and three syllables were prompted e.g. *horse, monkey, crocodile*, followed by pairs of words, e.g. *Mammy horse, Baby Bear*. Tom's utterances were recast as alternative models and these were reinforced through Repetitions. The Prompts, Recasts and Repetitions were used in a game format of turn-taking between Tom and me, where I had repeated opportunities to model the words and phrases for Tom and he had repeated opportunities to say them.

These verbal strategies were supported with physical supports such as toy animals and with additional aural supports of singing the syllables to one, two and three note tunes and beating out the syllables on percussion instruments. Additionally, within the game format, there was a concern to match the prompts to Tom's focus of attention and to follow in with an appropriately adjusted verbal response, to any lead that he might take in relation to a topic or object of attention. In this regard, the Fine Tuning strategies were in play here as in all of the teaching and learning contexts with all of the children.

There is evidence of this use of the Prompting strategy supporting Tom's acquisition of words in the one-to-one teaching and learning contexts in the study. In the following example, which is an extract from Transcript 20, as the session progresses, there is evidence of Tom first joining in on the second syllable of the word (20.17), then humming the two note interval in a perfect repetition of my singing (20.21), and going on to use two word combinations; *Daddy horse* (20.42), and *Mammy horse* (20.49):

Excerpt from Transcript 20

16. Anne: Look at this fellow...monkey (saying and playing two syllable sound on percussion instrument)...my turn, monkey...Tom's turn...are you ready? (Anne gives Tom the instrument and helps him to hold)...Are you ready?...Monk-
17. Tom & Anne chorusing: - ey (Tom joins in on second syllable)
18. Anne: Oh Tom that's brilliant....will you do it for me...will you? ...my turn...monkey
19. Tom & Anne chorusing: Monkey...monkey... (Anne singing word to notes soh, me, and helping Tom to play two beats on percussion inst.)
20. Anne: Wonderful...will we put the monkey beside the horse?
21. Tom: Da-dar... (sung in perfect imitation of the soh, me interval Anne has been singing) and then Tom shows Anne the horse
22. Anne: Horse (Anne sings as one note: soh) ...monkey (sung as two notes: soh, me), monkey....monkey...Tom's turn
23. Anne: Monkey...monk-
24. Tom: (Anne beats two beats, Tom joins in on second syllable) – ey
25. Anne: That's brilliant Tom...watch... (Anne produces a snake from the bag)...Look at this!.
26. Tom: Two?
27. Anne: Ssssnake (making hissing sound with percussion inst.)
28. Tom: Two?
29. Anne: More than two...Are you ready to do snake?
30. Tom: Yeah
31. Anne: Tom's turn...Ready?...you say it ...sss
32. Tom: aake dy ou
33. Anne: Oh well done....ok now... time to say goodbye to them...I just want to show you something
34. Tom: Not tomorr...!!
35. Anne: Oh will we do it again
36. Tom: Yeah
37. Anne: Look this is...Daddy horse
38. Tom: Dadd-u
39. Anne: Daddy horse
40. Tom: oss (Tom joining in on word horse)...
41. Anne: You tell me
42. Tom: Daddy horse
43. Anne: And look, tell me who this is
44. Tom: Two me
45. Anne: This is...Mammy horse (singing to soh, soh, me) who's this?
46. Tom: Mammy
47. Anne: Tom, it's?
48. Anne & Tom chorusing together: mammy horse (Tom attempting to join in)
49. Tom: Mammy oss
50. Anne: (singing & playing) clip-clop, clip-clop...Tom look who this is ...put mammy and daddy standing there....mammy horse, daddy horse...Tom look who's coming (bringing toy foal out of bag)
51. Tom: Two baby
52. Anne: Tom, look Tom...baby horse (singing to same tune)
53. Tom: Ah my bebe
54. Anne: Baby horse...Tom who is this?
55. Tom: My babe (using high pitched voice)
56. Anne: Yes baby horse (singing again)...ok, will we put mammy and daddy there and put baby beside mammy....put baby horse down there as well
57. Tom: Tom lines the animals up together
58. Anne: Ok now, are you ready?
59. Tom: Yeah
60. Anne: Will we say all their names again?...my turn...croc-o..
61. Tom: Ah me!!
62. Anne: No me first...crocodile (accompanying with three beats on percussion inst)... Tom's turn
63. Tom: Coc-y- ile

An additional strategy which is apparent in the transcript is the use of Chorusing where Tom joins me, spontaneously, in singing a word or phrase and we continue to chorus together. Chorusing is identified in the literature on early language acquisition and intervention as a communicative behaviour between parent and child, which is apparent while children are still at the pre-linguistic stage of language development. Parents imitate their children's vocalisations and also chorus with them (McCathren, Warren & Yoder, 1996).

In this study, chorusing arose from the adult's spontaneous strategy of singing appropriately chosen words and phrases. This strategy was engaging for Tom and it supported him by providing models of the words and phrases and opportunities for him to chorus along. In the excerpt quoted above, the strategy is also used by the adult to match variations of the two notes of a musical interval (soh, me), to recasts of Tom's attempts at spoken phrases. In this way, his words and phrases are recast and are also sung, adding variety and emphasis, (e.g. the utterance, *Mammy* recast as *Mammy horse* and sung to the tune of *soh, soh, me*).

In a follow through to the episode quoted above, Tom is invited to present his information about the horse, by showing and telling, in the whole group context, with the class teacher and child-care worker also present. The Transcript shows that Tom is happy to be in the role of presenter and he shows the horse and communicates with the children, through gesture and some sounds, over a number of turns (21.1-24). Tom's sounds and gestures indicate his understanding and he uses the word *bag* to instruct me as to where the toys should go (21.27&29). However, he does not use any of the words or phrases that he used in the one-to-one context.

In this context, Tom is scaffolded by me, with Prompts and by the affirming and encouraging comments of the class teacher and child-care worker. Nonetheless, this is a less tightly structured context than the one-to-one episode and it makes different demands on Tom as a speaker. At this time, which was January of Phase 2 of the study, the transcripts do not show evidence of Tom showing his emerging expressive abilities outside of the structured one-to-one contexts.

Cathy

The transcripts show the use of the Modelling strategies in providing Cathy with explicit Prompts for new words, e.g. *See Cathy?...What's his name?...Hedgehog (Anne, 19.100), Hedgehog (Chris, 19.101), Hedgehog (Cathy, 19.102), Hedgehog, good girl (Anne, 19.103),* and in Recasting both her words and her sentences to model the appropriate alternatives, e.g. *ela (Cathy, 19.24), el-e-phant (Anne, 19.25, clapping the syllables), Ye, he ring a ring a rosy (Cathy, 25. 70), He plays ring a rosies does he? (Anne, 25.71).*

There is evidence of Cathy using some of the new words that were modelled for her, in contexts other than those in which she first met them. For example, she uses the words, *pear* and *snail*, when she is reporting back in the whole group context (*Cathy, 21.115-162*), and on other occasions as reported by Grace, the class teacher. These words did not appear to be in Cathy's receptive vocabulary when she first met them in the small group context. There, they were mapped on to objects and illustrations for her with Prompts and Repetitions and she had opportunities to use them through elicited Prompts and elicited imitations (*17.51-58*).

One of Cathy's great strengths is that she enjoys conversation and will initiate topics with the adult. The findings also show her willingness and ability to contribute to a topic, including using decontextualised language to contribute information from personal experience (*Transcript 25*). Among the strengths here is the fact that in her willingness to communicate, Cathy provides the adult with many examples of her current use of the system and many opportunities to attempt to adjust and to enhance that use.

This study is proceeding on the premise that, through dialogue and supported monologue, children can be engaged in constructing utterances which can constitute a challenge to their current lexical- grammatical use. The aim is to enable the extension of that use and, accordingly, the extension of their potential for constructing meaning. The differentiation of the adult strategies is an attempt to respond to individual children's manifestations of their current meaning making. The response includes assessing the gap between children's actual utterances and the potential for meaning making which these utterances suggest and Fine

Tuning the adult talk to attempt to bridge that gap. In the study, this conceptualisation of the use of the strategies is an application of Vygotsky's principle of the adult and child working together in the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

The challenge to differentiate the Modelling strategies appropriately for Cathy included an additional concern about her serious articulation difficulties. The concern here was that these articulation difficulties would inhibit the adult in understanding Cathy's words and phrases and, consequently, in responding with appropriate Prompts and Recasts. In an attempt to address this concern, there was a specific emphasis on using the Modelling strategies with Cathy, in contexts where the words, phrases and sentences were predictable. One such context is illustrated in Transcript 17.

Here Cathy is recalling incidents from a picture storybook which has been a focus for the class story on the previous day. The picture story, *Cat on the Mat* (Wildsmith, 1987), is told in a simple, repeat format of one sentence per page, where the text remains the same on each page except for the subject of the sentence. This word changes on each page, to mark the entry of a new subject, e.g. *the cat sat on the mat, the dog sat on the mat, the cow sat on the mat, ect.* The text is accompanied by illustrations which afford insights into the unfolding of the story and which add complexity to it and allow for much more challenging discussion than is implied in the simple text. Another feature of the story is its circular structure. In the climax to the story; the cat chases all of the animals from the mat and the story finishes with a repeat of the first line.

In the context of enjoying this story, Cathy had a good number of opportunities to repeat the sentences from this book, with the adult Prompting and Recasting her utterances, knowing clearly what the target sentences were. In the following extract, in a different, whole group context, she is prompted by the children's contributions to remember this story topic. In this extract, Cathy is not recalling the text of the story but is constructing a new set of sentences to explain the outcome of the story. An interesting feature of her contribution is that, as in the book, she also uses a repeat format in the way in which she structures the sentences. The

context is very clear to the adults and Cathy draws us into collaborating with her. Equally, it allows Cathy to provide good, tangible evidence of her sentence structure to which the adults can then respond with appropriately judged Recasts and with Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies:

Excerpt from Transcript 33

64 Cathy: *An the ...an the moo runn-ed a back*

65 Anne: *Who ran back?*

66 Cathy: *The moo...a moo*

67 Anne: *The cow ran back*

68 Cathy: *And the ela runned back in a...*

69 Anne & Grace: *The elephant ran back*

70 Anne: *Who else?*

71 Cathy: *And the...an the billy goat run a back*

72 Anne: *And the billy goat ran back*

73 Cathy: *Yeah, the mornin'*

74 Anne: *And who else was there?*

75 Cathy: *Em...*

76 Anne: *Was there a dog?*

77 Cathy: *Yeah*

78 Anne: *What did the dog do?*

79 Cathy: *He's a runned back*

80 Anne: *Did the dog run back?*

81 Grace: *And Cathy why did they all run back?*

82 Cathy: *They wand to go back..*

83 Grace: *Who were they all afraid of?*

84 Cathy: *A big pussy cet (cat)*

85 Grace: *Why were they afraid of the pussy cat?*

86 Cathy: *'Cos e a pit (Because he spits)*

87 Grace: *Because he was showing his sharp?...na...ails*

88 Cathy: *And sp...spit...*

89 Grace: *That's what he did...he?...lets all do the spit...he sssspit*

90 Cathy: *Spit*

91 *All of the children joining in*

92 Anne: *Did he spit at all the animals?*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR MODELLING AND DISCOURSE ENABLING STRATEGIES

The findings for Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies show that these strategies support the children's continued acquisition of the language system while simultaneously developing their understanding and use of expository discourse. The Modelling strategies allow for the provision of the vocabulary and sentence structures, including sophisticated vocabulary and complex structures, which challenge the child's existing system and enable the extension of it. With the development of vocabulary knowledge comes greater

understanding of classes and categories of information which, in turn, enables the growth of concepts.

The Modelling strategies also support children in using their developing knowledge of the language system to order and sequence information, and to structure it in a coherent discourse. For example, one of the enabling functions of Recasts and Expansions is that they provide models of the linguistic forms which maintain coherence between sentences.

These developments in knowledge of the vocabulary and structure of the language, together with the dialogue skills which are supported by the Fine Tuning strategies, enable children to move towards the use of decontextualised language to report and to comment on experience.

The Discourse Enabling strategies of Continuing and Elaborating on the topic, and Challenging the children for explanations, build on these skills and provide for more complex levels of meaning making. They help to move the children towards the construction of context free ideas and the use of language for propositional thinking.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, the findings for the use of Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies, in developing the children's skills in expository discourse, have been presented and discussed. The findings show the role of the strategies in developing the children's vocabularies and sentence structures, in supporting their conceptual development and in helping the children to use decontextualised language for reflection and explanation.

The generation and analysis of data was also concerned with the use of the adult talk strategies in the collaborative construction of narratives. The findings for the children's construction of narratives are outlined and discussed in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER 11: FINDINGS IN PHASE 2 FOR NARRATIVE DISCOURSE WITH MODELLING AND DISCOURSE ENABLING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings for the relationship between the use of Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies and the children's construction of narratives are presented. Developing the children's narrative skills included a continued emphasis on the discourse skills which have been discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, with the additional emphasis of developing the children's knowledge and use of the distinctive properties of narrative. As is the case with expository discourse, narrative discourse requires the children to build extended linguistic structures which are coherent in the organisation of their content, and in which cohesion between utterances is maintained, through the use of linguistic forms such as proper nouns, pronouns, and connectives (*before, after, because*). Equally, in developing the children's narrative skills, as in developing their expository discourse skills, there was the intention to simultaneously develop the children's vocabulary and sentence structure. The narrative skills which were the focus of attention were the children's use of the central elements of narrative structure: setting, complication and resolution and their skills in reflecting on and reasoning about the goals, motivations and behaviours of the characters encountered.

The adult strategies which are discussed in these findings are the Discourse Enabling strategies of Developing Narrative and Challenging for Explanations and the range of Modelling strategies: Prompting, Repetition, Questioning, Recasting and Expanding, Continuing a Topic and Elaborating a Topic. Fine Tuning strategies are as integral to the development of the children's narrative skills as they are to the development of their expository skills. The in-depth analysis of the use of Fine Tuning strategies, which was conducted in Chapter 9, is proposed as indicative of their use in the present section and is not repeated here. However, Fine Tuning strategies are referred to at some points in the discussion.

Findings for two kinds of narrative are presented and discussed: play narratives, and narratives based in picture storybooks. The findings for play narratives are presented and

discussed first. The play narratives reported were constructed by Nessa, Aisling and Jennie, as a group, and by Cathy and Tom individually. The findings for Nessa, Aisling and Jennie, are discussed under two subheadings which refer to the relationship between the use of the strategies and these three children's development of, and reflection upon, ideas, within a narrative framework. Additional discussion on each of these children is included under a group sub-heading. The presentation and discussion of the findings for Cathy and Tom are reported under each child's name.

Findings for the construction of narratives based in picture books are presented and discussed in the second part of the chapter. The findings reported are for the narratives constructed by a group of four children. This second part of the chapter is structured under sub-headings. These refer to the relationship between the use of the adult strategies and the children's construction and elaboration of ideas, arising from a picture storybook. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings for narrative discourse. The transcripts quoted from are numbered from 34 to 43.

THE COLLABORATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES IN PLAY

The findings for narrative discourse show the use of the adult strategies in enabling the children's collaborative construction of narratives through play, and their reporting of these, to an audience, at a later stage. The findings also show that the strategies support the children in interpreting existing stories, in re-interpreting these in the construction of new stories through play, and in reporting these new stories to an audience.

In a series of transcripts (*Transcripts, 34-38*) on the topic of three teddies in a playground, Discourse Enabling and Modelling strategies are used to support children in the construction of narratives, at differing levels of complexity. In each episode, the play is based on the use of three small teddy bears and a miniature set of playground toys. The first two episodes involve Nessa, Aisling and Jennie. In episode 3, Cathy is working individually with me and in episode 4, she is presenting to the whole group. In episode 5, Tom is working individually with me.

