UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Is every child's voice heard?
Longitudinal case studies of
3-year-old children's
communicative strategies
at home and in a preschool playgroup

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VOLUME 1 OF 2 VOLUMES

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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IS EVERY CHILD'S VOICE HEARD?
Longitudinal case studies of 3-year-old children's
communicative strategies at home and in a preschool playgroup

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This ESRC funded study investigates how young children integrate a range of multimodal strategies, including talk, body movement, gesture and gaze, to make and express meaning at home and playgroup during their first year in preschool. Using longitudinal ethnographic video case studies of four 3-year-old children, two boys and two girls, the study identifies patterns in the children's uses of different communicative strategies that relate to the dynamics of the social, institutional and immediate contexts in which they are situated, particularly with regard to whether at home or in playgroup; with familiar or less familiar others; with adults or peers; with peers of the same sex or age group and with different playgroup activities.

The thesis draws on post-modern interpretations of knowledge and truths to reflect critically on the different pedagogic discourses concerning the role of talk in learning implied in the Foundation Stage Curriculum and to revisit Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian theories of talk and learning in the light of the children's multimodal sign making in different settings. By interpreting the children's gaze, facial gestures and body movements as part of both communicative and meaning-making processes, the study pieces together unique and composite understandings of how the children conform to and resist the communicative practices of the 'speech community' (Hymes 1996) within the playgroup studied. These findings in turn give new insights into the genesis of pupil identity and issues of power, control and agency.

Furthermore, the study discusses the development of systems for handling and representing complex video data alongside more traditional data collection methods, including audio recordings, field and diary notes and interviews. The thesis concludes by discussing how the study findings contribute to growing understandings of the multimodal processes of young children's making and expressing of meaning and consequent implications for early years policy and practice.

List of Contents

Volume 1

Volume 2
Chapter 6 **Child Profiles at home and playgroup**

Chapter 7 **Unravelling the dynamics of playgroup**

Chapter 8 Implications for Theory and Practice

List of Figures and Illustrations

FIGURES

ILLUSTRATIONS

Accompanying Materials

CD Video Clips[1]

1. Example J1/1 Jake at home, 16.05.01

2. Example J2/5 Jake at Milk Time, 04.04.01

3. Example 7.1 Jake at the Craft Table, 05.03.01

4. Example M1/3 Michael at home, 30.01.01

5. Example M2/6 Michael at Milk Time, 26.02.01

6. Example 7.15 Michael at Free Choice Tables: Lego construction

7. Example T1/2 Tallulah at home, 05.12.00

8. Example T2/1 Tallulah at Milk Time, 15.11.00

9. Example 7.7 Tallulah at the Craft Table, 15.06.01

10. Example Z1/3 Zara at home, 12.02.01

11. Example Z1/7 Zara at home, 11.06.01

12. Example 7.16 Zara at Free Choice Table: Playdoh, 20.03.01

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[1] Examples with accompanying video clips are indicated in the analysis chapters by **Video clip**. Participant names have been erased from the video clips, resulting in some loss of sound quality. Picture quality has been reduced to fit the accompanying material onto a CD.

List of Appendices

Acknowledgements

There is a French saying 'il n'y a rien de plus dangereux qu'une idée', there is nothing more dangerous than an idea. The idea behind this thesis began to germinate in my mind several years ago, but would not have come to fruition without the support and encouragement of many people who have contributed towards it in many different ways.

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Dedicated to my mother, Kathleen,
who always encouraged me
to think for myself

Definitions and Abbreviations

CACHE Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education

CGFS Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfEE/QCA, 2000)

Childminder is used to refer to an adult who looks after a child in the childminder's home and is paid for doing so.

Co-construction In constructivist approaches to learning, new understandings are built on the foundations of a child's prior understandings. Co-construction involves new understandings being constructed between different people through their joint engagement and interaction, in whatever mode or combinations of modes.

Curriculum The knowledge, skills and values children are intended to learn in an educational institution, as represented by the official curriculum written for their age.

Fantasy play A form of role play where children create stories or imaginary contexts that they explore on their own or with others, involves objects and people taking on new, innovative, make believe functions and roles.

Joint engagement/ joint involvement When two or more individuals, adults and/or children, have focussed sustained attention on a shared activity.

LEA Local Education Authority

Mode is used in this thesis to describe a medium or semiotic resource for expressing and conveying meaning, such as language, gaze, facial expression and body movement (see **Multimodality**).

Multimodality This term has emerged from the field of discourse analysis (eg Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001) to highlight the importance of taking into account how different semiotic resources, such as image, sound, movement, language, combine to construct meaning, offering an alternative to monomodal approaches to meaning making, such as the study of language or visual images in isolation.

Nanny refers to a trained adult paid to look after a child in the child's home.

Parent is used to refer to mothers, fathers and other main carers, for instance stepparents, with whom the child lives.

Pedagogy The practice, art, science and craft of delivering a prescribed curriculum, including the provision, in early years settings, of learning environments for exploration and play and 'instruction', in the form of the initiation and/or maintenance of effective means to achieve educational goals (DfES, 2002, p27).

PLA Preschool Learning Alliance (formerly **PPA**, Preschool Playgroups Association)

Playgroup refers to playgroups as part of the Preschool Playgroup Alliance network. The site of this study is a playgroup.

Practitioners Adults who are paid to work in a preschool setting, regardless of their qualifications.

Preschool or **preschool setting** is used to describe any registered organisation or establishment that provides out-of-home preschool care or education, including local authority nursery schools, nursery classes attached to primary schools, nursery centres, playgroups, social services daycare centres and private day nurseries and kindergartens.

Role play Children take specific roles and explore their ideas about those roles through solitary or joint play.

Small group In the particular playgroup studied, small groups comprised between 3 and 6 children.

Sustained shared thinking refers to episodes where two or more individuals work together in any communicative mode to solve problems, clarify ideas etc, all parties contribute to the thinking and there are changes/developments in the thinking.

Toilet trips In the playgroup studied, the toilets were in the adjoining primary school, so toilet trips involved a short walk and rarely took less than 7 minutes. Children could request a toilet trip at any time and were always accompanied by an adult, who would take between 1-4 children each trip. 2 adults would accompany larger groups.

Video clip Refers to a section of video on accompanying CD illustrating an example.

Voluntary helper Adult with no child in the preschool setting assisting without pay.

Voluntary parent helper Mother, father, grandparent and/or nanny assisting in preschool, without pay as part of the parent rota system.

Whole group refers to activities where all the children and some adults were engaged in the same activity at the same time (some children were sometimes absent for toilet trips, some adults would be clearing up and/or setting up other activities).

Work experience student from the local secondary school, usually 15-16 years of age, assisting in preschool setting for 4-6 weeks without pay.

ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) The distance between what a child can do on his or her own and the higher cognitive levels a child can achieve when supported by a practitioner or more knowledgeable other (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4).