Enabling Reflection, Explanation and the Construction of Ideas

Episode I is a long play session of more than four hundred utterances, and the narrative is constructed in a series of eight sequences. The first sequence (34. 1-61) is concerned with establishing setting and character. Here the Discourse Enabling strategies and Fine Tuning strategies combine in that the adult is simultaneously Questioning and Prompting for Joint Attention and attempting to establish the narrative setting through the use of Narrative Developing *who*, *where* and *what* questions: *Now, look who we have back today, the? (Anne, 34.1), Teddies (Nessa, 34.2), The teddies. Here's Mr.?... (Anne, 34.3), Purple Teddy (Jennie, 34.3), Here's Mr.?..(Anne, 34. 5), Red Teddy, where's his bike? (Nessa, 34.6), There's a question for you teddy. Did you hear Nessa asking a question? She's asking where's his bike? We'll have to find his bike for him, and Mr? (Anne, 34.7), Orange Teddy (Aisling, 34.8), Orange Teddy, so, Purple Teddy, Red Teddy and Orange Teddy and the teddies are going to?..(Anne, 34.9), the playground (Jennie, 34.10), And can you remember, what have we got in the playground? (Anne, 34.13), A dragon (Jennie, 34.14), Oh not who (Anne, 34.15), A dinosaur (Nessa, 34.16), The slides (Aisling, 34.17), Yes Aisling, think of what they will play on (Anne, 34.18), The toys (Jennie, 34.19).*

In sequences two and three, each of the children agrees to *mind* a bear and each becomes a narrator through her bear character (34.63-103). This is followed by an initial play period when the bears choose their play areas, and engage with each other about these choices (34.104-163). Following the establishing of the setting, I introduce various characters: an elephant, three dinosaurs and a policeman. This is a deliberate Narrative Developing strategy intended to present challenges to the teddies in playing with the toys and to cause complications which will require reflection and explanation from the children. Sequences 4, 5 and 6 show how these reflections and explanations develop in the context of the use of Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies from the adult. The sequences also show how, at times, the children construct collaborative responses. In the closing sequence, a resolution is found to one of the most interesting complications in the story (34.370-403).

In this episode, the concern was to challenge these children to use a narrative framework to construct and to reflect upon ideas. In the transcript, the adult uses Discourse Enabling

strategies to support the children's constructions at a number of levels. Initially, the main use of the strategies is to support the construction of the narrative framework with its central components of setting, complication and resolution. From here, the focus is to use this framework to challenge the children for the kinds of reflection, hypothesising and interpretation that such a framework provides for. With these considerations, there is the constant concern to develop the children's use of an explicit, disembedded, lexical grammatical style, to enable them to clarify and to articulate the meaning they are constructing and to have them use the language of narrative to serve their thinking processes.

In this episode of narrative, one of the first challenges to the children happens in sequence two, when, acting in role, they are required to explain how they have come to be in the playground. Nessa replies that they came by themselves (34.82), and Aisling agrees with her explanation (34.85). When I express surprise, Aisling explains that they have been allowed (34.91) and Jennie agrees (34.101). This is an interesting instance of collaborative meaning making based in agreement, where the children are listening to each other and are willing to build on each other's ideas.

In the subsequent sequence, there is an equally interesting incidence of meaning which is also collaborative but is constructed through disagreement. Here, Jennie is frustrated in her goal of getting a partner for her teddy for the see-saw. Moving in and out of role, she presents the problem and when the others will not co-operate, she provides her own resolution: *He needs someone to get up with him (Jennie, 34.120), Does he? He'd better ask them (Anne, 34.121), Orange Teddy Bear, are you comin' with us? (Jennie, 34.122), I'm goin' on the bike (Nessa, 34.123, singing in a loud voice), Orange Teddy Bear, Red Teddy is asking you something (Anne, 34.124), Are you comin' for a ride on the see-saw? (Jennie, 34.125), But I want to go on the bike (Nessa, 34.126), I'm afraid he doesn't want to go on the see-saw, he wants to go on the bike. Well maybe you could ask someone else Red Teddy? (Anne, 34.127), Purple Bear (Jennie, 34.128), OK ask Purple Bear (Anne, 34.129), Purple Bear, do you want to play a game on the see-saw? (Jennie, 34.130), No, I'm playing in the sand (Aisling, 34.131), Purple Teddy is in the sand, Poor Red Teddy, I hope they'll come and play with you soon (Anne, 34.132), It's alright, I'll play with him (Jennie, 34.133).* These instances of

collaborative meaning making were not in evidence in Phase 1 of the study and mark a distinctive development in the children's behaviour in Phase 2.

Sequence 4 begins with my introduction of a toy elephant. Aisling immediately sees this as a complication and attempts to explain: *You're too big, you won't fit nowhere* (Aisling, 34.167). Taking the role of the elephant, I ask whether I can play on the see-saw. Here, Nessa and Jennie agree but again Aisling explains with emphasis: *You're too heavy* (Aisling, 34.177), *you'll make the see-saw?* (Anne, 34.178), *Break* (Aisling, 34.179), *No, no, he's breakin' it now* (Nessa, 34.180). When I challenge the children to explain the problem to the elephant and attempt to collaborate with them in the construction of the explanation, Nessa suggests a solution and explains why it will work: *...But look, let's see, let's try and tell him what's wrong. Mr. Elephant, you push him up but he isn't able to push you down because you're too?* (Anne 34.181), *Heavy* (Aisling, 34.182), *He's breakin' it now* (Nessa, 34.183), *He's too?* (Anne, 34.184), *Heavy, he's pushin' it down to the bottom* (Aisling, 34.185), *Oh alright then, can I go on the swing please?* (Anne, 34.186), *No!!* (children together), *Why not?* (Anne, 34.188), *'Cos you're trunk won't fit* (Aisling, 34.189), *Your trunk won't fit, your trunk is very?* (Anne, out of role, 34.190), *It's very big, you can play with the sand, he can play with the sand* (Nessa, addressing the elephant and then us, 34.191), *Oh, can I play with the sand everybody?* (Anne, in role, 34.192), *Yeah* (Nessa & Jennie, 34.193), *No!* (Aisling, 34.194), *Yeah* (Nessa, with emphasis, 34.195), *you're too big* (Aisling with emphasis, 34.196), *Is he too big for the sand as well? I wonder is there any part of him that could stretch into the sand tray so that he could play?* (Anne, 34.197), *Then he can only play with it like this (dipping elephant's trunk in sand tray), suck it, suck the sand and put it into...into he's mouth an' put it into the bucket* (Nessa, 34.198).

In the sequence outlined above, the adult is using the narrative structure to challenge the children to engage in what Bruner (1996) calls the arguments of action. Rather than simply describing events, the children are being required to explain them in terms of causal relations between agents and their actions. They are also being challenged to consider and to present new propositions following from their explanations. In their responses to these challenges,

the children are talking about concepts: *too big, too heavy*, and they are verbally reasoning out solutions.

With these language uses, the narrative accompanying the play is being driven by ideas about the characters and the play objects, rather than by the play objects themselves. In keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) premise, the play setting allows the children to enter imaginary worlds where the objects signify more than their material meaning and the children are freed from the constraints of context. The children are articulating imagined, possible scenarios where their thinking is stimulated by the visible, playground materials but is also becoming disembedded from them. They are working with images which are based in, but which go beyond, the visible materials and they are imagining scenarios which are stimulated by those images. Further, scaffolded by the adult, they are harnessing the symbolic function of language to clarify and to communicate these thinking processes. In this sequence of the play, the children are engaging in what Painter (1999a) describes as the *linguistic construal of context* (p.77) where the meaning is relying, primarily, on the use of decontextualised language.

This level of cognitive and linguistic behaviour is stimulated by the dialogue context and by the adult's use of Narrative Developing and Modelling strategies which set the parameters for meaning making at the level of the propositional mode. The adult strategies challenge for explanations: *Why do you need two teddies on the see-saw?...Why is that I wonder?* (Anne, 34.154), and present propositions: *Listen Teddy Bears, will you listen to Mr. Elephant, he says he's going to take the sand tray home. Is that a good idea?* (Anne, 34.229).

This style of interaction invites the children to think about cause and effect, actions and consequences, and it requires them to articulate these thoughts. In this way, it initiates them into more complex meaning making requiring the use of decontextualised language. The adult strategies also support the children's entry into this complex mode by demonstrating forms of reflection: *Aisling, I'm surprised...Nessa...I thought the teddies would be afraid of the dinosaurs Nessa...they're not* (Anne, 34.282) and also by demonstrating how language works to support the thinking out of explanations: *Let's try and tell him what's wrong.*

Elephant, when you go on the see-saw and if Purple Teddy gets on (putting both toys on the see-saw), you're much, much heavier than Purple Teddy. Mr. Elephant, you push him up but he isn't able to push you down because you're too? (Ann, 34. 181), Heavy (Aisling, 34.182).

The use of language by the children to construct ideas within the narrative framework continues in sequence 5 of the transcript (34.244-291) when I introduce the dinosaurs. Here again, as in sequence 4, while it is the adult who introduces the character, the children determine the nature of the complication and how the narrative will proceed. In response to my question, they decide that the teddies are not afraid of the dinosaurs and that they want to include the new characters in their play (34.273-276).

One of the most interesting developments in this narrative comes in sequence 6, when Nessa introduces a complication that continues as a thread of concern until it is resolved in the final sequence. Again here, this interesting sequence results from the adult strategy of Developing the Narrative by Prompting the children to think about the elephant who is a character in the play but has not been involved since sequence 4. The following excerpt shows Nessa's ability to use decontextualised language to communicate her idea. It also shows the adult Developing the narrative, and using Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies to support Nessa while also responding to Aisling and Jennie who are pursuing a different narrative thread. Finally, the adult Fine Tunes the setting so that all three children are engaged with Nessa's idea and begin collaborating about it:

Excerpt from Transcript 34

293 Anne: *What's elephant doing? Ah look he's over there all by himself*

294 Nessa: *He's looking at the children*

295. Anne: *Is he?*

296 Nessa: *Aren't you looking at the children Mr. Elephant? Yeah*

297 Anne: *And would you like to do anything else Mr. Elephant?*

298 Nessa: *No my...my family went away for...a couple a years*

299 Anne: *So are you all alone?...Is that why you come to the playground to play with the other animals?*

300 Nessa: *I have to stay here for ever me Mam says*

301 Anne: *Goodness me!...I wonder how will you ?...Where will you sleep I wonder?...Oh look what's happening here*

302 Nessa: *I have to sleep on the ground*

303 Anne: *There's a great idea here (responding to Jennie's actions)...Look what's happening...Tell us Red Teddy, what are you doing?*

304 Jennie: *Sittin' on the Dinosaur*

305 Anne: *The Dinosaur...Red...This is a new song...Red Teddy is on the Dinosaur... not on the back...Red Teddy is on the Dinosaur... Ah look this is a great idea, Purple Teddy is on the Dinosaur...and so is your Teddy, are they friends?*
 306 Nessa: *I'm going on the bike now*
 307 Anne: *Elephant, we thought it was just you who gave rides to the Teddies...Look!*
 308 Nessa: *I'm goin' to stay here for ever and ever...:*
 309 Anne: *Ah elephant!*
 310 Aisling: *My teddy can even jump over...go over like this...*
 311 Anne: *This is a sad story, Aisling are you listening to what the elephant is saying?... I have to stay here?..*
 312 Nessa: *For ever*
 313 Anne: *Elephants don't..*
 314 Aisling: *Even ...even he can go down on a ride*
 315 Anne: *Ride on?...can he ride on the Dinosaur? Do you know something everybody... Elephants don't usually...elephants don't usually live in a playground do they?*
 316 Children together: *No*
 317 Jennie: *In a Zoo*
 318 Anne: *They usually live in a Zoo*
 319 Nessa: *An Anne he's sad 'cos he has to leave his family*
 320 Jennie: *Or maybe in a forest*
 321 Anne: *In the forest?*
 322 Nessa: *He has to get a new family*
 323 Anne: *Now that's sad isn't it, because?...*
 324 Nessa: *He has to get a new family...He's looking everyplace for a new family*
 325 Anne: *Where will he get a new family I wonder? Do you mean a new baby elephant and a new mammy elephant?*
 326 Nessa: *Get off me, get off me (responding when Jennie tries to put a teddy on the elephant's back)*
 327 Anne: *He's a bit cross because he's all alone...well we might be able to help him because someone else is coming into the playground (I introduce a policeman and police car)*
 328 Aisling: *It's the police*
 329 Anne: *Oh I wonder why the policeman is here?...I wonder why the policeman is here in the police car?*
 330 Aisling: *'Cos he wants to take the teddies and we...we have to hide*

In sequence 7, there is a discourse between the policeman and the teddies (34.332-359) and then Nessa introduces the final sequence by taking the role of the elephant and recalling her story about losing her family, for the policeman. In the discourse that follows, she acts on the earlier suggestion from the adult that the policeman might help and she employs this character to provide a solution:

Excerpt from Transcript 34

358 Nessa: *Mr Policeman, I have to stay here all day long...for ever and ever*
 359 Anne: *Why*
 360 Nessa: *I have to get a new family*
 361 Anne: *(Taking the role of the policeman) What's wrong with your family Mr Elephant?*
 362 Nessa: *They went away from home from me*
 363 Anne: *Did they go to live in a new forest?*
 364 Nessa: *Mmm*

365 Anne: *Well Mr. Elephant, I don't think you should stay in the playground forever because elephants don't usually live in playgrounds...Jennie can tell you where they live*
 366 Jennie: *In the for. .in the jungle*
 367 Anne: *Yes in the jungle and sometimes in the?*
 368 Jennie: *Zoo*
 369 Nessa: *Will you give me a ride there?...OK (moving between roles to ask and answer the question)*
 370 Anne: *Alright...I have a great idea...I'll drive down to the? (moving out of role) Where is he going to drive I wonder? Where will the policeman bring the elephant?*
 371 Jennie: *Jungle*
 372 Anne: *Drive down to the jungle...*

Enabling Collaborative Discourse

In a follow up episode, the narrative is reconstructed by the adult and the three children, for the whole class group (*Transcript, 35*). The audience is extremely engaged by the story and the video tape of the episode shows their level of interest and enjoyment including a very marked level of participation from Tom and a high level of participation from Cathy. In Phase 2 of the study, the children showed skills of engaging with each other's topics and of collaborating together to construct meaning which were not in evidence in Phase 1. These developments are attributed to the influence of the Fine Tuning strategies.

There is good evidence of the children collaborating together also in this episode. In reconstructing the story, the adult again uses a combination of Fine Tuning and Narrative Developing strategies to help the presenters to establish the setting and to recall the story sequences. While we are introducing the characters and the toys, a discourse develops on the functions of the playground toys, with children from the audience questioning, and the presenters, and sometimes other members of the audience, explaining: *And what's that one with the ladders...up there? (Kevin, 35.29), What's this up here? (Anne, 35.30), A bridge (Garry, 35.31), It's like a bridge Garry, yes, it's ...(Anne, 35.32), And that looks like a door (Nessa, 35.33), It's what you get on the slide (Jennie, 35.34), It's part of the climbing frame. Jennie tell them what to do with it. You use it to? (Anne, 35.35), Climb up, then he can get down and come down the slide (Jennie, 35.36), Do you hear what she's telling you? (Anne, 35.37). And he can even go through the hole thing (Aisling, 35.38)*. Together with the children's developing ability to talk to and to question each other and to view each other as *tellers* and *knowers* of information, the conversation here shows that, at times, the children build on each other's topics and ideas.

Throughout this transcript there is evidence of the children using decontextualised language to reason about experience. When Nessa comes to retelling her story about the elephant's family, she explains what the problem is, in response to my Cueing strategy: ...*Everybody, there was a problem with the poor elephant. Nessa, it's a bit sad, will you tell everybody?* (Anne, 35.104), *Em...he haded (had) to leave his family....* (Nessa, 35.105), *He was all?* (Anne, 35.106), *Alone* (Nessa, 35.107), *Because his?* (Anne, 35.108), *Family's lost* (Jennie, 35.109), *Because his family went away* (Nessa, 35.110), *To a new?* (Anne, 35.111), *Home* (Nessa, 35.112), *In the?* (Anne, 35.113), *Forest* (Garry, 35.114), *In the forest* (Nessa, 35.115).

In the extract quoted above, by signaling to the children that now they are going to reflect on a problem: *Everybody, there was a problem with the poor elephant. Nessa, it's a bit sad, will you tell everybody?* (Anne, 35.104), the adult is using both a Narrative Developing strategy and a Cueing strategy. The Cueing strategy fine tunes the context for both the listeners and speakers and suggests to them that reflection on a problem, and consideration of solutions, is the level of meaning making that is required. Similar strategies were identified in the findings for Expository Discourse, for example, in the discussion of Chris's postman story (*Transcript 21*). By requiring the children to engage with their own topics at levels of reflection and explanation, the adult is initiating the children into complex modes of meaning making and disembedded forms of language use.

In this extract also, this part of the story is reconstructed through a kind of verbal cloze procedure in which the Topic Continuing strategy is a series of Prompts, from the adult, which engage the child in a collaborative recall of the story. This strategy use serves a number of purposes here and it is used also in a number of other episodes in the study (e.g. see *Transcript, 22*). It ensures that the critical elements of Nessa's story are recalled, and are structured coherently for her listeners, while simultaneously Modelling the kinds of linguistic devices that provide cohesion between the utterances. In the context of reconstructing the story through collaborative turn taking, the adult has the opportunity to model, for the whole group, the kinds of pronouns and connecting phrases (*because his; to a; in the*) the child

must come to use independently. This strategy provides a legitimate, social interactive means of demonstrating to the children how linguistic devices are used to create cohesion, and it is an important contribution in the study. The literature has identified the lack of evidence available on the social interactive experiences that contribute to the development of these monologue skills (Snow, 1989) and, in more recent research, Hickman (2003) highlights the inadequate treatment of the issue of cohesion in the literature on children's narrative discourse.

Jennie, Nessa and Aisling

In the transcript quoted above, there is evidence that Jennie, Aisling and Nessa are becoming more skilled in the use of the explicit, decontextualised language required to present information which is not shared with an audience. In two instances in the transcript, Jennie uses explicit statements to clarify the topic and to identify a central point of meaning in the discourse. In the first instance, we are recalling the arrival of the Dinosaurs into the playground and I am Prompting the children to speculate as to what the consequences might have been. When the responses from Kevin and Brendan suggest that the Dinosaurs will cause conflict, Jennie interjects to say: *the dinosaurs were friendly (35.186)*. Equally, when we are speculating as to why the policeman is worried and why he has come to talk to the Teddies, Jennie explains that it is *'cos the mammy and daddy were worried (35.224)*.

Nessa's story about the elephant is evidence of her developing skills. In this whole group context, she does not elaborate as spontaneously and as fully as in the original telling and the narrative emerges through dialogue with the adult. However, in response to the adult Prompts, her vocabulary and sentence structure are appropriate and explicit and are totally independent of context. Like Aisling, she also structures sentences which capture meaning and are a clear statement of it, as in her response to a question which was posed to Aisling: *...what did the policeman do with the elephant? Can you remember Aisling? (Anne, 35.233), Brought him back to the jungle (Nessa, 35.234)*.

The Transcript shows that Aisling can be reticent in the whole group setting requiring support with Prompting (35.50-51). However, her responses to Prompts are clear and context

free. In addition, a number of utterances show her trying, independently, to provide an explicit account: *My teddy...eh...the purple teddy could even go down even one more other ladder (35.45), The teddy goed under the ladder (35.47).*

Taken together, the findings from Transcripts 34 and 35 show significant developments in the three children's discourse skills, compared with their contributions in Phase 1 of the study. The evidence from Phase 1 (*Transcripts 9, 10, 15*), showed Nessa, Aisling and Jennie to be inclined towards one word responses and, in the main, to use full sentence structures only when these were elicited by the adult, in highly structured contexts, such as when repeating sentences in a call and response picture book format. In Phase One also, the children's utterances were often fragmented; lacking coherence for the listener. They did not expand on topics and it was unusual to hear extended sequences of sentences or the use of complex sentences.

By contrast, Transcripts 34 and 35 show them contributing to and elaborating on topics during extended episodes of conversation, leading the discourse, and building linguistic structures that can be reconstructed as narratives. These episodes also show them using decontextualised language to communicate information which is not shared with an audience, including narrating problems and ideas about characters and events, and reflecting on these.

Cathy

The findings from Transcripts 36 and 37 show how the adult strategies are differentiated to meet Cathy's needs and how they support her development of a play narrative while simultaneously developing her sentence structure. In the first episode (*Transcript 36*), Cathy is playing with two teddies and the playground toys, in a one to one context with the adult. In the opening sequence, the focus is on establishing the narrative setting: *...Red bear and look who's here again today, who's this? (Anne, 36.1), Purple Bear (Cathy, 36.2), Purple Bear...Red Bear and Purple Bear and look what we have here...look what we have Cathy, the? (Anne, 36.3), Fwing (swing) (Cathy, 36.4), Swing and the?...what do we call this? (Anne, 36.5), A ladder (Cathy, 36.6)*. This sequence in which the characters and the toys are named, and the characters' actions are described, continues for twenty five utterances. From

here Cathy engages the bears in a further series of actions until she decides they are going home.

The narrative constructed with Cathy has a simpler form than the one constructed with Nessa, Jennie and Aisling in that no seriously complicating factors arise. In strict terms, this play episode does not constitute a legitimate story in that the structure does not conform to the requirements of setting, complication and resolution. Rather, it suggests what Hickman (2003) describes as a script, where scripts are defined as involving routine and predictable event sequences as compared to stories which include the unpredictable or the problematic, resulting in a dilemma to be resolved (Hickman, 2003). Nonetheless, scripts are types of narrative discourse and Hickman allows that the line between script and story is not a hard and fast one, and that scripts can have story like qualities.

In this narrative, events were not totally predictable in that choices could be made as to where and how the teddies would play and how the episode would end. Cathy took a number of initiatives in structuring the events including deciding that the final event would be the bears leaving for home together, sharing the bicycle. By the end of this episode, we had constructed a narrative which did have sufficient substance to be recounted to the children in the whole class group.

The findings in this transcript are interesting and useful in that they show how the adult strategies help Cathy to construct sentences to describe her play activities and to build a narrative to represent those activities. A critical factor here is the use of the range of Modelling strategies. In this transcript, the adult talk is characterised by explicit Prompting of sentence structures, by Prompting for Elicited Responses and Elicited Imitations and by Recasts and Expansions.

In the following excerpt, the adult follows the child's lead and maps language on to the child's action. This is followed immediately with Prompts in which she both models the sentence structure required and elicits the same kind of response from the child. The child's response is then followed with a Recast and an Expansion. This highly structured use of the

strategies proceeds in the naturalistic setting of play and of singing about the bear's activities. Cathy loved music and here the use of singing is an additional, spontaneous strategy used to capitalise on Cathy's strengths:*What do you want to do? Are you putting Red Bear on the bike? (Anne, 36.14), Yeah (Cathy, 36.15),will you sing for Red Bear? Red Bear is on the bike (Anne singing), you sing for Red Bear will you? (Anne, 36.16), Red Bear i (is) on the bike (singing) (Cathy, 36.17), That's gorgeous (Anne, 36.17), Red Bear is on the bike, in school today (Anne & Cathy singing together, 36.19).*

In a further sequence, these Prompting strategies are used within a call and response game which is a stimulus to prompt Cathy to be verbal. In the game format, the adult closes her eyes and has to be told where the bears are playing:*Oh Red Bear, where are you? Where are you Red Bear? (Anne, 36.34), I'm on ...(indecipherable) (Cathy, 36.35), I'm on the bike (Anne whispering prompt, Cathy joins in on word bike), I'll call him again. Oh Red Bear, where are you? (Anne, 36.36), I'm here, I'm down here (singing by fitting her response to the tune used by the adult and using bear's voice) (Cathy, 36.37), On the? (Anne, 36.38), Bike (in role using same voice) (Cathy, 36.39), Alright now, I'm going to call him, are you ready? (whispering to Cathy), ...oh Purple Bear, where are you? (singing) (Anne, 36.40), I'm down at the wee tsaw (see-saw) (incorrectly naming the swing and again singing by fitting her response to the adult's tune) (Cathy, 36.41), Are you?...On the swing (singing) (Anne, 36.42).*

The play proceeds with the adult using a combination of Prompting model sentences, eliciting responses based on these models and then Recasting Cathy's utterances. As the play progresses, the transcript shows a number of examples of Cathy taking on the adult's style of response and using more mature structures than would have been in evidence in Phase 1 of the study. In the following example, she asks two questions and answers one, with reasonable fluency. The example begins with Cathy and the adult calling together in chorus. The adult withdraws and Cathy continues alone: *Oh Purple Bear... (Anne & Cathy, 36.60), Hare (where) are you? Red Bear, hare (where) are you? I'm up here...(Cathy, 36.61), On the? (Anne, 36.62), Ladder (Cathy, 36.63).*

In another example, in response to a Prompt question, Cathy maps language on to the bear's action by singing a phrase which she and the adult have sung together earlier in the episode, where the ascending notes, *doh, me, soh, doh* are sung as the teddy climbs each of four steps on the ladder: (36.7; 36.50; 36.51). Here Cathy repeats the phrase matching a note to each word in almost perfect pitch: *Now where's he going?* (Anne, 36.85), *Climb- up- in -stair* (*climb up the stairs*)(Cathy, 36.86), *Climb up the stairs, that was lovely. I heard you singing for him...(singing)* (Anne, 36.87). Towards the end of the transcript, when I take another opportunity to rehearse her sentence structure, Cathy responds with one of the most complete structures she has used so far: *Oh Purple Bear, where are you?* (Anne, 36.90), *I'n goin' (I'm going) on the whing (swing)* (Cathy, 36.91).

A significant finding here is that, in the examples quoted above, Cathy's responses follow Prompt questions or, Elicited Responses, from the adult rather than Elicited Imitations, where models of the required response are presented first, as in the interactions in earlier sections of the transcript (*e.g.* 36.16, 36.17). This suggests that Cathy is beginning to generalise her use of these language forms, beyond the highly structured exchange of utterances in which she first used them. This development cannot be considered as an example of true generalisation as it is happening within the episode rather than occurring in different and varying contexts. Nonetheless, it is a significant advance in Cathy's command of language structure.

The follow through episode (*Transcript 37*) in which Cathy presented her narrative to the whole class group also shows significant development in Cathy's communicative skills. When we have reconstructed the setting by naming the characters and playground toys, Cathy places the bears on the toys and, without Prompting, she informs the children of the event she has constructed. She then joins the adult in singing the familiar song about the toys, this time articulating each of the words in the sentence. In this extract, Cathy is using more complete sentence structures and is carrying over the kinds of developing skills that were apparent in the one-to-one context: *Red Bear on the bike, Purple Bear ona...the (on the) ladder* (Cathy, 37.32), *Look everybody, we'll sing for them. Red Bear* (Cathy joining in) *is on the bike, is on the bike, is on the bike, Red Bear is on the bike, in school today. Will we sing about Purple Bear?* (Anne, 37.33).

In this whole group context, Cathy's spontaneous description of the bears and her more complete sentence structures are significant developments for this Phase of the study. As in the instances quoted from Transcript 36, here Cathy communicates independently of direct adult modelling and, in addition, she is without a direct adult prompt. Her behaviour here can be interpreted as evidence of generalising of skills, from the one-to one- context, to this new context.

In the episode discussed above, Cathy was an engaging speaker for her audience and the video tape shows that the children were delighted with her presentation. It is probable that she was supported by the presence of the toys which served as a physical reminder of the meaning she had constructed and could now reconstruct. If needed, the toys could also provide a prompt to meaning for the audience for whom Cathy's articulation and sentence level difficulties could be a barrier to understanding. In this short presentation however, Cathy's sentences are closer to being fully formed and she articulates the words clearly. In this instance, the children are less reliant on the physical prompts and Cathy is moving closer to being able to rely on language alone.

In this presentation, the main use of the adult strategies is to Continue the Topic and to Recast Cathy's utterances, continuing to model clarity for her and for her audience. This use of the strategies in the supported monologue context, combined with the visual prompts of the toys, is an example of Fine Tuning the context to support the differentiated needs of the speaker and listeners.

The findings from here suggest marked development in Cathy's language and discourse skills from those which were in evidence in Phase 1 of the study. In the whole group context, Cathy is presenting information on her topic, the children are listening and responding and, in one sequence, Kevin addresses questions to her. These questions prompt responses from other children and from Cathy, and, from here, all of the children join in singing the sentence Cathy has constructed (37.38-46). This level of interaction between Cathy and the children is in marked contrast to Phase 1 of the study when there was no evidence of any of the children

initiating communication with her and when Cathy was usually silent in the whole group context.

Tom

The findings for developing narrative with Tom show the strategies being used similarly to the ways in which they were used with Cathy. Here the focus is to interpret Tom's play activities to him by mapping language on to these activities, and to encourage him to be verbal. Again here, the Modelling strategies are critical.

Transcript 38 records the findings for a number of short play sequences where Tom is in a one-to-one context with the adult. In the first sequence we are playing with the teddies and playground toys. In the initial sequence with Tom, we are focusing on establishing the setting (38.1-65). We name the characters and the toys and we describe the activities of the bears. Here the Transcript shows the adult following the child's lead and mapping words and phrases to his focus of interest: *Look at that, Red Bear is on the?* (Anne, 38.1), *Bike* (Tom, 38.2). The adult also Recasts Tom's words and phrases and extends his utterances:.... *Red Bear is on the bike* (Anne, 38.3) and uses a time delay, or close technique, leaving the final word for him to supply: *Oh... Look Tom it's a?* (Anne, 38.7), *Wing* (Tom, 38.8), *Swing* ... (Anne, 38.9). In this play sequence, the narrative develops in a script format in which the teddies engage in a number of activities

Throughout the sequence with the playground toys, there are good examples of Tom responding to Prompts by attempting the words and phrases which have been modelled by the adult. When he gestures that he wants to put Red Bear on the ladder, I take the opportunity to Prompt the phrase, *climb up the stairs* (Anne, 38.19), again singing it as for Cathy. Tom responds with a similar tune and a three word utterance which is a good approximation: *Uh de airs* (Tom, 38.20). In another instance, when he wants to take Purple Bear from me, I use a Prompt to elicit the bears name and again Tom's responses approximate to the words: *Tell me who he is* (Anne, 38.31), *Bup-ty (Purple)* (Tom, 38.32), *Bear* (Anne, 38.33), *Bor* (Tom, 38.34).

In a very significant incidence, when we move to play on the large toys which mirror the small playground toys, and as we are playing on the see-saw, Tom tells me he wants to play on the bike, and in the car: *I ge me bike (Tom, 38.83), Are you going to go on the bike? (Anne, 38.84), Yeah (Tom, 38.85), In a minute, first we're on the see-saw...we're on the see-saw (Anne, 38.86), A an an me car (Tom, 38.87), And your car (Anne, 38.88).*

The findings here show that, in February of Phase 2 of the study, Tom is attempting to verbalise a number of the target words and phrases in this play context. In the playground sequences, in response to prompts, he makes good attempts to verbalise the words *swing (wing), bear (bor) see-saw (ee-aw) stairs (sairs) and elephant (elephan)* and the phrase *up the stairs (uh de airs)*. Prior to this episode, Tom had been using the initial sounds b, e and s and these words build on his existing skills. He also uses a four and a five word utterance, spontaneously: *I ge me bike; A an an me car.*

The findings in this one-to-one context, in Phase 2 of the study, reflect the positive findings which were reported for Tom in the section on Expository Discourse (*Transcript, 20*). These findings support those reported in the language intervention literature that a combination of Milieu Teaching and Responsive Interaction Techniques such as are included in Enhanced Milieu Teaching (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006), can support the development of vocabulary and sentence structure, in naturalistic settings, for children with serious language delay. The examples quoted above show the use of a combination of explicit, elicitation and imitation Prompts, together with Recasts and Expansions of the child's utterances.

The play contexts constitute a naturalistic setting in which the adult can follow the child's expression of interest and respond contingently to the child's verbal or non-verbal communication, and can elicit particular levels of response and model appropriate language forms. The findings here also support the view, in the intervention literature, that a combination of strategies is needed to create the maximally responsive environment. In the examples quoted above, as in the findings for Cathy reported in the earlier section, the use of explicit prompts for elicitation and imitation provide examples of the children's talk which the adult can then respond to with recasts and expansions. For Tom, the findings here agree

with studies which suggest that the requirement to say the particular language target, rather than simply listening to the language model, is particularly supportive of children who are in the early stages of developing expressive vocabulary and word combinations (Yoder, Kaiser, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek and Fischer, 1995; Yoder, Kaiser and Alpert, 1991).