Introduction

> Early childhood is '… a period of momentous significance for all people
> growing up in culture … By the time this period is over, children will have
> formed conceptions of themselves as social beings, as thinkers, and as
> language users, and they will have reached certain important decisions about
> their own abilities and their own worth.'   (Donaldson et al, 1983, p1)

This thesis began as a longitudinal study of 3-year-old children's uses of talk as a
means of communicating and learning during their first year at a preschool playgroup,
compared with their uses of talk at home. However, led by the data and subsequent
search for a theoretical framework that enabled me to understand more fully what I
had observed, the project moved beyond a study of children's talk to consider the
diversity of their emerging communicative and meaning-making strategies. The thesis
illustrates how the children's talk in the different settings of playgroup and home was
interwoven with other modes of communication, focussing on the uses of gaze, facial
expression and body movement in their multimodal constructions and expressions of
meaning. The term 'multimodal' has emerged from the field of discourse analysis (eg
Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001) to highlight the importance of taking into
account how different semiotic resources, such as image, sound, movement and
language, combine to construct meaning, offering an alternative to monomodal
approaches to meaning making, such as the study of language or visual images in
isolation.

The scope of the thesis is ambitiously broad as the issues addressed concern not only
the development of young children's multimodal communicative and meaning-
making strategies in the different institutional settings of home and playgroup, but
also how the children's roles and identities can be seen to develop differently in the
different settings. This heterogeneous approach is essential if we are to begin to
unravel how the dynamic interplay of modes of communication, identity and
pedagogy all combine to shape young children's learning.

However, limits have been imposed on the study through the choice of case study as a means of data collection. This approach has provided a methodological framework that permits both a sharp focus on individual children's communicative strategies and a wider perspective on the overlapping and opaque layers of contexts in which the children were situated. As Kress et al suggest:

> … the question of identity and knowledge are always embedded in specific life worlds, which are themselves co-articulated with sets of others, and these questions cannot be discussed in any serious fashion outside of an understanding of these "webs." The modes of representation are imbricated everywhere, both in the constitution and in the realization of these lifeworlds, and, therefore, in the forms of identity and the shapings of knowledge, which are at issue.
>
> (Kress et al, 2000)

The thesis documents the experiences of four 3-year-old children over the course of their first year in a small rural playgroup and, by taking into account not only how the children communicate but also how their individual identity is created and re-created through the processes of acquiring new 'voices' in new social domains, the study proposes answers to the following specific questions:

1   During their first year at playgroup, how are some children constructed as more socially confident and better communicators than others? How do home perceptions of each child differ from playgroup staff perceptions?

2   Are there significant patterns and/or developments in individual children's communicative strategies during their first year at playgroup? How do these compare with the children's communicative strategies at home?

3   What sequences of playgroup experiences and what other factors may have influenced these outcomes?

To locate the specificity of this study within a larger framework, the thesis begins with background information on the diverse range of early years provision in Britain, reflects on some of the assumptions underlying this provision and documents changes in early years over the last decade. Chapter 2 discusses different theoretical approaches towards young children's language development and multimodal meaning making and Chapter 3 critically reviews a wide range of research studies in these fields. Details of the methodological approach adopted in this study are presented in Chapter 4, followed by an extended presentation of the data analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 which answer the research questions stated above. Finally, a concluding chapter summarises the research findings and discusses their implications for early years research, for research in multimodal communication across all age ranges, and for early years training, practice and assessment.

This ESRC-funded thesis results from work carried out by myself whilst in registered postgraduate status at the Research and Graduate School of Education, University of Southampton.

Chapter 1

Background to early years provision in Britain

To locate this study within a socio-historical context, Chapter 1 reviews the history of early years provision in Britain, focusing on the development of playgroups in England. Consideration is given to tensions in Britain between the provision of childcare and education, and to alternative approaches to early years offered in other countries. Finally, major changes made over recent years to early years provision and funding in England are summarised and discussed.

1.1 The diversity of preschool provision in Britain

> The history of child care in Britain since the war is a curious counterpoint of unfulfilled official declarations of intent, and voluntary response filling gaps left by inaction. In 1978, Britain had one of the poorest childcare records in Western Europe in the maintained sector, and arguably the best record in the world in the do-it-yourself care of the under-fives.
>
> (Bruner, 1980 pp31-32)

Since Bruner made this stinging observation, early years provision in Britain has changed significantly, particularly during the last decade with the introduction of state funding, the creation of an early years curriculum, moves towards the standardisation of training and the inclusion of early years providers in OFSTED inspection. Yet before discussing these changes, it is essential to consider how the historical legacy of 'inaction' described by Bruner has created a diversity of early years establishments and practices upon which the efficacy of any changes depends.

Broadly speaking, preschool establishments in Britain have evolved from two distinct models: the family and the traditional school. Where the family model predominated, the preschool establishment has been care-oriented. Where the school model predominated, the preschool has been education-oriented. There has never been a nationwide preschool network offering an original solution to the challenge of organising the communal life of very young children outside the home. The very term 'preschool' is symptomatic of historically established attitudes towards these years as preparation for something that follows rather than recognition of their own unquestionable value.

The current diversity of early years provision is further complicated by regional factors: different Local Education and Health Authorities with historically different facilities and funding arrangements offer different forms of provision (DfES, 2001a). Differences are also found between rural and urban areas.

1.1.1 Different settings for preschool provision

The types of preschool establishments on offer in any one area may include all or some of the following (compiled from DfEE, 1999b, DfES, 2001a, NCB, 1999):

Local authority nursery classes Classes within primary schools, usually led by a graduate qualified teacher, supported by an adult with 2 years' childcare training. The provision offered tends to be half-day sessions, 5 days per week during school term time. Average staff/child ratio 1:13.

Local authority nursery schools Separate LEA schools, combining kindergarten traditions designed for middle-class children, and 'welfare' nursery school approaches aimed to give better physical care to children from less well-off homes. Head teachers usually have graduate training with early years' experience; other staff have some training in nursery education. Sessions are usually half-day, with an average staff ratio of 1:13. Some nursery schools offer full day care.

Private day nurseries Most staff have 2 years' childcare training, some less and some more. Usually offer full day care, with a staff/child ratio of 1:8. Costs vary, but full day care for working parents is expensive.

Local authority day care centres Evolved from social services day care provision, although many now operate under the authority of the LEA, they vary in the services they offer: some combine day care with education, whilst others are care-oriented. Usually run by adults with 2 years' childcare training, some receive input from a qualified teacher. Average staff/child ratio 1:8. Most offer full day care.

Voluntary playgroups and/or preschools Historically, staff training has been variable, ranging from none to graduate level (see Section 1.2.2 below). The number of sessions offered varies from between two to ten 2 ½ hour sessions per week, depending on the particular group. Attendance is sessional, with a maximum of five sessions per week, depending on availability. Premises vary, with only a small percentage on permanent sites (see Section 1.2.4 below).