A final sequence in this play illustrates a less tightly structured style of adult interaction. Here the adult maps language on to the child's activities and perceived meaning intentions and Recasts his utterances. There is less use of direct Prompting for elicited and imitative responses. In the sequence, Tom and I are using a different set of bears, daddy, mammy and baby and a picture book, to reconstruct the picture book story. In this sequence, Tom initiates a number of events for the bears, none of which is in the original story.

As we are naming the bears, referring to the picture book, and establishing the setting (38.100-116), Tom introduces the phrase: *A me bed* (38.117). Over a number of utterances, in which he repeats the phrase, I understand that he wants the baby's bed (38.117-125). Following from this initiation, and with Tom again taking the lead, an amusing event is constructed in which daddy and mammy bear try sleeping in baby's bed. One of the significant findings here is how, following the child's lead, the adult strategies are used to support the child and how the adult and child collaborate in building this narrative event:

Excerpt from Transcript 38

130 Anne: *This is the baby's bed.....ok now.....and what does baby want to do?*

131 Tom: *Bed*

132 Anne: *He wants to go to bed does he?...you forgot to ask daddy to take him up the stairs*

133 Tom: *Oh daddy*

134 Anne: *I'm tired...give me a?...jockey back,isn't that right?...Now are you ready for him to go up the stairs?*

135 Tom: *E baye (can't decipher)*

136 Anne: *Put him on daddy's back*

137 Tom: *That wo a (can't decipher) (Tom puts the baby on the daddy's back)*

138 Anne: *Yeah, put him on daddy's back, now look ready? Climb- up --the -? ...stairs (Anne, mimes moving bears up the stairs and sings matching a note to each stair). Will you put baby in his bed?*

139 Tom: *Eh, oh (Tom takes on role of baby bear, yawning and making accompanying sounds)*

140 Anne: *I'm tired (Taking role of baby)...put him into bed*

141 Tom: *My bed tha (Tom takes baby bear out of bed and puts him on the table)*

142 Anne: *Oh is he not going into this bed?*

142aTom: *No that (indicating baby bear will sleep on the table)*

143 Anne: *Is that his bed? Alright*

144 Tom: Tom now puts daddy bear in baby's bed (smiling at me)
 145 Anne: Ha ha, daddy bear, no, you're too? (laughing)...Daddy's bear is too
 (looking at Tom)
 146 Tom: Big
 147 Anne: Big, he's too big
 148 Tom: (Now puts mammy bear in the bed)
 149 Anne: Mammy bear you're too?
 150 Tom: No! (enjoying the game)
 151 Anne: She is...mammy bear, get out of my bed, you're too?...too? (taking on role of baby
 bear)
 152 Tom: Too big tha (Tom holds both bears and using baby voice, moves baby as
 if speaking to mammy)
 153 Anne: You're too big for that bed, that's right...good night mammy, goodnight daddy
 154 Tom: Tom puts baby back in bed
 155 Anne: Ah look Tom, he fits in doesn't he?...Just right

The findings from the sequence quoted above reiterate the point that a combination of strategies is needed to create the maximally responsive environment. In this less highly structured play sequence, the adult strategies are used, in the main, to support the development of Tom's ideas about the play. In this way, the adult recognises and builds on his great enjoyment of developing play scenarios and narratives in a one-to-one context with the adult. These strengths were first apparent in Phase 1 when he communicated his narrative about Santa Claus (*Transcript, 6*) even though relying on sounds and gestures, and again in the play sequences recorded in Transcripts 4 and 5.

In this sequence, the adult maps language on to the child's activities, articulating his ideas in more accurate and complete phrases than he is using (38.142-143). In this way, I interpret the child to himself and model the language he needs to use. I also engage the child in communicating about his ideas as when Tom places the daddy bear in the baby's bed and smiles at me. Here, I interpret Tom's non-verbal meaning as him playing with the idea of size and engage him in explaining the idea, scaffolding the explanation for him with the close strategy (38.145-147). These strategies also serve as Topic Continuing and Narrative Developing strategies. The excerpt shows how the strategies contribute to the collaborative construction of a narrative event over a number of utterances.

The findings for Tom again suggest that a combination of strategies is needed to create the maximally responsive environment. Together with hearing models of language, Tom needs practice in using them. This play sequence allows some opportunities for the adult to elicit

verbal responses from the child, and to recast those responses. However, there is a danger that, in a sequence like this, the child could communicate through actions only, with the adult supplying all of the language, and failing to make demands, for target responses, from the child. The intervention research suggests that the strengths of Elicited Prompting and Elicited Imitation are that they require the child to say the target words (Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Mousetis, Kaczmarek and Fischer, 1995). The field of language and literacy research also provides evidence that creating opportunities for children to use new words is more facilitative of vocabulary acquisition than passive exposure (Nagey & Scott, 2000). The findings in this study concur with these positions.

The findings discussed above show positive effects on Tom's language development within the specific teaching context. In the intervention literature, this evidence would be regarded as the first stage of effectiveness. Language interventionists look for generalisation of comprehension and use of vocabulary and grammatical structures beyond the specific teaching context in which they were used, and also, beyond the specific topic of the original episode (Kaiser, Yoder & Keetz, 1992).

In the early part of Phase Two, Tom did not show evidence of transferring vocabulary and phrases beyond the one-to-one context. This point was illustrated in Transcript 21 and was discussed in Chapter 10. However, by April and May of Phase Two, he was becoming more communicative in the whole group context, both in presenting information as a follow up to a one-to-one interaction with the adult (*Transcript, 42*), and as a member of the audience during other children's presentations (*Transcript 41*).

In an episode in April of Phase 2, in preparation for a story about animals, Tom shows the children a toy lion and uses the word *lion*, in response to a Prompt from me:*tell all the children what his name is (Anne, 42.9), Lion (Karen, 42.10), Lion (Anne, 42.11, whispering prompt), Lion (Tom, 42.12)*. After I introduce the story and we discuss the fact that there is a lion also in the picture book, I engage Tom again: *Look first of all everybody...lion...Tom is this a?... just listen to Tom now for a minute, it's his turn. Is it a baby lion? (Anne, 42.19), No (Tom, 42.20), Who is it? (Anne, 42.21), Big Lion (Tom, 42.22), What? (Anne, 42.23), Big*

Lion (Tom, 42.24), Big lion, is it the mammy? (Anne, 42.25), Yeah (Tom, 42.26), No, the daddy (children together, 42.27), It's the? (Anne, 42.28), Daddy (Tom and children, 42.29). Later in the story, Tom says the word *monkey (Tom, 42.63)*, a word he first began to form in a one-to-one context in January of Phase 2 (*Transcript 21*).

These findings show the development in Tom's expressive skills from Phase 1 of the study when his communication was almost exclusively dependent on sounds and gestures and his meaningful interactions were confined to short episodes in a one-to-one context. His inclusion as a communicating member of the whole class group, presenting information, however brief, in clearly discernible words, marks a major development from his relationship with the group in Phase 1 of the study.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES BASED IN PICTURE STORYBOOKS

Picture storybooks were also a source for children's narrative development in Phase 2 of the study. The picture storybook, *The Baby Who Wouldn't Go To Bed* (Cooper, 2001), was the stimulus for the construction of three narrative episodes, recorded in Transcripts, 39, 40 and 41. Transcripts 39 and 40 record episodes in small group contexts. In the first of these, the story was re-read and discussed and in the second, this same group of children engaged in block play to construct a new story, based on the original. In the third episode, (*Transcript, 41*), these children reconstructed their new story for the whole class group. The children in the small group episodes are: Nessa, Chris, Aisling, Jennie and Garry. Garry was not one of the eight small group participants in the study but he had expressed a strong wish to join us in these episodes.

Taken together, these three transcripts show the use of the adult strategies in supporting the children's use of decontextualised language to construct and reconstruct narratives in which they explain behaviours, draw inferences and articulate central points of meaning. The children's responses to the picture story and their own new story, constructed through play, show them engaging with experience, in the main, at a level of reflection and propositional thinking, rather than at a level of description.

The transcripts show the adult drawing on the range of strategies discussed so far. Prompting and Questioning strategies are used to recall story events and Topic Continuing and Narrative Developing strategies are used to affirm children's contributions and to elaborate their ideas. The adult also challenges the children to construct meaning beyond that directly available in the text, to reflect on and to explain events, and to consider propositions. In addition, strategies are used to focus attention on new vocabulary, to Prompt the children to use these words and to Recast and Expand upon children's utterances.

Challenging the Children to Elaborate and to Explain

In the first episode, the recall of the story is supported by the addition of a toy car and a baby doll. The story recounts the adventures of a baby who refuses to go to bed and who escapes from his mother in his toy car. He travels along, meeting a number of characters and inviting them to play with him until, eventually, exhausted and ready for bed, he meets his mother again. The story has an additional layer of complexity in that the baby is dreaming and the characters he is meeting are in fact his own toys. This sub-text is not referred to in the text of the story and has to be inferred from the illustrations, as the story develops.

In their recall of this story (*Transcript, 39*), the children show good examples of elaborating on the topic with explicit use of vocabulary and, in some instances, complex sentence structures. In the opening sequence, as we recall the setting, I ask Nessa to tell us about the main character: *...Did you hear who Nessa says this is?...Tell them again will you Nessa?* (*Anne, 39.14*), *The baby in...who...who ran away from home and his mammy found him* (*Nessa, 39.15*). In another instance, when we are discussing an illustration in which a group of soldiers are marching up to a castle, Jennie explains that: *They're goin' up to rescue a princess* (*39.242*).

This explanation from Jennie is one example of a number of explanations given by the children in this transcript. A significant point here is that, as well as explaining in response to Prompts from the adult, in some instances, the children explain in response to Prompts from each other. In the following sequence, the explanation arises from a question from Nessa. She is asking about the illustration in which the baby's car is depicted with little clouds of

smoke coming from the exhaust pipe: *What are them things?...Little ball things?* (Nessa, 39.59), *What are those little shapes coming out of his car?* (Anne, 39.60), *I know* (Garry, 39.61), *Clouds* (Aisling, 39.62), *No, no...smoke* (Garry, 39.63), *Are they?* (Anne, 39.64), *The smoke is like clouds* (Aisling, 39.65), *Like clouds, exactly Aisling. Garry knows what they are* (Anne, 39.66), *Smoke* (Garry, 39.67), *Smoke coming, choo, choo, out from the pipe in the back of his car* (Anne, 39.68), *No, 'cos they're called cake clouds* (Jennie, 39.69), *Are they?* And Aisling said they're like clouds, the smoke is in the shape of clouds (Anne, 39.70).

In Transcript 39, Jennie's explanation of where the soldiers are going gives rise to further discourse with further explanations: *Jennie had a great idea about where those soldiers were going* (Anne, 39.245), *Up to rescue a princess* (Jennie, 39.246), *She says they're marching up to this castle* (Anne, 39.247), *That looks like ..that looks like a heart shape window* (Nessa, 39.248), *To rescue a princess* (Jennie, 39.249), *And Jennie, will you tell Garry, why do you think they have to rescue that princess?* (Anne, 39.250), *Cos castles is scary* (Chris, 39.251), *No 'cos that's why Farqual 'ill kill her* (Jennie, 39.252).

In the final sequence in the story, we identify all of the toys the baby has met on the road, now all lying in the baby's bedroom but not referred to in the text. Here the adult challenges the children to think out and to articulate the meaning that is inferred in the illustrations:

Excerpt from Transcript 39

487 Anne: *Can I ask you a question everybody? Will you think about this? Can you sit down Chris and think. Why are all of those people and toys and vehicles?*

488 Nessa: *And chains*

489 Aisling: *They were all messed up*

490 Anne: *Why are they all in his room?*

491 Jennie: *That's why*

492 Aisling: *They're toys*

493 Jennie: *Maybe they came back by their selves*

494 Anne: *Maybe they all came back by themselves, what do you think Aisling?*

495 Jennie: *Maybe he had a ...maybe you have a dream*

496 Anne: *Ah now, Jennie has a great idea*

497 Jennie: *Maybe he had a dream*

498 Anne: *And maybe in his dream he was dreaming about all of his?*

499 Children together: *Toys*

500 Anne: *What did you say they are Aisling?*

501 Aisling: *Toys*

502 Anne: *They're all his toys, his toy tiger, his toy train, his toy monkey and kangaroo and musicians.....now look I think Jennie's idea was a great one. Jennie will you tell all*

- the children? ... Chris and Garry I want you to listen 'cos we need to tell Tessa and Grace this. Jennie thinks all of these toys are in the baby's room because?*
- 503 Jennie: *He had a dream*
- 504 Anne: *Because they are his toys, the toys he plays with!... and he had a dream about his?*
- 505 Children together: *Toys*
- 506 Anne: *And in his dream...did he dream that he met all of his toys on the road?*
- 507 Aisling & Chris: *Yeah*

In the reconstruction of the story outlined above, the narrative properties of the setting, the complications faced by the central character, and the final resolution, present opportunities for the adult to challenge the children to analyse information, to make inferences and to explain events. The interactions are greatly facilitated by the children's enjoyment of, and emotional engagement with, the story. In response to the adult and in collaboration with her, the children go beyond the information given in the text, to deal in propositions and explanations about the text. In the discourse, scaffolded by the adult, the children are using language which is disembedded from the text and they are engaging in decontextualised thinking.

This kind of discourse on storybook reading is defined as non-immediate talk by De Temple and Snow (2003) and as child-involved analytic talk, by Dickinson and Smith (1994). In the Home School Study of Language and Literacy Development, mothers' use of this kind of talk, while reading to their pre-school children, was related to their children's later performance in vocabulary, story comprehension, definitions and emergent literacy (Tabors, Beals & Weizman, 2001).

Enabling Propositional Thinking

In a follow up play episode (*Transcript, 40*) based on the story of the baby, the children and the adult collaborate to construct a new narrative. In this play context, we use large play blocks to construct a road for our baby doll and toy car and we replicate the baby's journey, introducing him to a different array of toy characters.

The findings here show the use of the adult strategies to set the level of the discourse in a propositional mode. The play is to be based in constructing ideas about the baby's journey, in reflecting on those ideas, and in representing them in appropriate language. In the opening

sequence, the adult signals the disembedded cognitive and semantic style required, by posing a problem and asking for ideas about solutions: *...now baby...there's a problem Aisling. This baby has to travel out of the door and along the? (Anne, 40.5), Road (Garry, 40.6), Along the road, now, we don't have a road! Will you help me to make the baby's road? (Anne, 40.7), Yeah (children together), Alright...now, has anybody any good ideas? What could we use Chris?...we need to make the road (Anne, 40.9).*

In response to these Prompts from the adult, over a number of utterances (40. 13-71), the children make suggestions and they respond to suggestions from the adult and from each other and, as in the following extract, they disagree and negotiate together and they arrive at decisions: *We could use those toys over there or?.. (Anne, 40.19), No they're for jumping over (Jennie, 40.20), Oh you see, they're for jumping over, we won't use those for the road. There might be something in here we could use? ... (Anne, 40.21), Blocks (Nessa, 40.22), Blocks, would that be a good idea? (Anne, 40.23), No, 'cos they're hard and you might fall off them (Nessa, 40.24), The blocks might be too hard? (Anne, 40.25), No they won't (Jennie, 40.26), Yeah if it dropped (Aisling, 40.27), We'll have to be careful that they won't fall. How can we be sure they won't fall? (Anne, 40.28), Leave them like that (Jennie showing how to lay the blocks flat) (Jennie, 40.29), Jennie has a good idea, will you explain to Aisling? (Anne, 40.30), You just leave them like that and then they won't fall (Jennie, 40.31).*

In a follow up sequence, we decide where the road will begin and end and we solve the problem of it being too narrow (40.81-87). In these sequences where we are still establishing the setting, we go on to test the width of the road for the baby's car (40.100-137), and to build a bridge (40.138-207). Again here, the narrative proceeds through the generation of ideas in response to propositions from the adult, e.g. *I wonder could we make a bridge for the baby to go under? Does anyone have a good idea? (Anne, 40.188), I have teacher (lifting the top block, indicating that we need to go higher) (Jennie, 40.189), Yes, come on Aisling, have we any? ...could we get the bridge up like that for the baby to go under? (Anne, 40.192), Oh yeah, we can (Aisling, 40.191).*

Together with the Narrative Developing strategies through which the adult helps to sustain the play and to Prompt the children to engage with propositions and ideas, the adult uses Fine Tuning strategies to help the children to clarify and to extend their thinking, as when Nessa is explaining about the need to use long blocks: ...*We need long blocks (Anne, 40.38), They won't be too ..too long won't they? (pointing to short blocks, seeming to mean that these would be too short) (Nessa, 40.39), Which ones Nessa? What were you going to say about the short blocks? (Anne, 40.40), The short blocks would be too short to make ...a road (Nessa, 40.41), And we would need too? (Anne, 40.42), Many (Nessa & Anne together, 40.43), Yes, the long blocks are better because they reach further along, (measuring the blocks against each other), the short ones only reach a little bit and we would need lots of them (Anne, 40. 44).*

In this transcript, the adult also maps language on to the children's behaviours. Here the purpose is both similar and different to the one served by mapping in the findings for Tom, discussed in the previous section. In both cases, the purpose is to interpret the children to themselves. For Tom, this interpretation is about following in to his focus of attention and modelling words and phrases, to build his vocabulary and sentence structure. In this block play episode, this strategy is being differentiated to the context. It is being used as a way of articulating the ideas which underlie the children's behaviours, and of modelling, to the children, how those ideas are represented in language and are disembedded from the activity. An example of this is when the adult articulates the idea demonstrated by Jennie (*Jennie, 40.189*), when in response to the adult's prompt (*Anne, 40.188*), Jennie lifts the blocks to indicate that making the bridge higher is the answer to the problem: *Come on Chris, help us will you, if we make the bridge higher, maybe the baby could go? (Anne, 40.192), Under (Jennie, 193), (Chris builds up the blocks, working with the idea of going higher).*

In this episode, the adult Narrative Developing strategies are centrally important in setting the level of challenge, in sustaining the discourse and elaborating on the topics, and in modelling styles of expression. Within this framework of support, the children also contribute to sustaining the play by generating ideas and by drawing on earlier ideas to create new sequences.

When we have established the setting and introduced all of the characters and objects the baby will encounter, we then go on to create a number of sequences in which the baby talks to the various characters. Here the children are enthusiastic in taking on roles and they call on a range of knowledge and experience to contribute ideas and to elaborate on the topics.

A significant finding here is that some of the children's ideas are supported by, or perhaps generated from, knowledge we have constructed in earlier sequences in the discourse, as when Chris explains his job as a fireman (40.357-371) by recalling the description we have all constructed together earlier (40.280-317). In another example, towards the end of the play episode, when the baby is stuck on the moon, Nessa employs the toy fairy to rescue him and draws on knowledge we have constructed in an earlier sequence (40.418-427), reminding us that the baby too can fly: *Don't forget I'm a fairy (Nessa, 40.489), Oh don't forget baby, you're, you've been turned into a fairy, so you'll be able to? (Anne, 40.490), Fly (children together, 40.491)*. These instances can be interpreted as examples of the children generalising knowledge within the play context.

These findings show the role of dialogue, and the use of the strategies, in helping children to acquire and to represent knowledge about a topic and to use that knowledge to interpret and to represent meaning, beyond the context in which they acquired it.

Enabling the Collaborative Construction of Ideas

In some instances in the transcript, the children prompt each other's ideas. For example, it is probable that Nessa's idea of the baby finding a dead person (40.376-399) was prompted by Chris's comment when, as the fireman going to rescue someone in a burning house, he said: *now, someone might be dead (Chris, 40.371)*. There are also instances of them collaborating together to elaborate on an idea (40.280-288) or to clarify meaning (40, 306-316). These findings suggest that dialogue contexts in which the adult strategies are used to Fine Tune the context for listeners and speakers, to affirm children's ideas, and to scaffold their expression through Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies, enable children to listen to and to learn from each other and to build meaning collaboratively. The following excerpt shows the children taking the various roles and collaborating with each other and with the adult, to

create scenarios which, while rooted in the physical context of the play objects, are generated in the imagination and are realised in decontextualised language:

Excerpt from Transcript 40

357 Chris: Stop (in role of fireman)...stop
358 Anne: Stop baby, the fireman wants to talk to you
359 Nessa: And he wants his bottle
360 Anne: Oh he's hungry now...baby ask the fireman to play with you
361 Nessa: Ah no, I want to play with the fairy (in role of baby)
362 Chris: Don't play now (using a very formal, cross fireman's voice)
363 Anne: What did the fireman say? Are you going to play fireman?
364 Nessa: I'm playin' with the fireman
365 Chris: After my job
366 Anne: No wait a minute I didn't hear what the fireman said. What did you say fireman?
367 Chris: I'm goin' to rescue someone who's stuck in a fire
368 Anne: Oh! do you hear that everybody, the fireman, the fireman is too busy, he's going to rescue somebody who's stuck in?
369 Chris: A burnin'
370 Anne: A burning house...go and get the policeman and see what he says about this. Don't go yet baby, the policeman is coming...yes get the fairy and the fish ...Garry who are you going to look after?
371 Chris: Now someone might be dead
372 Anne: Jennie we just want to hear the policeman first and then we'll hear the doctor
373 Nessa: Oh Anne no there's too many kids
374 Anne: Alright now, the baby is getting frightened, there are too many. Baby will you talk to the policeman first?...excuse me doctor, you have to be quiet we want to hear the policeman
375 Chris: What's wrong with the baby? (now in policeman role)
376 Nessa: Mr policeman, I found a people... parcel what...is dead
377 Anne: Mr Policeman the baby found a parcel but there's something dead in it!
378 Aisling: It might be the other one
379 Nessa: It's in Florida ...somebody's dead
380 Anne: Mr Policeman, this lady found a parcel and there's something dead in it
381 Aisling: It might be the other one
382 Nessa: It's in Florida, somebody's dead
383 Anne: Now we didn't hear what the policeman is going to say...what are you going to do Mr. Policeman?
384 Chris: Going to open ...the parcel
385 Anne: And what will you do when you open it ...if there's something wrong...who will you get to help you?
386 Chris: The Fireman
387 Anne: Oh good idea...tell the baby
388 Chris: We're gettin' the fireman
389 Anne: ... and here's the fireman ...what do firemen have to do...?
390 Chris: Come on Fireman
391 Anne: And the Doctor is here as well
392 Chris: What's their name?
393 Anne: What's the name of the person who's dead
394 Nessa: Yvonne
395 Anne: Yvonne...
396 Garry: I'm the Doctor (bringing the toy ambulance close to the scene)
397 Anne: What are you going to do Doctor?
398 Garry: Collect her

399 Anne: *You're going to collect Yvonne in the ambulance ...alright...the Doctor's gone to collect Yvonne in the ambulance*

Challenging for Complex Language Uses

The transcript of the follow-up presentation to the whole class group (Transcript 41) shows the children responding to the adult Prompts to recall the major events in the play. They also explain the problems that arose and the solutions that were found, including the difficulties with building the bridge (41. 172-203) and the complication and resolution regarding the stealing of the baby's bottle by the fairy (41.432-470). As with the presentations of the narratives about the teddies and the playground (Transcripts 35, 37), here the audience is actively engaged with the presenters. The video of the episode shows their delight in the presentation and how they are prompted by the context to comment and to question. This transcript shows particularly good verbal interaction with Tom, with explicit use of vocabulary and a number of instances of word combinations.

In this transcript also, there are good examples of the children using explicit vocabulary and extended sentences, including complex sentence structures, to make clear, explicit statements about events and interactions which the audience have not shared. In one of these examples, Nessa responds to a Prompt from the adult to tell the children what the baby did by saying: *It's bedtime and the baby said, I'm not goin' to bed* (Nessa, 41.115). In another example, Jennie uses a complex structure to explain a scene from the picture storybook: *They're recun...rescuing Princess Fiona* (Jennie, 41.242), *They're rescuing Princess Fiona Tom...Tom, the soldiers, and that's the castle* (Anne, 41.243), *'Cos Farquell will kill her if they don't save her* (Jennie, 41.244). This use of explanation from Jennie is interesting in that she extends it from when she used it in the small group context, (Transcript 39). Here she includes the phrase *if they don't save her*. This notion of being saved was introduced by the adult in response to Jennie in that exchange (39.252-256).

There are also good examples of Chris using complex sentence structures when he recalls the interaction between the baby and the fireman. In the following extract, he responds to the adult Prompts and to Cues for Topic Elaboration and he also responds to a prompt from Jennie:

Extract from Transcript 41

260 Anne: ... Tell everybody what the fireman said

261 Chris: *I'm too busy I have to go home and go to bed*

262 Anne: *And he had a job to do as well Chris. Can you remember the great job you said he had to do?*

263 Chris: *Rescue*

264 Anne: *Who did he have to rescue?*

265 Brendan: *The Princess*

266 Anne: *I don't think it was the Princess*

267 Jennie: *A little baby who's stuck in the house.*

268 Chris: *I'm tellin'*

269 Anne: *Chris will tell us first and then Jennie*

270 Grace: *And then Jennie*

271 Anne: *I'm going to rescue?*

272 Chris: *A little boy who's stuck in the firehouse*

273 Anne: *A little boy who's stuck in the burning house*

274 Grace: *And do you know Jennie remembers that*

275 Anne: *Jennie remembered what Chris had said... Garry, Garry you see Jennie gave us the great idea about the soldiers going to rescue the Princess and that made Chris think about the fireman going to rescue? ... Chris will you hold the fireman for a minute? The fireman was going to rescue a boy who was in a burning house... Chris lets hear the fireman talking to the baby one more time...*

276 Chris: *I have to get him out*

277 Anne: *I'm too busy I have to go and?*

278 Chris: *Rescue*

279 Anne: *Rescue?*

280 Donnie: *A boy*

281 Chris: *A boy who's stuck in a firehouse*

As was seen from the findings for Expository discourse (*Transcript, 21*), the adult strategies support Chris in constructing a decontextualised narrative for an audience. The strategies are used to remind the child of the original ideas and to help him to reconstruct them for this audience, keeping the levels of complexity that were constructed in the first instance. In this regard, when Chris reports that his explanation to the baby was: *I'm too busy, I have to go home and go to bed* (Chris, 41.261), the adult Prompts and Cues him to recall his original, more complex, and more logically coherent explanation. This was that he had to rescue a boy from a burning building.

Being required to provide this explanation presents a more appropriate level of semantic challenge for Chris and is an example of how differential levels of challenge can be included within any particular episode of talk. In responding to the adult's Prompts and Cues, Chris calls up the verb *rescue* (Chris, 41.263), which Jennie had used in talking about the Princess in Transcript 39 (Jennie, 39.242). Chris first used this word in Transcript 40 (Chris, 40.367),

applying it to his job as fireman and following this specific application of the word, by the adult, in an earlier section of that transcript (*Anne, 40.309- 313*). In these findings, these uses of language by Jennie and Chris are interpreted as examples of the influence of the adult strategies in developing in the children, a more elaborated style of language use.

Supporting Vocabulary Development

The findings from the three Narrative episodes discussed above (*Transcripts, 39, 40, 41*), are interesting also for the information they provide on the value of story and play, as contexts for children's vocabulary development, and for the insights they provide into the nature of the adult role in scaffolding that development. In all three episodes, the adult has the opportunity to focus on a range of vocabulary including the super-ordinate category words such as, *people, animals, toys* and *vehicles* and sophisticated collective nouns within these categories such as *passengers* and *musicians*. There is also the opportunity to revise vocabulary from earlier contexts as when we focus again on the word, *mane* (*40. 245-247*) and to engage the children in new applications of words as in the use of the verb *rescue* across the three episodes.

The findings here support the literature which advocates the use of book reading as a valuable source for vocabulary development (De Temple & Snow, 2003). They also add to the literature which highlights both the importance of the frequent occurrence of sophisticated vocabulary, in adult input to children, and the importance of adult interactive style in helping children acquire, and use, that vocabulary (Tabors, Beals & Weizman, 2001; Weizman & Snow, 2001). Further, the findings from this study provide evidence for the kinds of teaching and learning contexts, and the specific adult talk strategies, which support the acquisition of sophisticated vocabulary in early years settings.

The children's growth in understanding and use of the verb *to rescue* is an example of how the adult strategies provide the supportive framework within which the children come to include new words in their expressive vocabulary. The word *rescue* was introduced by the adult in the first reading of the picture storybook when she suggested that the soldiers might

be going to rescue someone and explained this word as saving someone who needed help. In this first reading, Jennie quickly associated the idea of rescue with her prior knowledge of a story about a princess.

When the idea is revisited in the first episode reported here (*Transcript 39*), Jennie shows she has retained the word and she uses it appropriately: *They're goin' up to rescue a princess* (Jennie, 39.242). The adult's strategies are to Cue the other children to Jennie's use of the word, to Question for explanations of its meaning and provide additional semantic cues, and to use Prompting and Repetition to ensure multiple opportunities for exposure to it (39. 242-279). Already, within this sequence, Prompted by the adult, Nessa attempts to use the word; *It's too late for marching, we have a special? (Anne, 39.272), Job to do, resco the princess* (Nessa, 39.273), *Rescuing* (Anne, 39.274), *And we have to go to bed after that* (Nessa, 39.275). Later in the episode, the adult takes the opportunity to use the word again, this time in the context of interpreting the category word, *people*: *We forgot about the people who were rescuing the princess from the castle ... (Anne, 39.450), There* (Nessa, *pointing to the soldiers*, 39.451), *Who were they? (Anne, 39.452), soldiers* (Chris, 39.453), *soldiers* (Nessa, 39.454).

In the follow up play episode, the adult uses Cueing and Prompting strategies to alert the children to the possibility of applying the word in a new semantic context, where now the fireman is rescuing a baby: *...remember what...the lovely word Jennie said about the princess...the soldiers had to? (Anne, 40.309), Resta* (Aisling, 40.310), *Not resta? (Anne, 40.311), Restay-cue* (Nessa, 40.312), *Rescue the princess and the fireman might have to rescue the?* (Anne, 40. 313), *princess* (Nessa, 40.314), *Is it the princess? (Anne, 40. 315), No, the baby* (Jennie, 40.316).

While Chris does not use the word in this sequence, the focus on it comes in the context of a discussion of his role as fireman and he is listening to the exchanges. Later in this episode, when the role of the fireman again becomes the focus of attention, Chris uses the word spontaneously: *No wait a minute, I didn't hear what the fireman said. What did you say Fireman? (Anne, 40.366), I'm goin' to rescue someone who's stuck in a fire* (Chris, 40.367),

Oh do you hear that everybody? The fireman, the fireman is too busy, he's going to rescue somebody who's stuck in? (Anne, 40.368), A burnin' (Chris, 40.369), A burning house...(Anne, 40.370).

In two further instances in this episode, the adult takes the opportunities, that arise in the play, to use the verb explicitly and to extend its use to rescuing the baby's bottle (*Anne, 40.408 & 410*) and to rescuing the baby from the moon (*40.480-483*). In the latter exchange, the adult strategies of Prompting, Questioning and Topic Continuing, enable Nessa both to use the word and to show her understanding of it: *...fairy, what are you saying to the baby?...will I rescue you baby?(Anne, 40.480), Will I rescue you baby? (Nessa, 40.481), How will you rescue me fairy? (Anne, in role of baby, 40.482), I will fly up (Nessa, 40.483)*. The final presentation of the narrative, to the whole class group, (*Transcript, 41*) provides further opportunities for Jennie and Chris to use the word in relating their different sequences about the princess (*Jennie, 40.240*) and the fireman, (*Chris, 40.263*) and allows the audience to hear the word used by the children, and explained by the adult, in relation to two semantic contexts.

Across the three transcripts, there are a number of examples of the adult focusing in a conscious and deliberate way on particular aspects of vocabulary. The super-ordinate category words, *people, animals, toys and vehicles* are introduced in the first episode (*39.313 & 487*) and are revisited in both the subsequent episodes (*40.250-317; 41.237-297*). Low frequency, sophisticated words, e.g. *passengers* and *musicians*, are also introduced with deliberate focus in episode one (*39.313-321, 39.358-360; 39.377; 39.447*) and are recalled and rehearsed in both subsequent episodes (*40.225; 40.227; 41.343-347; 41.380-389*).