Childminders/ Home care Some 3-5 year olds are cared for exclusively in the home or by a childminder, where there is great variation in what children do. The number of registered childminders fell after the re-registration process following the 1989 Children's Act (DfES, 2001a) and after the introduction of childminder Ofsted inspections. In some areas of the country, childminders are the only available and/or affordable type of care for the children of working parents.

Historically, political rhetoric has claimed this diversity of provision offered parents the freedom to choose where and how often, if at all, their child attended preschool, whilst glossing over the lack of government funding:

> The National Commission's proposals for free state nursery education for all 3 and 4 year olds conflicts with our policy of choice and diversity of provision which best meets the varied needs of children and their parents. It is also unrealistic in resource terms.   (Hansard, 14 December 1993)

In reality, parents were rarely presented with a choice of preschool facilities. Ball (1994, p31) described the uneven and inequitable provision of services for the under fives in Britain as lacking 'coherence, coordination or direction' and failing to 'meet the needs of either children or parents'. Pugh was equally indignant:

> It seems shameful that at the end of the twentieth century, after countless reports from researchers and national committees, we are still having to make the case that a child's early years are of critical and lasting importance. It is now well established that a high percentage of children's learning takes place in the first five years of life, and that this is the time when attitudes are formed, when first relationships are made, when concepts are developed, and the foundation for all skills and later learning are laid.
>
> (Pugh, 1994, p1)

In the new national framework for education, the importance of children's early learning has been given official recognition, through the phasing in of state funding for preschool, attendant inspection regimes and the creation of the Foundation Stage Curriculum for 3 to 5- year-olds (see Section 1.4 below). Depending on local availability, the child's date of birth, the local LEA or school admissions policy and parental choice, children either spend one or two years of the Foundation Stage in a preschool setting, plus one year in Reception class at primary school. Appendix 1.1 illustrates possible settings where, and ages when, children may experience the Foundation Stage.

1.1.2 Attendance at different preschool settings

Reliable statistics on attendance at different preschool settings are difficult to obtain and should be treated with caution, partly because different authorities gather figures at different times of year using different criteria (Moss et al, 1998). Furthermore, due to the inadequacy of provision in any one setting, many children attend more than one setting: the Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) estimates

that 1.8 children occupy each playgroup place (NCB, 1999). *Figure 1.1* overleaf indicates how many children used each preschool service in England in 2000, 1997 and 1986.

Overall, the figures show how, despite government predictions of significant rises in early years provision, the number of childminding places has fallen since 1997, as have places in local authority day nurseries. Playgroups catered for 63% children aged 3-4 in 1986, falling to 54% in 1997 and 52% by 2000, corresponding to a significant rise in children entering infant and nursery classes, where many teachers had no or little early years training. These figures demonstrate how playgroups have become a permanent and significant feature of preschool provision, viewed not as 'a cheap substitute for nursery education but … a valid alternative in their own right' (PPA 1989, p6). The site for this study is a rural playgroup run by local parents. To understand the ethos and organisation of playgroups, it is helpful to look briefly into the history of their development.

1.2 The development of playgroups in Britain

1.2.1 The growth and funding of playgroups

The variety of provision outlined above illustrates how, through lack of clear direction, preschool provision in Britain has developed along many different paths. Pre World War II, state-funded early years provision was almost non-existent, with residential or day-care nurseries provided only for children deprived of 'normal' home circumstances. In the aftermath of WW2, with its disruptions to family life and mass evacuations of young children, there was powerful opposition to the employment of women, based partly on the potential psychological damage to their children. Such fears were fuelled by the works of the psychoanalyst John Bowlby who, from his studies of orphanages, institutional care and young thieves, suggested that maternal deprivation in the early years might cripple the capacity to form relationships with other people and could be a cause of delinquency in later life (Bowlby, 1951).

Figure 1.1

Under fives and preschool services in England: 2000, 1997 and 1986

o *Figures in italics show percentage of 3 and 4 year olds*

o *% do not total 100% as some children attend more than 1 preschool*

Population	2000	1997	1986
Total population	49,997,000	49,284,200	47,112,000
Population age 0 - 4 years	2,999,500	.3,106,300	3,004,200
Population age 3&4 years	1,224,800	1,272,300	1,183,500
Childminders (children aged 0-5)			
Places with registered childminders	320,400	365,200	137,732
Day Nurseries (children aged 0-5)			
Places in Local Authority Day Nurseries	17,200	20,2000	28,920
Places in registered private nurseries	245,100	172,000	27,923
Playgroups (children aged 3-4)			
Places	353,100	383,700	412,391
Children using playgroups (1.8 ch per place)	635,580	690,660	742,304
Percentage of 3-4 year olds	*52%*	*54%*	*63%*
Nursery schools and classes (children aged3-4)			
Children using nursery schools (part + full-time)	46,300	50,734	49,383
Children using nursery classes (part-time and full-time)	316,400 *30%*	316,669 *29%*	223,097 *19%*
Percentage of 3-4 year olds			
Infant classes (under fives)			
Children attending infant classes (part-time and full-time)	351,000 *57.91%*	346,116 *54.53%*	236,143 *20%*
Percentage of 4 year olds			
Independent schools (under fives)			
Children attending independent schools (part-time and full-time)	69,766 *6%*	66,900 *5%*	41,789 *4%*
Percentage of 3-4 year olds			(England + Wales)

Sources: National Early Years Network (2002), DfES (2001a), HMSO (1988),

NCB (1986)

Bowlby's ideas were in tune with Beveridge's call to slay the five giants of want, squalor, disease, idleness and ignorance, and were used in the political realm to underpin arguments for restricting the development of day care to those in 'needy' circumstances (Arnot et al, 1999). Consequently, in 1950s Britain, children were looked after predominantly in the home. In some areas, primary schools accepted children aged 4 years. In other areas, particularly towns and cities, nursery schools and 'welfare' nurseries remained, primarily for children deemed at risk of neglect (Bruner, 1980).

Moss and Penn (1997) suggest that the debate over and distinction between care and education for preschool children, coupled with an underlying fear of the consequences of maternal deprivation, effectively blocked the development of preschool provision. In contrast with more innovative preschool schemes in France, Italy, Spain and Scandinavia initiated in the post-war period, British preschool provision remained heavily dependent upon modernised or 'Bowlby-ized' Victorian values (Arnot et al, 1999, p58), provided by mothers and financed by maternal guilt rather than by the state coffers.