In all of these instances, the adult uses strategies of Cueing the children to highlight the new word, e.g. *...and there are people on the train, do you know the special word for them? (Anne, 39.313)*, and explicit Prompting of the word, to directly inform the children. She also uses Fine Tuning for comprehension by referencing the word to the children's existing knowledge, and Repetition to ensure multiple opportunities to hear the word being used in meaningful contexts, e.g. *Little pigs, they're little animals aren't they? And there are people*

on the train, they're all passengers Garry, the passengers are on the train Garry. They're travelling ... (Anne, 39.315). In both the dialogue and supported monologue contexts, the adult verbal strategies are further enhanced by the physical props of the toys, by the pictorial cues from the book and by the children adopting the roles and behaviours of the characters.

Play, Dialogue and Monologue

The findings for Narrative Discourse highlight the value of play as a context in which the children and the adult construct narratives together. In this study, the play contexts provide opportunities for sustained cognitive challenge leading to the development of concepts and ideas and to their expression in decontextualised language, including the use of sophisticated vocabulary. The children's enjoyment of the play and their engagement with it provides an incentive to them to assert their play characters and to be verbal in their respective roles. A critical feature here is the role of the adult in Fine Tuning the context to create a maximally responsive teaching and learning opportunity. Within each play context, the adult Fine Tunes the dialogue to establish a mode of meaning which is appropriate to the participating children.

In the three transcripts discussed above, as in the playground transcripts with Nessa, Jennie and Aisling, the role of the adult is to set the propositional, interpretative and evaluative mode of the dialogue and to consciously and deliberately model the language that will interpret this mode. In the play contexts in which the adult was interacting on an individual basis with Cathy and with Tom, the mode of meaning was predominantly one of developing vocabulary and extending sentence length, while still engaging with the elements of narrative. The findings for Narrative Discourse suggest that in all of these contexts, the use of the adult talk strategies, combined with the imaginative nature of the work and the adopting of roles by both the adult and the children, facilitate communicative behaviour in the children and elicit elaborated utterances from them.

By its nature, dialogue can legitimately allow for short phrases and single word responses and, in a context of play, children can rely on gesture and activity rather than the spoken word. Two points are relevant here. Firstly, in the dialogue context, the adult, in role, can

circumvent the children's tendency to rely on gesture by Prompting for elicited responses which are legitimate to the narrative plot. In this way, the adult is able to Prompt the children to narrate information. Secondly, these opportunities for constructing fuller responses serve as rehearsals for the later presentations.

In the monologue contexts, the adult strategies are important in reminding the children of the ideas constructed in dialogue and the Questions, Prompts and Cues scaffold the presentation of the ideas to the audience. The findings also show that, in the supported monologue contexts, the strategy of Prompting, sometimes by whispering, and of supporting the presentations with physical props such as toys and picture cues, are critical elements in the scaffolding of the children's presentations. In these contexts, there is the requirement to be explicit, to strive to present, fully formed, the ideas that may have been only partially articulated in the dialogue context.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

The findings for Narrative Discourse show the relationship between the use of the adult talk strategies of Modelling, Contributing to Narratives and Challenging for Explanations and the children's use of decontextualised language to construct and reconstruct narratives in which they describe and explain behaviours, draw inferences and articulate central points of meaning in the discourse. The findings also show that when challenged and supported by the adult strategies, children can engage in this kind of verbal reasoning, in both dialogue and supported monologues contexts.

In the play contexts, the adult strategies challenge the children to consider events and experiences at a level of reflection and propositional thinking rather than at a level of description. They are used to support the children in formulating and articulating ideas about objects, rather than talking about the objects themselves. In the monologue contexts, the adult strategies are important in reminding the children of the ideas constructed in dialogue and the Questions, Prompts and Cues scaffold the presentation of the ideas to the audience.

The findings also provide evidence of the specific adult talk strategies which support children's acquisition of sophisticated vocabulary in early years settings. The children acquired sophisticated words and generalised their use beyond the contexts in which they first encountered them. The adult strategies which enabled this learning were explicit Prompting of new words, Questioning for meaning and provision of additional semantic cues, and Repetition and multiple opportunities for exposure to the word.

With the Modelling strategies, the adult elaborates on the children's topics with explicit models of sentences structures, and follows through with explicit Prompts to the children, for similar styles of response. These strategies elicit elaborated responses from the children. In response to Challenges and Prompts in the dialogue contexts, and supported by Prompts and Cues in the presentations to the whole class group, there are good examples of the children using explicit vocabulary and complex sentence structures to make clear explicit statements about events and behaviours.

One of the most heartening outcomes of the study is the evidence that, in dialogue and supported monologue contexts, where the children grow accustomed to being tellers of information, to having the context Finely Tuned for them and to being supported in clarifying and articulating their contributions, they begin to respond to each other's Prompts, to develop each other's ideas, and to collaborate together to construct meaning.

These findings are in sharp contrast to the children's expressive language styles in Phase 1 of the study when they did not expand on topics and were inclined towards one word responses and it was unusual to hear extended sequences of sentences or the use of complex sentences. Further, the children's utterances were often fragmented and could lack coherence.

The findings also show how the strategies can be differentiated effectively to support Cathy and Tom. Explicit Prompting of sentence structures, Prompting for Elicited Responses and for Elicited Imitations, and use of Recasts and Expansions, are used in a highly structured way, in naturalistic play contexts, to support the development of Cathy's vocabulary and sentence structures and to develop Tom's expressive vocabulary. There is evidence too of

this learning being generalised beyond the initial teaching and learning contexts. The evidence from Phase 2 of the study suggests that, for Cathy and Tom, one-to-one intensive interaction with the adult, impacted significantly on their language delays. The adult talk strategies provided supports within which Cathy could extend her sentence structures and Tom could develop his expressive vocabulary and begin to combine words. As Phase 2 of the study progressed, there is evidence also that these skills began to be carried over to the supported monologue contexts. Cathy and Tom became more communicative in the whole group episodes and the children began to include them as communicating *tellers* and *knowers*, within the group.

CONCLUSION

As with Expository Discourse, the findings for Narrative Discourse show the importance of adult intervention, and of particular styles of interaction, in extending the children's engagement with, and communication about, experiences and activities in the early years setting. The adult talk strategies and their differential use in finely tuned dialogue and supported monologue contexts, constitute a pedagogic approach which attempts to provide appropriately judged and sustained cognitive challenge, matched with Modelling of the linguistic forms that articulate the ideas which are being constructed. The findings here indicate how this conscious and deliberate style of adult intervention can be accommodated in naturalistic settings and with both child and adult initiated activities.

In this regard, the findings in the study reiterate the consensus in the literature that conscious and deliberate teaching strategies, which are finely tuned to the characteristics of the children as learners, provide for responsive and challenging environments which extend children's learning. The consensus for this approach to teaching and learning is evident in the recommendations from the REPEY Study (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004), in the literature on language and literacy (Dickinson, 2001) and in recent language intervention literature (Hancock & Kaiser, 2006). This study adds to these literatures. It identifies a repertoire of specific talk strategies, used in a range of naturalistic settings, and provides an in-depth analysis of how these strategies are used, and are differentiated, to attempt to create maximally responsive environments for children with differential strengths and needs.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore whether the features of adult speech to young children which have been identified across a range of literatures to be facilitative of their language development, could be used as pedagogic strategies to develop children's language skills, in schools and other early years settings. The aspects of language development studied were children's acquisition of the elements of the language system and their use of that system to engage in expository and narrative discourses. A further focus of the study was to examine whether the adult talk strategies could be differentiated to meet the needs of children with a range of language strengths and needs, along a continuum of development, and could constitute an inclusive language pedagogy.

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 extended from September until Christmas of the school year. In this phase, baseline data were gathered and a group of eight children were chosen to be the small group participants for the second phase of the study. In Phase 2, which extended from January until June of the school year, I assumed a teaching role, exploring the adaptation of the facilitative features of adult talk for use as a repertoire of teaching strategies for the development of children's discourse skills.

In this chapter, the main findings from the use of a range of pedagogic strategies are highlighted and some general conclusions about language in early years settings are drawn. The implications of the study for practice and for policy in early years language teaching and learning are then discussed, the strengths and weaknesses of the study are examined and possible directions for future research are outlined.

DIALOGUE AS A CONTEXT FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this study, adult-child dialogue is shown to be an important context for language teaching and learning in early years settings and the language teaching strategies that support and challenge children in these contexts are identified. Children are initiated into dialogue during their first year of life. Communication begins in the inter-personal relationship between adult

and child and is based on mutual interest and attention and characterised by turn taking and meaningful exchange about objects and topics of interest. In these early dialogues, the adult follows the child's lead and finely tunes his/her own talk to the child's comprehension levels.

Developmental theorists (Bruner, 1983; Wood, 1989) have characterised early adult-child linguistic interaction as a prime example of social interaction as tutoring. However, it is well recognised that parents' behaviours are motivated by a desire to achieve effective communication with their child rather than by any explicit intention to teach. The facilitative features of adult talk to young children emerge in the informal, everyday routines of adult-child interaction, during children's first two to three years of life and these are the contexts which have received most attention from research. Knowledge about how adult talk can support children's development of the language skills necessary for educational knowledge and access to a school curriculum is less well developed and research has given little attention to examining adult talk as classroom pedagogy.

Early language intervention is one area of educational research and practice which has focused on the adaptation of the facilitative features of adult talk for pedagogic practice. This study is continuous with that work and shows how adult-child dialogue can be continued in one- to -one and small group contexts in early education settings. The findings of the study show how, in these settings, adult child interactions provide the context within which children continue to develop the language of inter-personal relationships but also extend beyond this to develop the language of discourse. A large body of research indicates that this is the level of language competence required for access to a curriculum (Halliday, 1993; Snow, 1989; Snow & Tabors, 1993; Bruner, 1996; Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer-Wolf, 2004).

Through discourse, children are initiated into the complex modes of meaning required for educational knowledge and they engage with the more sophisticated vocabulary and the more complex sentence structures which discourse demands. For discourse, children are required to use vocabulary which is explicit and appropriate to the topic and they must articulate content in well formed sentences, building linguistic structures such as narratives and

explanations. The meaning content must be coherent in terms of structure and sequence with careful attention to backwards and forwards referencing on the topic and use of linguistic forms such as pronouns and connectives to ensure cohesion between sentences (Hickman, 2003; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer-Wolf, 2004). Within the discourse, children can be challenged to reflect on and to explain ideas, events and experiences, to examine propositions and to describe problems and suggest solutions.

In Phase 2 of the study, discourse skills which were not in evidence in Phase 1, were developed in dialogue and were extended in supported monologue contexts, for all of the participants. In the study, the range of adult talk strategies which supported the development of these discourse skills in Phase 2 is identified and the relationship between the use of these strategies and the emergence of children's skills in vocabulary and sentence structure and their construction of descriptions, explanations and narratives is discussed. Evidence from the study shows how the differentiated use of the strategies supported children along a continuum of ability. In Phase 2 of the study, all of the participants: Aisling, Nessa, Jennie, Karen, Chris and Kevin along with Cathy and Tom, who had serious language delay, were exhibiting knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure, engaging in discussion on topics, and presenting information to an audience, in ways which contrasted sharply with their communicative behaviours in Phase 1 of the study.

STRATEGIES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The adult talk strategies identified in the study, are grouped in three categories: Fine Tuning, Modelling and Discourse Enabling.

Fine Tuning for Dialogue

Within the category Fine Tuning, the strategies used in the study are: Cueing, Prompting and Questioning for Joint Attention, Responding with Joint Attention and Adjusting Comprehension. The findings show the effects of the Fine Tuning strategies in establishing joint attention between the adult and the children, in maintaining listening and attention between the listeners and the speakers in the dialogue, and in developing children's skills in turn taking and in contributing with relevance to a topic. As the focus of the adult-child

interaction in Phase 2 of the study is to engage children in discussion on a topic and to elicit and respond to their contributions over a number of turns, the Fine Tuning strategies have an important function in helping the children to sustain the dialogue. Key adult behaviours here are Responding to the child's utterances with interest and enthusiasm while Prompting or Questioning for a clear and relevant contribution, Cueing and Prompting the listeners to attend and ensuring their understanding of the speaker. The outcomes also show the effects of the Fine Tuning strategies in Prompting the children to focus on aspects of a topic that go beyond direct experience and the visible world and are dependent on the use of language which is explicit and context free.

The findings show how these strategies are used to create and support dialogue as a context for language teaching and learning for children with a range of abilities and needs. Within the study, Fine Tuning is interpreted as sensitive adaptation of the strategies to afford maximum support and maximum challenge to children who are at various points along a continuum of development. The study shows how, through the differentiated use of the Fine Tuning strategies, the adult attempts to create a maximally supportive climate for the speaker while simultaneously creating optimal conditions for the listeners, mediating their understanding and encouraging their collaboration.

For the group of participants, the findings from Phase 1 showed that all of the children needed varying degrees of support in focusing on and in sustaining a topic over a sufficient number of turns to build a description, a narrative, or an explanation. For Cathy and Tom, who were still acquiring knowledge of basic vocabulary and sentence structure, the Fine Tuning strategies were critical in establishing a topic and in achieving joint attention for naming objects and combining words in sentences.

The findings for Fine Tuning strategies afford significant insights into an issue of importance and debate in early communication and language teaching and learning. The issue is that of achieving a balance between child initiated and adult initiated topics. For typically developing children, the evidence for early adult-child communicative behaviour, in informal settings, suggests that the most successful communications result from the adult following

the child's lead and mapping language to the child's perceived communicative intention (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein & Baumwell, 2001; Hoff & Naigles, 2002; Masur, Flynn & Eichorst, 2005). In adopting similar styles of interaction in an early education setting, tensions arise between the need to respond to children's topics of interest and the need to accommodate to teachers' intentions for reaching wider curriculum goals. The findings from this study show that appropriate and sensitive use of Fine Tuning strategies which affirm, collaborate with, and build upon children's contributions, results in children attending to and developing topics over a substantial number of turns, whether the topics have been child or adult initiated.

There is a further issue here for which the findings also provide valuable information. Children with language delay and difficulty may be less inclined to initiate communication or their initiations may be difficult to understand. For these children, the literature suggests that adult initiatives are critical in drawing the child into dialogue and creating the conditions where meaning intention can be established and a child's contribution to a topic can be affirmed and expanded upon. The evidence from this study is that for the two children who had language delay, the adult strategies of Prompting and Questioning for Joint Attention together with the strategy of Responding to the child's perceived meaning intention, were central to creating the conditions for dialogue within which these children's communicative competence developed during the course of the study.

A further finding which has significance for learning in early years classrooms was the way in which, during Phase 2 of the study, the children were initiated into a way of talking collaboratively about a topic. Within a classroom climate of enthusiasm for, and promotion of, children's contributions, in Phase 2, the children began to develop an appreciation of listener-speaker relationships which were not in evidence in Phase 1. This development is attributed to the positive promotion of children's communication within the classroom and to the use of the Fine Tuning strategies to affirm the legitimacy of children's topics and to support children's communicative attempts. The findings from Phase 2 show the children responding to each other's topics, engaging together in dialogue about each other's contributions and, with adult support, collaborating in constructing narratives and

explanations. These communicative relationships are a significant development from Phase 1 when the children rarely acknowledged each other's contributions and, when this did happen, did not develop each others' topics beyond an acknowledgement.

The findings for the use of Fine Tuning strategies show that these are important strategies in early educators' repertoires of skills for engaging young children in dialogue. They support young children in attending and contributing to a topic over a sufficient number of turns to build linguistic structures such as narratives and explanations. They are also used to develop children's awareness of themselves as listeners and speakers and to enhance their appreciation of how topics are constructed and how they can be developed collaboratively.

Modelling for Vocabulary and Sentence Structure

The findings of the study show the role of Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies in developing children's vocabulary and sentence structure. The Modelling strategies used in the study were Prompting, Repetition, Questioning, Recasting and Expanding and Topic Continuing and Topic Elaborating strategies. The Discourse Enabling strategies were Contributing to/Developing Expository Talk, Contributing to/Developing Narrative and Challenging for Explanations.

The findings show that children develop vocabulary and sentence structures in response to the specific use of Modelling strategies supported by the provision of physical supports such as toys and pictures. The vocabulary and sentence structures used by the children in Phase 2 of the study include basic items of vocabulary, category names, attributes of people, animals and objects, sophisticated nouns and verbs and complex sentence structures. In Phase 2 of the study, there was clear evidence of the children using more sophisticated vocabulary and more elaborated utterances than were in evidence in their talk in Phase 1. For Cathy and Tom, there was evidence of increase in expressive vocabulary with Tom beginning to use words spontaneously and to combine words and Cathy using full sentences to report information to an audience. This learning is linked to Modelling strategies of Prompting, Prompting with Explanations, Repetition, Recasting and Expanding of utterances and the provision of

multiple opportunities to practice the use of the new words and phrases in meaningful contexts.

An important finding of the study is that new words and phrases introduced in the dialogue contexts were used appropriately by the children in later sequences of talk within those contexts, and were applied by the children in talk about novel topics. The use of these new words and phrases was sometimes Prompted by the adult but they were also used, spontaneously, by individual children. Further, the children's use of these words and phrases was also generalised beyond these contexts to follow-through presentations.

In developing vocabulary and sentence structure, the findings of this study also highlight the importance of creating contexts in which, together with hearing the adult model the words and structures, children are required to use the target word or structure in a meaningful context and on multiple occasions. Here again, the study provides evidence to inform issues of debate within early years practice. The literature suggests that, for typically developing children, adult Recasts and Expansions of their children's utterances provide models from which children develop more complex sentence structures (Snow, 1989; Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000; Saxton, 2005). However, the language intervention literature advocates a combination of strategies of Prompting for Elicited Responses, including Elicited Imitations, and Recasts and Expansions. The rationale here is that children with language delays and difficulties may not provide utterances which are sufficiently developed for the adult to Recast or to Expand upon (Yoder, Kaiser & Alpert, 1991; Yoder, Kaiser, Goldstein, Alpert, Moussetis, Kaczmarek & Fischer, 1995).

The evidence from this study is that all of the participants benefited from the use of the combination of strategies. This was true for the children for whom the focus was to enlarge their vocabularies to include more sophisticated words and to challenge them to use more complex sentence structures than were in evidence in Phase 1, and for the children for whom the focus was developing basic vocabulary and in increasing sentence length. For all of the participants, a combination of Prompting strategies and Recasts and Expansions, used in play contexts, served to directly inform the children about the words and phrases, to provide

models of their use and to ensure that the children had opportunities to apply them in context. For Cathy and Tom, these strategies were expanded to include the provision of explicit models of sentences such as those in a call and response picture storybook or in a song or rhyme. The findings show the importance of these models in providing opportunities for the child to practice sentence structures and for the adult to interpret the child's fluency, in a mutually enjoyable context.

The findings show that, in an early education setting, young children can acquire vocabulary and can develop their use of complex sentence structures during play with objects and pictures in which the adult Prompts and Questions for names and attributes and Recasts and Expands upon children's contributions. This study shows that Picture storybooks and symbolic play are rich contexts for the development of vocabulary and sentence structure, where both the books and the play scenarios generate new narratives and present real opportunities for presentation and retelling to an audience. In these contexts, the adult strategies can be differentiated to create maximally responsive environments for children along a continuum of development. The study shows how, by acting in role and by creating scenarios where the children are happy to act and to respond in role, the adult can make legitimate demands on the children to use explicit vocabulary and to construct, or begin to construct, full sentence responses in the dialogue and in the follow-up presentations.

Knowledge and size of vocabulary in the early years of schooling and understanding and use of complex sentence structures are linked to children's understanding of the more sophisticated vocabulary and more complex forms of syntax encountered in written texts (Walker, Greenwood, Hart & Carta, 1994; Dickinson 2001; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer Wolf, 2004). This study provides evidence of the kinds of adult talk strategies that support the development of young children's vocabularies and sentence structures and it documents how that development proceeds in a variety of play contexts.

Discourse Skills

The study shows how, in Phase 2, through adult strategies of Modelling and of Contributing to Expository Discourse and to the construction of Narratives, the children were initiated into

the complex modes of meaning making and the disembedded, or decontextualised, forms of language use required for educational knowledge. The findings show that, in response to and in collaboration with the adult, the children engage in expository talk and they construct narratives. In these discourses, the children engage in verbal reasoning to reflect upon experiences, to explain events in terms of causal relations between agents and their actions and to consider and present new propositions following from these explanations. Many of the discourses are based in imagined experiences and, when challenged and supported by the adult, a number of the participants in the study generate ideas about these experiences and they articulate the ideas in decontextualised language.

The children's use of explicit vocabulary and extended sentences, including complex sentences structures to elaborate on a range of topics and to present information which an audience has not shared, are significant developments in Phase 2 of the study. These language behaviours were not in evidence in Phase 1 when the children's talk was characterised by short utterances which could be fragmented and incoherent and it was unusual to hear extended sequences of sentences or the use of complex sentences. The findings also show how the strategies are differentiated to support Cathy and Tom in developing simple narratives. Here the strategies were used to interpret the children's play activities, to map language to them and to provide opportunities for the children to use new words and phrases. During Phase 2 of the study, both of these children progressed to presenting information to an audience and to engaging in some discussion with them on the topic of the presentation.

The study also shows how children's discourse skills are developed in play. In this regard, it contributes to the literature on the role of play in language teaching and learning and it demonstrates the role of the adult in structuring the play context as a maximally responsive one in terms of children's interests, abilities and needs. The findings show how, in play, as the adult demonstrates the styles of reflection and thought required by discourse and provides models of the forms of language required to articulate these thinking processes, the children take on these cognitive styles and move towards a use of language which is more explicit and context free. Equally, the findings show how during the construction of the discourses and in

their reconstructions for an audience, the adult strategies support the children in building coherence and they demonstrate the linguistic structures which provide for internal cohesion in narratives and in expository talk.

The findings of this study suggest that Modelling and Discourse Enabling strategies are important in supporting children's development of the language of discourse. Typically, educational knowledge is represented in written discourse which is abstracted from any situational context and does not assume shared knowledge between the author and the reader. Meaning is carried through the language alone and access to it requires that the reader decipher the concepts and ideas in the sentence while also interpreting them in relation to those ideas already deciphered. Further, the reader must continue to re-interpret understanding in the light of new meaning unfolding as he/she reads. These skills are first developed as oral language skills and they are rooted in the development of children's use of decontextualised language for discourse, in early adult-child dialogues (Snow, Tabors & Dickinson, 2001; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp & Palmer-Wolf, 2004). This study documents the kinds of strategies adults can use, and the contexts they can structure, to enable children to develop these oral language skills.

One of the findings in the study is the difficulty for the adult in Responding with Joint Attention when a number of children are initiating or responding, as can often happen in small and whole group dialogue contexts. In a number of instances, the findings show the children being helped to understand the need to wait their turn, to listen to the current speaker and engage with the topic and to trust that they will be given their opportunity. However, the findings also show a number of instances when I miss children's contributions or fail to respond in time to support the development of the idea.

There is also the difficulty of ensuring equal attention to each child's topic and the danger that the most articulate or engaging child will attract an inappropriate amount of the adult's time. In the episode where Jennie, Nessa and Aisling are constructing a play narrative, Nessa is quite dominant and may have been having an inhibiting effect on the other girls. This

finding suggests the need to monitor the composition of groups and to strive to provide the optimal conditions to facilitate children's communication.

Acquiring the Strategies

In pointing up the use of the strategies and in identifying their origins in the facilitative features of adult talk to young children, certain considerations arise. These considerations are whether the styles of linguistic interaction explored in the study are intuitive to early educators and to what extent the skills need to be, or can be, developed. There is little research evidence on the nature of adult-child linguistic interaction in early years settings. The Home School Study (Dickinson, 2001) is an exception here in that, among the range of investigations conducted, Dickinson observed teachers' styles of interactions in pre-school classrooms and identified a number of factors that influenced them. The findings on teachers' use of talk strategies, across a range of small and whole group contexts, throughout the day, afford some insight into teachers' habitual styles of interaction. Dickinson found only limited evidence that teachers who use one effective verbal strategy, in a particular context, use other effective strategies in that same context, for example, developing vocabulary through use of rare words and also challenging children to explain ideas. Equally, he found little evidence that teachers consistently applied effective strategies across contexts. For example, there was no statistically significant evidence to indicate that teachers who use rare words during play episodes use this strategy during children's snack times.

Overall, the findings from the Home School Study show that, across the multiple centres investigated, few teachers were providing optimum support for language learning. Dickinson makes the point that lack of pedagogical knowledge and lack of understanding of the teacher's role in contributing to children's language development, cause teachers to fall back on teaching styles which are shaped by contextual issues, for example only using rare words during story time, and environmental factors such as class size. Levels of teacher education were a factor in effective practice with more highly educated teachers using more effective strategies more frequently.

My experience of working with teachers and observing practice on continuing professional development courses, over a number of years, is that teachers experience great uncertainty and insecurity about the practice of language teaching and learning. Many do have an intuitive understanding of the kinds of adult talk that support children's language. However, most need detailed guidance in interpreting these as teaching strategies and in locating them in a pedagogical framework. Equally, they need close guidance in planning and structuring the teaching and learning contexts in which the strategies will be applied.

Some of the defining influences on my work in developing pedagogic strategies came during my experience of teaching in the Rutland St. Preschool Project. The innovative nature of the intervention project, during the first decade of its development, provided a context for on-going curriculum development which in turn focused attention on theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning, on research and on reflexive practice. The research conducted by Joan Tough for the Schools Council Communication Skills in Early Childhood Project (Tough, 1973, 1977, 1981) and the research conducted by Gordon Wells at the University of Bristol (1985) were defining influences on the language curriculum and on practice in the Rutland St Project. Dorothy Heathcote, who in the 1970's and 80's was doing seminal work in educational drama and whose workshops I attended, was also an important contributor to developing a pedagogy based on principles of dialogue and exploration.

AN INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

The findings from the study show how the repertoire of adult strategies can be used to support children whose language competences place them at varying points along a continuum of development, including children whose development has been compromised or impaired. Further, these strategies are used effectively in naturalistic play contexts in an early years setting. In the study, an inclusive pedagogy is conceptualised as one which recognises a continuum of learning and is underpinned by the principle of individualisation of teaching and learning through the differentiation of curriculum and teaching strategies. The evidence in the study is that differentiation for inclusive teaching occurs at two main levels. Firstly, the strategies themselves are differentiated in more and less structured ways, to accommodate to individual children's strengths and needs. Secondly, the strategies are used to Fine Tune the

dialogue or monologue contexts differentially, according to the degree of support required by any individual child in being an able partner in dialogue and a successful communicator to an audience. The evidence from this study is that for inclusive practice, teachers and early educators require the full range of strategies in their teaching repertoires.

One of the findings is that, in the early part of Phase 2, including Cathy in a small group context did not provide a maximally responsive environment for her. While there is evidence that she was comprehending other children's contributions, and was being included at points in the discussion, in a number of early episodes, the context was not being differentiated sufficiently for her and she was inappropriately passive. The amount and quality of her talk improved substantially when the episodes of talk were then structured as one-to-one contexts between Cathy and the adult. One of the tensions in the work is about achieving a balance between providing the optimal context for the intensive interactions children need, when, at times, this can mean singling children out for individual attention and providing for the inclusive experience which the early years setting seeks to provide. In this regard, the findings from the study show that providing intensive, one-to-one teaching for Cathy, in appropriate play contexts, makes an important contribution to her inclusion as a fully recognised, communicating member of the group.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR PRACTICE, POLICY AND RESEARCH

Curriculum

The repertoire of teaching strategies and the teaching and learning contexts identified in this study can inform teachers and other early educators about the practice of language teaching and learning for children with diverse abilities and needs. However, a number of implications for practice arise. The practices for English teaching identified in the Primary Curriculum Review, Phase One (NCCA, 2005b), where teachers relied primarily on whole class teaching and individual work, would militate against the social/interactive perspective and the styles of adult-child interactions which are the basis for this study. While whole group sessions would serve as contexts in which children could present information and could engage with the wider group, this work would need to be preceded by dialogue between the adult and

children in small group contexts. Equally, play would need to be a central medium for language teaching and learning.

Teachers in infant classes may perceive adult-child ratios as inhibiting the kinds of interactions being advised in this study. However, in recent years, numbers in all infant classes have fallen and in schools serving large numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, ratios in the infant classes are especially favourable. Further, in the context of a whole-school plan based in collaborative team work and in-class support, teachers who have adequate knowledge of the pedagogic strategies can collaborate with colleagues in the infant classes and with support personnel such as learning support teachers, resource teachers and special needs assistants, to plan appropriate opportunities for language teaching and learning.

The findings of the study also have implications for the time allotted to English in the curriculum for the infant classes. Together, oral language, reading and writing are allotted three hours per week. The small group episodes of discourse, reported in this study, required a minimum of thirty to forty minutes with additional time needed for reporting back and developing skills of presentation and monologue. In addition to this, all of the children had a session of story, rhyming and singing. All of this time would need to be allotted daily to allow adequate time for all of the children and to address the levels of diversity in the group. It would appear that the amount of time currently allotted in Primary schools falls far short of what is needed to develop the levels of language competence children require. For children at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage and children with disabilities, who are more dependent on schools to support their communication and language development, greater emphasis on oral language within the curriculum is required. In this regard, the recommendations from previous Irish research (Eivers, Shiel & Shortt, 2004), that at least 90 minutes a day should be allocated to the teaching of English in schools with high levels of disadvantage and low levels of achievement, is repeated here.

The structural and organisational constraints outlined above are potential barriers to the kinds of adult –child interactions recommended in this study. However, arguably, a more serious constraint to developing young children's language to the levels of competence required for

educational knowledge is imposed by the curriculum content for the infant classes. In this study, it has been shown that, in appropriate contexts, and supported by appropriate adult talk strategies, children aged three and four can be initiated into discourse. In conversation with the adult and with each other, the children construct expository talk and narratives in which they use decontextualised language not just to recall events and experiences but to reflect upon them, explaining cause –effect relations, considering propositions and suggesting actions. In engaging at this level of discourse, the children use sophisticated vocabulary and they construct complex sentences, building ideas about their play which can then be repeated for an audience. They also use language to engage, with the adult, in the logical construction of solutions to problems.

In the current language curriculum for primary schools, these levels of competence are not required until children are in first and second class. For the infant classes, for Oral Language, while there is some expectation that children will engage with and use decontextualised language in the construction of ideas, the requirements are minimal, providing inadequate levels of challenge for children and setting low parameters in terms of guidance for teachers.

In the strand unit, Receptiveness to Language, from a set of six requirements, the most demanding is that the child should be enabled to: *listen to a story or description and respond to it*. In the strand unit Competence and Confidence in Using Language, from a set of six, the most demanding requirement is to: *talk about past and present experiences and, plan, predict and speculate about future and imaginary experiences*. In the strand unit, Developing Cognitive abilities Through Language, from a set of six, the most demanding requirements, respectively, are: *discuss different possible solutions to simple problems ; focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position*. In the strand unit, Emotional and Imaginative Development Through Language, from a set of ten, the most demanding requirements, respectively are: *reflect on and talk about a wide range of everyday experiences and feelings; create and tell stories*.

The difficulty here is the lack of emphasis on elaborating on topics and on building the coherent linguistic structures of discourse. When it is considered that the requirements quoted above are aimed at children in the four to six years age group, the under challenging nature of the language curriculum is apparent. There is the requirement to tell stories and to create and sustain play contexts, but not the additional challenge to include the key elements of narrative or to analyse and reason about characters' goals and motivations. While there is a requirement to *talk about* experiences, there is no emphasis on reporting experience and the requirement *to report* does not appear until first class. With this, there is a lack of focus on the need to develop sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentence structures, including the structures that will allow the children to meet the existing requirement to *predict and speculate about imaginary experiences*. The requirement for sentence structure to *combine simple sentences through the use of connecting words* is insufficiently challenging. Neither is there sufficient emphasis on the use of language to articulate ideas, to talk about propositions and to describe problems and explain solutions. The requirement *to explain* is not present in the curriculum until first class. The requirement here to *discuss different possible solutions to simple problems* underestimates the abilities of children of this age to articulate problems based in action and in the imagination, to explain cause-effect relationships and the nature of processes, and to consider motivations and behaviours. A further concern is the absence of any requirement that children should listen and talk to each other, building meaning collaboratively in a variety of contexts. The requirement to use language to engage with either the adult, or other children, to *enquire, persuade, agree or disagree* is not present until first class.