In the early 1960s, after the Ministry of Education had denied preferment in state schools to the young children of school teachers, a teacher and mother who was affected by the changes advertised for other parents who might be interested in setting up a cooperative group (Bruner, 1980). Others followed suit, and gradually the playgroup movement came into being, fulfilling a variety of different local needs. Some playgroups were set up to counter the isolation and anonymity of high-rise living, some to encourage inter-racial mixing, but most simply offered a place where local children could meet to play together under adult supervision. Playgroups were predominantly middle-class institutions, run by volunteers, mostly mothers. The number of playgroups rapidly increased, slowly filling the gap created by the limited provision of nursery education. As more women began to return to work during the 1970s and public attitudes towards childcare became influenced by feminist writings, such as Kristeva (1974), the number of playgroups continued to increase, spurred on by the continued shortfall of state-funded places.

By 1967, the Plowden Report had outlined a substantial increase in need for preschool care, and this need was officially recognised in Mrs Thatcher's 1972 White Paper *Education: a Framework for Expansion*:

> The action the Government now propose will give effect to the (Plowden Council) recommendations. Their aim is that, within the next ten years, nursery education should become available without charge, within the limits of demand estimated by Plowden, to those children of three and four whose parents wish them to benefit from it.   (DES, 1972, pp4-5)

In reality, the provision of care fell far short of those figures. By 1977, a little over half the recommended number of places had been provided (ACC, 1977), and these were in nursery schools or classes with a strong education bias. Again, it fell to private nurseries and voluntary playgroups to shoulder the bulk of preschool provision. Over time, the separately formed playgroups became linked through the Pre-School Playgroups Association (re-named the Pre-School Learning Alliance in 1995). First established in 1961, the PPA/PLA provided local and regional support and training within a national framework.

For the government, playgroups, financed by parental fees supplemented by fund-raising, offered a conveniently cost-free alternative to their unfulfilled promises. Limited external funding was sometimes available, for example from Social Services, LEAs, Parish and District Councils, but income from such sources amounted to less than 5 per cent of playgroups' total income (PPA, 1990). By the early 1990s, government policy clearly shirked state responsibility:

> The government believe that in the first instance it is the responsibility of parents to make arrangements, including financial arrangements, for the day care of preschool children.
> (Department of Health evidence to House of Commons, 1989, cited by Pugh, 1994, p2)

The 'Start Right' Report (Ball, 1994) refuelled pressures on the government to improve preschool provision, and the Conservative Party under John Major introduced a voucher system for four-year-olds, whereby parents received vouchers totalling £1,100 towards the cost of nursery education. This system was fraught with difficulties, and the Labour Party redirected voucher funds to Local Education Authorities, which in September 1998 were committed to providing a free, part-time early years education place for all four-year-olds. Funding for three-year-olds has subsequently been phased in, and should be complete by end 2003.

1.2.2 Playgroup staff training

Historically, mostly white middle-class mothers have run playgroups in an underpaid and undervalued sector where, until the 1990s, the levels of qualification required remained ambiguous and highly variable. The Children's Act Guidance and Regulations (DoH, 1991) specified that 50 % of preschool staff must be fully trained, with either an NNEB certificate, NVQ Level 3 in Childcare, or a PLA Diploma in Pre-School Practice. A revised training framework introduced by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCA) in 1999 aimed to standardise the range of early years qualifications available in England, beginning with an entry level of GCSE D-G grades and rising to the equivalent of postgraduate studies (QCA, 2002). However, it must be remembered that although playgroup staff are required to update and upgrade their training, this process takes time. Furthermore, playgroups remain dependent on voluntary parent helpers to achieve their adult:child ratio, and no official training is required of such voluntary yet essential assistance.

In 1998, a workforce survey (EEC, 2000) found that 44% early years workers had inadequate training: for playgroups the figure was one in four. A corresponding Hampshire preschool survey revealed that: 72% of paid staff had training needs; 25% of paid staff and 80% of volunteers had no relevant qualifications; 75% of preschools had no training budget. The most significant restraints on training were

cited as; time (51%); no suitable course (43%) and lack of funding (39%). The survey indicated the workforce is predominantly female (99.7% of paid staff and 87.1% of volunteers) and white (99.7% of paid staff and 100% of volunteers). The turnover of paid staff was 23% in 12 months; 64% of volunteers worked for 1 year or less; 28% of providers had been unable to recruit suitable staff. 49% of paid staff and 20% of volunteers had worked in preschools for more than 3 years (HCC, 1999, p58).

The nationwide diversity of preschool training has been highlighted by the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project. EPPE is a longitudinal study of 3,000 children in England, from 1999-2003, investigating children's development up to Key Stage 1 at age 7 in different early years settings, including 25 nursery classes, 34 playgroups, 31 private day nurseries, 24 local authority day care centres, 20 nursery schools and seven combined centres. Overall, EPPE has assessed playgroup provision as adequate to below adequate (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 6, p12 and p17). Using a revised standard Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R, originally devised in the USA) and the English Extension (ECERS-E), playgroups were rated as providing 'minimal' services in the categories of 'personal care practices'; 'language and reasoning'; 'preschool activities'; 'organisation and routines' and 'adults working together'. Only the category 'social interaction' achieved a total score of just above 'minimal', still falling short of 'good' (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 6, pp13-16).

1.2.3 Playgroup staff pay

Despite the changes in qualifications needed to run or assist in preschools, and despite some increases to pay since the state funding of places, the non-professional 'qualified amateur' status of playgroup staff (Bruner, 1980, p14) is still reflected in pay. At the time of data collection for this study, PLA guidelines suggested staff pay should be not less than £20 per 2 ½ hour session for the leader and £15 for trained helpers. Preparation and clearing up time was unpaid.

1.2.4 Playgroup locations and facilities

In 1992, the Department of Health reported that nationwide, about two-thirds of playgroups met in village, community or church halls and the remainder used a variety of premises, including sports clubs (3%), guide or scout halls (2%) or even private homes (2%) (DoH, 1992). About 10% benefited from the luxury of permanent premises, such as a classroom in the grounds of a primary school. Consequently, in approximately 80% of all playgroups, all equipment had to be set up and cleared away for each session. The EPPE study has shown playgroups to have the lowest rating of all preschool settings for 'space and furnishings' (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 6).

1.2.5 Playgroups: a British phenomenon

The role of playgroups and the sessional nature of early years provision is a purely British phenomenon:

> The United Kingdom is unique in depending so heavily in its provision for children over three on playgroups, early admission to primary school and a 'shift system' for nursery education.   (Moss, P. in Ball, 1994, p113)

Many other European countries have developed widespread state-funded facilities for children aged three to compulsory school age, offering part or full-time facilities. The disparity in provision between Britain and our nearest neighbour France makes a striking contrast. The French have long been clear both about the potential benefits of early years education and the state's responsibility to provide and finance facilities. In 1989 the *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Education* decreed all children aged 3-5 had the right to a place in an *ecole maternelle* (separate nursery school) or *classe enfantine* (class integrated in an elementary school). In rural areas where attendance was low, *ecoles maternelles intercommunales* were established, and in sparsely populated areas, *equipes mobiles d'animation et de liaison academique (EMALA)* were introduced. As a consequence, almost all 3,4

and 5 year olds attend pre-compulsory education. The *communes* (local authorities) manage pre-elementary institutions, but the *Republique* is responsible for the provision of premises and facilities, staff, salaries, educational content and inspection. Staff must have qualified teacher status *du premier degre* (primary and pre-primary), with both theoretical and practical training, and are supported by qualified nursery assistants. Although delivered by teachers, the 1995 curriculum emphasises the development of sensitivity, creativity and imagination through socialising and exploration, with a strong emphasis on language development.