The content of the infant curriculum is incompatible with the research evidence, including evidence from the present study, which shows that, in dialogue with adults, children in the three to four year age group are extending their potential for meaning making at increasing levels of complexity and need to be supported and challenged further in this learning. In the existing circumstances, it is probable that many children are entering junior infant classes with levels of language competence which are already in advance of the most challenging target required by the oral language curriculum.

Inadequate levels of challenge and low expectations from learners are particularly serious for children who are at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage and children with language delay or disability. These children are more dependent on teaching for their transitions to more complex modes of language use and the curriculum should be providing appropriate guidance to teachers on their behalf. The expectation would be that a curriculum would set parameters within which adequate demands would be made on children and they would be enabled to build on their existing competences, along a continuum of appropriate levels of individual challenge and support.

Policy

While the difficulties with the content of the oral language curriculum identified in the previous section influence practice and need to be addressed at school level, they also need to be addressed at policy level. It is to be hoped that, in future reviews, the NCCA will revisit issues of content and will update the early language curriculum to take cognisance of research from the fields of language acquisition and language and learning. Together with difficulties within the curriculum, there is a recent policy initiative which may influence oral language teaching and learning in schools with large numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and which runs contrary to the perspectives on, and emphases in, language teaching and learning recommended by this study.

The most recent policy document from the DES aimed at combating educational disadvantage, DEIS: An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion (DES, 2005a), provides for a speech and language therapy advisory service to be made available to designated schools. The focus of this provision will not be to support individual children with speech difficulties but to assist both class and support teachers in developing whole school *programmes* to address what are described as *language deficits* (p.36), especially those in infant and junior classes. This recommendation was first included in the report of an evaluation of literacy and numeracy in disadvantaged schools, by the DES Inspectorate (2005c).

The concern here is that, in this initiative, language teaching and learning in the early years classes is being conceptualised within a therapeutic programme model rather than a

curricular one, with the therapist, rather than the educator, being promoted as the advisor on how language teaching and learning should proceed within a school. Provision of therapy to individual children with speech and language difficulties is a necessary part of the web of supports which should constitute an early intervention programme. However, language teaching and learning within a curriculum is a different undertaking to providing a therapeutic service. Responsibility for interpreting the language curriculum and for whole-school planning to adapt and deliver it, should sit firmly with teaching staff. Teachers need to accept this responsibility and to define their roles as language teachers differently from the role of the therapist.

The findings from this study suggest that language learning can be conceptualised as a continuum of development along which children display wide diversity in abilities and needs. The curriculum needs to be inclusive of that diversity and teachers require the skills to teach to it. Initiatives based on a model of language deficit, or on the imposition of language programmes, are undermining of the notion that a curriculum should work for all children and that teaching should be appropriate to a range of abilities and needs. It would be preferable that, rather than relying on such initiatives, DES policy, in collaboration with the NCCA, would promote the curriculum and continue to examine its appropriateness and would emphasise the central responsibilities of teachers and help them to discharge those responsibilities. Initiatives which distract from developing appropriate curriculum and from enabling teachers to interpret and adapt it for their pupils, are unhelpful to children who rely on teachers to know how to develop their command of the language system throughout their school years and also their use of that system to support other critical areas of learning across the curriculum.

The provision in DEIS to map an intervention for 3 year old children on to existing services will need careful management and support to ensure the quality of language teaching and learning. Concerns for the need to provide further professional development for this sector have been raised in a number of policy documents (National Forum, 1998; DES, 2003; OECD, 2004) and research evidence suggests that levels of professional training and

knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy in the sector, fall short of required standards (McGough, Carey & Ware, 2005).

The findings from this study suggest that the 3 year old children who are targeted under the provisions in DEIS, would benefit from being exposed to the kinds of teaching strategies identified. This is likely to require considerable professional development for the personnel involved. In this regard, any plan for enhancing the educational provision in existing services, would require a realistic model of professional development including on-site support.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

The study was conducted by me adopting a teaching role. A limitation here may be that as a researcher interpreting data, I am interpreting my own behaviour and there is the risk that personal bias may influence my analysis and presentation of findings. A counter argument is that extensive samples of dialogue and supported monologue are included in this thesis and these are available for scrutiny and for analysis by readers who may judge the evidence presented. In future research of this kind, it would be useful to include a non-participant observer to both observe the teaching and to be involved in the analysis of data.

Absenteeism presented some difficulties in conducting the study. One of the children who had been chosen as a small group participant was not finally included because of long periods of absence. A second participant, who featured well in the data for Phase 1 and for the first half of Phase 2, is not visible in the data from the later period of Phase 2 because of absenteeism on a significant number of my weekly visits. Absenteeism is an issue of concern generally in schools with high concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and the possibility that this or other inhibiting circumstances will interfere with data collection is part of the reality of conducting research in real life settings. Nonetheless, maintaining a group of participants is critical to a research project and a small scale study like this could be vulnerable to losing key participants.

In presenting the findings from the study, I am proposing that the adult talk strategies constitute an inclusive early years pedagogy which can have positive effects on language teaching and learning in early years settings. A limitation in this proposal may be that in my explorations of the strategies, my research focus may have provided for a commitment and a rigour which contributed to the successful outcomes and that such a focus will be absent in every day teaching. A process of reflection and refinement is part of the conduct of research and must be expected to influence the outcomes. A counter point here is that, the on-going processes of assessment, reflection and planning and the dynamic styles of interaction which the adult must engage in for the use of these strategies, can be taught to teachers and other early educators in appropriate courses of professional development.

In presenting the findings, questions arise as to whether the children's competences can be seen to be directly linked to the use of the strategies. Some of the considerations here are that the design of the study does not allow for identification of cause and effect and that, over the course of a school year, the children's development could be attributed to maturational factors rather than to any distinctive contribution of the strategy use. While maturation and other contextual issues undoubtedly contributed to the children's language development during the course of the study, there is a particular argument for recognising the relationship between the use of the strategies and the children's language behaviours.

The findings presented result from the fine grained analysis of dialogue; of the meaning constructed *between* listeners and speakers rather than by speakers in isolation. The analysis focuses on how the linguistic structures are built as much as on the meanings they convey and, over long numbers of utterances, the influences of the contributions from both the adult and the children are teased out and identified. In fact, it would be difficult not to recognise the contribution of the adult strategies or to try to analyse the children's utterances in isolation, as the meanings that emerge come directly from *the relationships between* the kinds of talk that are used by both the adult and the children and the influences of each kind of talk on the other. In this way, when the adult challenges the children for explanations, the children give or attempt explanations and the adult then contributes again, both as a responding partner in dialogue, maintaining the conditions for dialogue, and as a teacher,

intentionally influencing the child's next contribution. Because the context is dialogue, the adult's and the children's contributions are underpinned by a commitment to a topic, with that commitment based in intersubjective understanding and the motivation to communicate. The mutual influences are immediately discernible, in context. I am also arguing that the adult strategies both provoked and scaffolded discourse skills and discursive styles in the children, which were maintained and applied by them, beyond the immediate context. The central argument here is that the children's talk occurred in relationship with the adult's intentional language teaching strategies and that the meanings constructed emerged from dialogue and supported monologue contexts which were characterised by particular styles of adult talk.

Research

The discussion in this chapter suggests many directions for future research. A small number of these are outlined below. A longitudinal study which examined the relationship between the strategy use in the early years and children's later literacy achievements, could provide insight into questions of the role and efficacy of the strategies in supporting children's learning, beyond the early years classroom.

There is a need for research into practice in language teaching and learning in infant classes in primary schools. In this chapter, I have referred to personal, observed evidence of teachers' insecurities in teaching oral language. Equally, I have argued that the oral language curriculum for the infant classes is insufficiently challenging. Research which would investigate children's levels of competence relative to the requirements of the curriculum and teachers' current practices in language teaching and learning, would clarify these issues of practice and would inform policy and course provision.

Together with the aim of informing practice in language teaching and learning, generally, in early years practice, this study has the aim of building on work done to date in supporting practice in the Early Start Programme. The achieving of this aim will be closely dependent on opportunities to disseminate the findings through a relevant model of continuing professional development. Within such a context, research to examine the efficacy of the

model and the degree of implementation of the strategies and their effects, could inform decisions on models of professional development within the wider early years sector.

A further option for research within Early Start is to structure a collaborative project involving the research team, the Early Start personnel, the infant teachers and the teaching support team, including the Home School Community Liaison Teacher, in one or a number of Early Start schools. The focus of this research would be to investigate the effects of a collaborative approach to the implementation of the interactive styles of language teaching and learning, identified in this study, across the early years provision in the school, including collaborating with parents. Such research could also inform the wider early years sector in which there is a need for collaboration and mutual support between preschool providers and their local primary schools on issues of curriculum and practice.

CONCLUSION

In this study a range of adult talk strategies which constitutes an inclusive pedagogy for language teaching and learning has been identified. The study shows how these strategies are used to develop children's expository and discourse skills in dialogue contexts and to support their presentations of explanations and narratives to an audience. The strategies are used differentially to challenge children according to ability and need and to fine tune a topic or a context, in an attempt to provide an optimally responsive environment.

The participants in the study included two children with serious language delay. For these children the strategies supported their vocabulary development and their use of word combinations and basic sentence structure. The strategies also supported the development of these children's discourse skills.

In the study, symbolic play and picture storybooks were shown to be rich sources for children's language development including their use of sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentence structures and their use of verbal reasoning in reflecting on propositions and in explaining problems and suggesting solutions. In play contexts and in response to

picture storybooks, the children also developed ideas and constructed narratives which they later recounted to the whole class group.

Over the course of the study, the children began to engage with each other's topics and to collaborate together to develop ideas and to support each other's presentations. In the supported monologue contexts, the listeners often engaged the presenters in dialogue about their topics.

This study provides a direction for language teaching and learning in schools and other early years settings and has particular importance for settings serving young children who are at risk for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage and children with serious language delay. For these children, early education may make the critical difference as to whether they can access the curriculum and achieve in school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to school principal seeking permission to conduct the study

School Name

Address

Date

Dear (Salute),

You may remember that when I visited the school recently, I told you of my hope to begin research for a Ph.D. degree in the coming September. I'm taking this opportunity to explain the project to you in a little more detail in the hope that I can enlist the help of your team in the work. Of course I am discussing the matter first with you and if you have reservations for any reason at all then, obviously, the matter will go no further. If you did feel it would be possible from your point of view then, with your permission, I would write to the team and explain the purpose and nature of the research and the implications for them.

The research is really about Language teaching and learning. With the advent of the Revised Curriculum, we have a programme content but we have a great deal to learn about how to teach it. There is a developing research position which points to particular kinds of expressive language as the skills which are supportive of school learning both in relation to cognitive development and in relation to literacy. These are the skills which children from disadvantaged areas seem to need most support in developing and they need to be part of the early years curriculum. So, this work would be about finding ways of teaching these particular forms of language use.

As you know, we have already done quite a bit of work on the language programme in Early Start. I am hoping now to bring that work further in line with the ideas outlined above. I really do want to do the actual teaching myself however, and this means having access to the class for at least one session per week, for a full year.

What I would be asking then is to come to the school on one morning each week for the full year, starting in late September and continuing until June. During this time I would work in one class only, focusing on a specific number of children, perhaps about eight. For the first few weeks I would observe and assess the children and decide on the members of the study group on the basis of strengths and needs. From the second half of the term I would hope to teach/ work with this study group in various contexts, as a group of eight, in smaller groups, as individuals and perhaps as part of the whole class group.

Obviously this request asks a great deal of the teacher and child-care worker involved. They would have to be willing to allow me to work along side them both as they would continue to work with the remaining children for at least some of the time while I was present. I would also be delighted to have them observe the work should they wish and there would probably be occasions when we would all work together.

Of course I would have to acquaint parents of the purpose and nature of the work and obtain their permission to work with the children.

(Name), perhaps it would be best if I leave any further detail until you have had a chance to consider the proposal so far. You are a busy woman and may not welcome an epistle at this stage! I would really like to be allowed to do the work at (School Name) but of course I will understand if this is not possible. I do appreciate that there are enormous demands being made on schools and this one may just not suit you at this time.

I will wait for your response and advice. I would be delighted to hear from you by phone if that suits.

With every good wish,

Anne McGough

Appendix B: Letter to parents seeking permission to work with their children

Parents' Home Address

12th November 2001

Dear Parent (s),

I am requesting permission to include (name) in my study of children's language development. To begin the study I need to collect as much information as possible about (name's) language development so far. This means I need to test (name) on some measures of language development and I also need to collect some information from you on what you think of her progress so far. I would also like to use a video recorder in the classroom on a regular basis and I would like your permission to include (name) in these video recordings. The videos would be used only for the purposes of the study and in my work with teachers. Of course you would be welcome to view the video recordings at any time.

Will you please sign below to say that you agree to allow (name) to be included in the study and to say that you agree to allow me to administer the language tests to her and to include her in the video recordings.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne McGough

I agree to allow (name) to be included in the language study and to take the language tests and to be included in the video recordings

Signature: _____

Appendix C: Early Start Beginning of Year Profile of Children's Language Development

- give /keep eye contact
- show interest in talking to an adult
- initiate conversation with adults
- initiate conversation with other children
- wait with interest while adult responds
- listens to adult and gives appropriate response
- is audible
- has clear articulation
- adopts the appropriate manner of speech
- relies on gesture and explicit terms
- can use full sentence structure
- inclined towards one word response
- can be coherent and explicit in making simple requests
- can be coherent and explicit in giving some item of information (has appropriate vocabulary, structures information in sentences having logical sequence)
- can /will give own name
- can /will name a number of own toys
- can sing /say a number of nursery rhymes /songs
- can follow a simple instruction
- can give a simple instruction
- can handle a book appropriately
- can name main body parts
- can listen attentively while adult names common items in a picture book, or game
- can take turn to name these items
- can make a complaint
- can say what it is he/she is doing in relation to activities, games, toys.
- can say what he /she would like to play with

Early Start End of Year Profile of Children's Language Development

- Articulate clearly (50% of 3-5 yr olds may still have difficulty with sounds, *l, sh, ch, j, z* and *v*; some children have trouble with *r, th*, up to 7 yrs)
- Engage in conversation with adult in both formal and informal contexts, attending to the topic and making relevant and appropriate response over a number of turns.
- Extend a topic during conversation, by introducing relevant and related sub topics.
- Inform a listener about a topic, giving the information which is relevant to the listener's needs.
- Show an awareness of the need to be explicit by choosing vocabulary and sentence structure which conveys clear, coherent meaning.
- Knowledge of vocabulary and command of sentence structure necessary to communicate in relation to every day topics, events and relationships.
- Use full sentence structure with appropriate use of nouns, verbs, adjectives and tense.
- Make short presentations on variety of topics from personal experience, stories, play, work done, to adult(s), to other children, giving essential points of information in logical, coherent manner and attending to listener's needs.
- Describe people, objects on the basis of distinctive traits and attributes.
- Describe a process, a game, how to operate a toy or machine.
- Give directions.
- Describe a familiar route, plan a journey.
- Describe and articulate a problem and suggest possible solutions.
- Recall, retell, extend and develop a variety of stories, sequencing events correctly, making reference to character, plot, episodes.
- Use complex sentence structures using words like *if, because, might*, to explain simple cause /effect relationships.
- Predict, speculate about the outcomes of concrete activities, real life situations, story and imaginary situations.
- Extract central meaning in relation to events represented pictorially, on video, on audio cassette, on T.V.
- Create simple stories based on personal experience.
- Use language to create and sustain imaginary play situations and dramatic contexts.
- Assign and explain role in imaginary play situations and dramas.
- Describe, recall events relating to imaginary play situations and dramas.
- Recite a particular repertoire of rhymes, sing a particular repertoire of songs.
- Offer appropriate rhyming words to create rhyme and nonsense rhyme.
- Show sense of pulse and rhythm.
- Interpret meaning / feeling, visually and vocally through dance, mime and drama.
- Request books to be read to him /her and initiate own reading activity.
- Handle a familiar book appropriately showing evidence of pretend reading.
- Has receptive knowledge of vocabulary related to the handling of books.
- Recognises readable material in various forms (in classroom, in environment and in books) and asks "what does that say?"
- Recognises when reading and writing are taking place (concrete and pictorial levels)
- Engages in pretend reading and writing.
- When shown a page with text and illustration can indicate that print tells the story.
- Attempts to finger point as text is read by the adult.