Globally, many countries have developed innovative early years provision. Unfortunately, there is not scope within this thesis to give details, but Appendix 1.2 outlines the facilities available in some developed countries.

1.3 Preschool childcare or education?

> The aim of the Government's early years policy is to provide a comprehensive range of services for young children. This includes integrated early years education and childcare provision which will make a positive contribution to children's early development, enabling them to build on this foundation throughout their lives, so providing a sound basis for lifelong learning. High quality care and education for young children will give parents peace of mind and help them to balance their work and family lives. (DfEE, 1999a, p4)

In contrast to post WW2 fears of child neglect, in recent years there has been a clear political implication that children in preschool care are getting something over and above what parents or carers at home provide, particularly in terms of learning and social skills thought necessary for success in later life. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the evidence base for these assertions is questionable, but in the political rhetoric the immediate and long-term effectiveness of preschool education has come to be presented as a given.

Also explicit in the political rhetoric, as exemplified by the quotation above, is that there are two aspects to early years:

1. the provision of positive, safe and happy childcare, so parents can manage their domestic lives and/or return to work.
2. the nurturing of social and learning skills as preparation for school and lifelong learning.

However, the blanket assumptions behind the political rhetoric mask the fact that the goals of helping mothers return to work and those of educating young children are very different. Schemes that help one may not be ideal for fostering the other. As Anning (2000b) discusses in her study of lone parents, balancing the demands of parenthood and work creates pressures for children as well as parents, particularly when the only available facilities are sessional, which, as discussed in Section 1.1 above, is often the case. Rather than finding 'joined up services', Anning found committed lone mothers laden with feelings of guilt and inadequacy as they either juggled working hours to fit available care, or juggled their children from one care setting to another to fit working hours.

These issues raise fundamental questions about access to quality early years provision. Which settings in England come closest to providing 'quality' care and education, and how can these be defined? Using ECERS-E to measure quality (see Section 1.2.2 above), EPPE's interim report (DfEE, 1999b) found that LEA centres, nursery schools, nursery classes attached to primary schools and nursery schools, which combine education with care, ranked as 'good' to 'excellent'. Social services day care centres mostly ranked as 'good', whilst playgroups and private day nurseries ranked as minimal/adequate. For full day care, only LEA nursery schools that had changed from 'education only' to full day care with high parental involvement scored highly. Adding 'education' to more care-oriented settings was not associated with higher quality.

Key factors to 'quality' appeared to be staff training and resources, particularly cash. The EPPE findings imply that England is far from achieving comprehensive, good quality early years provision with flexible hours:

> …care-oriented provision usually offers the lowest salaries to staff,
> employs workers with the lowest levels of qualifications, and has limited
> access to training and higher staff turnover. We found that provision above
> the 'minimal' level was concentrated in well-resourced centres.
>
> (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 6a, p20)

1.4 Changes in early years policy

1.4.1 Government responses to early years pressures

As discussed, in the past, political rhetoric praising the merits of parental choice has masked successive governments' failure to plan, provide and resource a nationwide, coherent service for preschool care and education, in terms of settings, staffing, early years curriculum and pedagogy and care facilities for working parents. As Pugh comments:

> With such a range of arguments, it is no wonder that it has been possible to
> ignore the voices altogether. (Pugh, 1994, p3)

However, particularly since the late 1980s, the multiple voices have been calling harmoniously and loudly enough to focus Conservative and Labour governments' attention on the provision of preschool education and care facilities. Some of these voices have emanated from influential reports, such as: the *House of Commons Select Committee* (1989) arguing for an increase in nursery education and against school entry at age four; *Starting with Quality* (DES, 1990), where the Rumbold Committee highlighted the poor quality of provision for 3 and 4 year olds in diverse settings; the Equal Opportunities Commission's *The Key to Real Choice* (1990) calling for a National Daycare Development Agency under the aegis of the DES; the National Commission on Education's *Learning to Succeed* (1991), which prioritised the need to expand nursery education; and the Royal Society of Arts Report *Start Right* (Ball, 1994) again arguing for the provision of nursery education for 3-5 year olds and raising the age of school entry to 6.

These reports have coincided with pressures from a large body of national and international research findings (discussed in Chapter 3) coupled with changes in legislation, such as The Children's Act (1989). The principles underpinning this act have impacted on attitudes towards and provision for young children, particularly in their emphasis on:

o the importance of responding to a child's racial, cultural, linguistic and religious background

o the importance of working in partnership with parents

o the need to focus on children's needs

o the need for better coordination between professionals in the provision of services.

These mounting pressures have led to the early years sector becoming a government priority, and the wheels of an ambitious plan for 'joined up' services have been set in motion. For example, the *Second Chances* document (DfEE, 2000) detailed the range and estimated costs of childcare for parents wishing to retrain and/or return to work, and the National Childcare Strategy (1997) stated the government's intentions to link local authority, private and voluntary sectors, to increase the number of available early years places, to raise the standards of provision and to standardize and raise the level of qualifications needed by practitioners. Some initiatives to carry out this work have included the development of Early Excellence Centres and the creation of the Childcare Information Service. Under the auspices of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (DfEE, 2001, formerly Early Years Development Partnerships, 1997), local authorities have a statutory duty to integrate childcare and education and to ensure adequate provision of nursery education within their area, and the Sure Start initiative (Sure Start, 2002) supports a wide range of local programmes, designed to improve services for families with children under four in areas of social need.

Furthermore, in order to monitor early years provision and raise standards, a new Early Years Directorate has been created at the Offices for Standards in Education (OFSTED), with 14 minimum standards to be monitored and inspected.

1.4.2 The creation of an early years curriculum

The links between primary school and preschool were officially fused through the creation of Desirable Learning Outcomes in 1996 (DfEE, 1996), followed by Early Learning Goals (DfEE, 1999a) and Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (CGFS) (DfEE/QCA, 2000), which incorporated and expanded upon the Early Learning Goals, creating a curriculum for children aged 3-5, from preschool through to the end of Reception Year in primary school. This curriculum was later supported by Planning for Learning in the Foundation Stage (DfES, 2001b) in response to requests from practitioners for advice on how to plan for the CGFS.

The CGFS takes a broadly socio-cultural view of learning (discussed in Chapter 2), with an 'emergent' and 'cognitively oriented' approach (DfES, 2002, p13) that emphasises learning through play and exploration. Clear learning objectives are set out in the form of colour-coded 'stepping stones', which indicate a linear progression, where 'it is likely that most three-year-old children in the foundation stage will be better described by earlier stepping stones shown in the yellow band, while the later stepping stones shown in the green band will usually reflect the attainment of five-year-old children' (DfEE/QCA, 2000, p27).

The learning objectives are underpinned by 12 'Principles for Early Years Education' (see Appendix 1.3) with guidance on 'putting the principles into practice' (DfEE/QCA, 2000, p12-16). In summary, the principles expect practitioners to: deliver 'a relevant curriculum' through their understanding of young children's physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth; ensure all children feel included and valued; help children build on their existing knowledge by providing a stimulating environment and responding 'appropriately' to children to engage and extend their learning; observe and assess children's performance to ensure the provision of challenging yet achievable adult and child-led activities; work with parents and finally, provide 'high quality care and education'.

It is too soon to assess the long-term impact of this new curriculum. However, Anning (2000a) proposes that early years settings, particularly those emanating

from a tradition of care, have been 'colonised' by education through the requirement to provide evidence of delivery of the curriculum. Whereas historically many care-oriented settings focussed on children's social/emotional and language development, there has become a growing trend to promote literacy and numeracy in early years settings.

Research conducted into the new 'Framework for Good Practice' in Scotland (SCCC, 1999) has found through practitioner interviews that although the new Scottish curriculum had influenced planning and documentation, the recording of children's progress and practitioner expectations of inspection, only the most experienced staff translated the curriculum into effective everyday practice (Stephen et al, 2001). These issues relating to the delivery of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, combined with the diversity of training experienced by practitioners as discussed in Sections 1.1 and 1.2, raise questions about the development and interpretation of early years pedagogy.

1.4.3 Early years pedagogy

The House of Commons Select Committee (2001) Report distinguishes between 'curriculum', viewed as the knowledge, skills and values children are intended to learn, and 'teaching'. In the CGFS specific references are made to 'effective teaching and learning' (eg DfEE/QCA, 2000, p5), but definitions of what these consist of are imprecise. For example, 'effective learning' is defined as:

- o children initiating activities that promote learning
- o children learning through movement and all their senses
- o children having time to explore ideas and interests in depth
- o children feeling secure
- o children learning in different ways and at different rates
- o children making links in their learning
- o creative and imaginative play activities that promote the development and use of language

(abbreviated bullet points from DfEE/QCA, 2000, p20-21)

'Teaching' is defined broadly in the introductory paragraphs of CGFS:

> To help practitioners in **teaching**, the guidance identifies:
> 'What does the practitioner need to do?', showing how practitioners can
> both support and consolidate … learning and help children make good
> progress towards, and where appropriate beyond, the early learning goals.'
>
> (DfEE/QCA, 2000, p5)

Within the body of the curriculum, each 'stepping stone' includes specific advice on how the practitioner should support the learning objectives by following the Principles for Early Years Education (Appendix 1.3). However, the FSCG guidance does not clarify how children learn 'in different ways' or 'through movement and their senses'. In the absence of a clear pedagogy, it is little wonder that so many practitioners focus on areas of knowledge where they feel more secure, such as the teaching of literacy and numeracy, as noted by Anning (2000a). Further explanations for this tendency can also be found in the top-down effects of the introduction of early years assessment.

1.4.4 The introduction of early years assessment

In line with the formal assessment of Key Stages 1 and 2 in the National Curriculum, from September 1998, Baseline Assessment (accredited by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA) became a statutory requirement for all state-maintained primary schools. This assessment took place within the first seven weeks of primary school with children aged between 4years 1month - 5years 1month, depending on the child's season of birth, the date of administration of the test and on the local authority's policy on school entry. [1]

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[1] Since the early 1990s, many LEAs have returned to promoting primary school single entry in September. Some authorities, and some schools within single entry authorities, allow children to join primary school either in September or in the term of their fifth birthday. In Hampshire, justification for single entry was based partly on the supposed educational merits for children and partly on the benefits for working parents, but also reflected funding pressures. (Hampshire County Council, 1999, pp22-23).

Baseline Assessment gave a 'snapshot' of each child, based on each child's abilities to listen, understand and respond to the class teacher. However, rather than introducing a single, national Baseline Assessment, 91 QCA accredited schemes emerged, along with the argument that local variation was necessary to ensure a match between schemes and local provision of services. Although some standardisation was ensured through QCA accreditation, comparability between schemes was problematic.

Furthermore, Baseline Assessment served various purposes and was 'not merely of interest as a means of assessing young children, it also represents an example of government policies which have multiple purposes and lead to contradictions in practice' (Lindsay and Lewis, 2003, p149). Lindsay and Lewis' nationwide survey, random sampling and case studies of schools in16 LEAs, identified two main competing purposes:

- o *Pedagogic aims*, including early identification of SEN, monitoring of all pupils and the setting of targets and learning strategies.
- o *Managerial aims*, including budget determination, resource planning, value-added analysis, school improvement and performance management.

With regard to pedagogic aims, one of the most widespread uses of baseline was in the grouping of children according to ability, which, given that younger children tended to score less highly than older members of the class, led to clear links between Baseline Assessment and early labelling. The system further disadvantaged children who took longer to settle in the new school environment, or who were reluctant to talk in their new environment.

When used for value-added and managerial aims the issues became more problematic. Whilst for formative purposes, it was better to delay assessment, for summative purposes, the greatest advantage lay in early assessment. Baseline Assessment could be linked to Performance Management, and head teachers

recognised that reception class teachers might use children's progress to support their arguments for threshold payment (Lindsay and Lewis, 2003, p159). As Torrance (2003, p171) proposes, early years teachers would have reason to suppress scores in order to demonstrate maximum value-added at Key Stage 1.

Inevitably, the top-down effects of assessment on entry to primary school soon became visible in preschool practices. The Project Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) analysed 35,000 test scripts from a Baseline Assessment Scheme used in 3,500 schools (1.5% of primaries) and found that more than 25% of children could write their name compared with only 10% in the previous cohort, indicating that parents and preschools were teaching children specific skills to achieve higher Baseline scores (Stout et al, 2000).

Globally, systematic assessment of children in the early years is rare. Where national schemes exist, as for example, in New Zealand, their focus is pedagogic rather than managerial (Wilkinson and Napuk, 1997). Contentious debate about Baseline Assessment contributed to the rapid development and introduction of an alternative scheme in the form of the Foundation Stage Profile, introduced in 2002. This is completed by the class teacher towards the end of Foundation Stage/ end of Reception Year, based on the teacher's accumulated knowledge of the child. The Profile is very detailed, aims to be child-oriented, and includes small sections for comments from the child's 'previous settings' and from the outcome of teacher discussion with the child and parents (DfES/QCA, 2003, p2). As the Profile was introduced in the academic year 2002-2003, details of its success are as yet scanty. However, early reports indicate that it is far from universally popular with Reception class teachers (Neill, 2003), with many resenting the increase on their workload inherent in a new scheme and sceptical of the usefulness of the detail contained in the profile. Although no longer statutory, over two thirds of teachers surveyed continued to use Baseline Assessment as a measure of children's performance on entry to school, in addition to the statutory completion of the Profile.

1.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have outlined how in post WWII Britain, fears of child neglect and lack of state commitment fed into ambivalence towards preschool education, leaving a lingering divide between care and education that remained singularly impervious to changing theories on child development and changing attitudes towards woman's role in society. The current diversity in provision and training, ranging from education provided by teachers in nursery schools to care provided by nursery nurses or childminders in the home, continues to reflect this polarity. Former governments have repeatedly excused the lack of early years provision by citing British values for individuality, the need to respect the different needs of local communities and, occasionally, confessing that adequate funds to provide for early years were simply not available.

Other developed countries have found national, state-funded, effective and original solutions to early years provision, but, until the Children Act (1989), combined with mounting pressures from research, early years provision in Britain remained heavily dependent on private and voluntary sectors, with a consequent lack of standard training in underpaid and undervalued work.

Major changes introduced in more recent years, such as the phased in funding of provision for 3 and 4 year olds, the QCA standardisation of preschool training, the creation of an early years curriculum and Ofsted inspections, represent a move towards a more consistent level of services and a long awaited recognition of the importance of this early stage in a child's development.

However, despite these far-reaching changes, the Foundation Stage Curriculum continues to be provided in a wide range of settings, by differently trained staff and without the support of a well-developed pedagogy that reflects empirical research into the diverse ways that children learn. The policies do not yet seem to have converted effectively into contextualized practice. Worryingly, research has found an increase in the explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy skills,

attributed partly to under-qualified staff interpretations of the curriculum, and partly to the top-down pressures exerted by the introduction of early years assessment schemes. I have outlined how this shift in early years practice is symptomatic of socio-historic ambiguity in Britain towards the early years. In Chapter 2, I review theories of learning that underpin the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and lay out the theoretical foundations for this study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Theory is always constructed, embedded and interpreted in particular sociocultural contexts, where views within disciplines vary over time and location. In the 20th century, early years research straddled different disciplines and was dominated by psychological studies of child development, how children learn and the role of language in learning and linguistic approaches to child language development. This chapter briefly discusses how these different theoretical approaches are reflected in current understandings of early years learning and then constructs the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 3 reviews in more detail research into young children's language development and learning.

2.2 A brief overview of theoretical approaches to learning

Greeno et al (1996) propose there are currently three general views of learning and knowing that feed into the planning and delivery of education in the Western world: empiricist, cognitive and situative/socio-historic. To this I add a fourth category, defined broadly in this thesis as poststructural/ postmodern, which here refers to theoretical approaches that derive largely from the works of Foucault (1980, 1982, 1984), investigate the contingency of 'reality' and question the assumptions inherent in any knowledge claims. As Thomas proposes:

> The critical potential of postmodernism lies in its subversion of conventional ways of thinking and its ability to force re-examination of what we think is real … its strength is in pointing out what we do not know.
>
> (Thomas, 1993, pp25-26)

From an empiricist stance, learning is a process of the transfer of skills, knowledge and associations from one person to another or by one person from one situation to another, where learning can be strengthened through reinforcement and repetition. This transmission model of learning has dominated Western education provision (Graddol, 1994) and in education policy and practice has validated functional approaches to literacy and numeracy where it is assumed that specific skills can be taught through the direct and uninterrupted transfer of knowledge from a teacher to a passive learner.

In Chapter 1, Sections 1.4.2 – 1.4.4, I discussed how an increase in the teaching of specific literacy and numeracy skills, such as letters and numbers, has been noted in early years settings, driven partly by pressures for evidence of performance in the current British educational climate. Whilst these functional, empiricist approaches to learning are not cited in the early years curriculum, in the absence of alternative direction on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills to very young children, they do appear to be evident in early years 'common sense' practice.

A cognitive approach to learning emphasises the development of general cognitive abilities, such as language and concept development, and the active construction of knowledge by individuals during their encounters with the physical worlds around them. From this perspective, typified in the works of Piaget (eg Piaget, 1962, Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) and reflected in the Plowden Report (1967), learning is viewed as an individually centred process, where the interest of the individual must be aroused for cognitive development to occur.

A situative/socio-historic approach emphasises the social nature of learning, as proposed by theorists such as Vygotsky (1962, 1967, 1978), Bruner (1983,1986a), Rogoff (1989, 1990) and Wood (1988), who have drawn attention to how the construction of knowledge is influenced by others through the interpretation of others' intentions as expressed in action and speech. Mirroring theoretical progression in this field, the links between talk and learning have become evident in education policy and curricula such as the Bullock Report (1975), the National Oracy Project (Norman, 1992), the Early Learning Goals (DfEE, 1999a) and Foundation Stage Curriculum (DfEE /QCA, 2000).

Sociocultural approaches have not emerged in isolation from theory development in other disciplines. For example, with their roots in literary criticism, the works of Bakhtin have highlighted how individual 'voices' are socially constructed (Bakhtin, 1986). Post-structural approaches have further broadened the view of what 'voice' consists of, blurring the boundaries between language and non-language, exploring the complexities of how individuals position themselves and are positioned by others as language users and how language, learning and identity are seamlessly entwined.

The theoretical framework for this thesis focuses on constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning, including the residual influences of Piaget and interpretations of the works of Vygotsky implied in the Early Learning Goals (DfEE, 1999a) and Foundation Stage Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 2000). The framework also includes post-structural approaches as theoretical tools for investigating the complex links between language, learning and identity.

2.3 Learning through exploration: the influence of Piaget

In post-Plowden primary and early years' settings the influence of Jean Piaget revolutionised children's education and, as this section discusses, continues to impact upon early years practice. Working in the field of developmental psychology, Piaget

developed a theory of mind based on the premise that children's thinking was organised in groups of logical operations through which children actively constructed and then tested their knowledge of the world by interacting with physical objects, transforming action into thought (Piaget, 1969).

Piaget's observations and analyses led him to conclude that cognitive development progressed from simple to more complex systems of logical operation through four maturational stages following an invariant course of logical progression. These stages he named: sensori-motor, up to about 18 months; pre-operational, up to 7-8 years; concrete operational, 8+ years, where the child still needed the identity of a physical object with which to interact and internalise thought; and formal operational, where a child or adult could act and interact with abstract thoughts (Piaget, 1969). Piaget's emphasis on the stage-like nature of cognitive development led to notions of 'readiness' and that children could only learn if they were at the right 'stage' of cognitive development.

With regard to the role of language in learning, Piaget believed that early language acquisition had to wait for cognitive developments in the first 18 months of life. Thus language development was a *reflection* of general cognitive development (Piaget, 1926). From his studies of children up to the age of 8, Piaget concluded that the 'pre-operational' child was essentially egocentric and incapable of seeing others' perspectives. Mutual understanding and reciprocity did not emerge until the child began to operate 'concretely'. For Piaget, this logical account explained why young children playing together often engaged in 'collective monologues' rather than true dialogue (Wood, 1988, p29).

From a Piagetian perspective, cognitive growth resulted from the disequilibrium between assimilation – where encounters with the world fitted into existing mental structures – and accommodation – where the existing mental structures changed to accommodate new encounters (Bruner, 1997). Thus young children tended to

assimilate rather than accommodate what another person said, often distorting the meaning to fit their previous knowledge, so the impact of language on a child was limited to what that child could assimilate, and what the child could assimilate was determined by the structure and stage of the child's cognitive development. In his later works, Piaget began to recognise that talking to others could help children restructure their knowledge by provoking thought, discussion or argument (Piaget, 1962).

Whilst proposing that learning was *triggered* by a disequilibrium between a child's new experience and previous knowledge or skills, Piaget also noted that learning was *motivated* by affect and by the child's interest, which could be a spontaneous reaction of curiosity to a new phenomenon or could be influenced by adults and peers and the child's relationship to them. This aspect of Piaget's work, which outlines the importance of social and emotional factors in learning, has been largely neglected (DeVries, 1997). The main thrust of his work continued to view the role of others in learning as no more than a potential challenge to a child's existing logical operations by proposing different possible operations. How the dynamics of disequilibrium caused the growth of mind was never clear in his account, nor was how children came to know others' minds through negotiation, instruction and enculturation:

> In consequence of this lack of clarity, the *causes* of growth in Piagetian theory seem chronically under-specified, though the *invariant direction* of that growth seemed clear enough. The theory, in consequence, has become more a *theory of the direction of growth* than of *the causes of growth*.
>
> (Bruner, 1997, p66)

In the world of education, Piaget's theories were interpreted as implying that the role of the educator was to *facilitate* the child's naturally active capacity to learn through the exploration of physical objects. The notion of readiness led to the belief that children can only learn effectively if their educational experiences match their stage

30

of understanding, and that due to their egocentrism and undeveloped logical operations, children learn best by discovering things for themselves rather than by being taught:

> Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered himself, the child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.
>
> (Piaget, 1970, cited by Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p37)

Walkerdine (1984) argues that the operational structures and stages identified by Piaget as being within the child, were in fact in the instruments of analysis of developmental psychology, where the developing child is viewed as an object with certain capacities located within the psyche. Piaget's experiments were mostly carried out in laboratory-like settings, where, as Donaldson (1978, p24) pointed out, the tasks set the children were stripped of all 'human sense' and ignored the social and cultural contexts of children's learning and performance. Conducting the same tasks in more meaningful settings, Donaldson found that very young children were adept at recognising others' viewpoints. The instruments and apparatuses of developmental psychology appeared to have restricted a more social view of learning:

> It is axiomatic to developmental psychology that there exist a set of empirically demonstrable foundations for its claims to truth about the psychological development of young children. … the problem in assuming that the way out of dilemmas about the possibility of both a liberatory pedagogy and a 'social' developmental psychology is in the limit-conditions of the project of developmental psychology itself.
>
> (Walkerdine, 1984, p154)

The power-knowledge relations inherent in the regimes of truth of Piagetian developmental psychology not only produced the classification and monitoring of

31

child development as a science, but validated scientifically a transformed pedagogy, thus bringing about the sedimentation of the historical conditions of developmental psychology in the set of 'taken-for-granted' child-centred practices that continue to exist (Walkerdine, 1984, p164). In Foucault's terminology, Walkerdine's critique illustrates how Piaget's theories of learning have entered into 'le savoir des gens'[1], that is, in localised knowledges brought into play by individuals in their daily lives.

The extent to which Piagetian theory has continued to influence early years education is difficult to over-estimate. Certainly, the Foundation Stage Curriculum recognises the importance of stimulating environments that children can explore, actively learning through first hand experience while playing. Graue and Walsh protest that Piagetian pedagogy 'continues to exhibit remarkable persistence in the face of a growing body of disconfirming evidence' (Graue and Walsh, 1998, p2). Historically, there has been in playgroups a tradition of allowing children to explore and discover freely in unstructured play (Sylva et al, 1980). When compared to education-led preschool settings, playgroups continue to offer less structured teaching with fewer opportunities to develop language and reasoning skills (DfEE, 1999b).

In education, the biggest challenge to Piaget has emerged from the works of Vygotsky, who, although also with a background in psychology, was writing at a time of revolutionary political activism in Soviet Russia and viewed social interaction through talk as central to learning.

2.4 Learning through talk: the influence of Vygotsky

Whereas Piaget viewed the learning process as a lone voyage of discovery, with the child rather than the teacher at the helm, Vygotsky's account stressed the social, verbally interactive context of development. Although Vygotsky's works were first

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[1] Translated as 'popular knowledge' (Foucault, 1976, cited in Kelly, 1994, p21)

published in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, they were not translated into English until the 1960s and '70s, long after his death in 1934, and after Piaget's theories had been translated into everyday reality in post-Plowden British education. Vygotsky's theories provided an alternative framework for teaching and learning that stimulated new attitudes towards the role of teachers. For Vygotsky, the very process of using words to express ideas focuses attention, requires analysis and synthesis and consequently helps concept formation. Language therefore *constructs* rather than *reflects* cognitive development:

> …children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands.   (Vygotsky 1978, p26)

These theories are clearly reflected in the Foundation Stage Curriculum:

> Children deepen their understanding by playing, talking, observing, planning, questioning, experimenting, testing, repeating, reflecting and responding to adults and to each other.   (DfEE/QCA, 2000, p6)

Whilst Piaget's theories had tended to imply that the child was capable of creating a conceptual world from scratch (Nicolopoulou, 1993), Vygotsky proposed that children appropriate the conceptual resources of the cultural world they are born into. From this perspective, psychological development is a process of gradual internalisation proceeding from the social (*interpersonal*) to the individual (*intrapersonal*), where both interpersonal and intrapersonal processes must be experienced for learning to take place. At the interpersonal level, the learner's understanding is hazy. At the intrapersonal level the learner tries to make sense of the knowledge and connect it to what he or she already knows (Vygotsky, 1978, p57). To accomplish this, the learner is reliant on the support of either an adult or more knowledgeable peer to guide and share the problem-solving, with the child taking the initiative but supported by the more knowledgeable other when necessary. Finally,

the child takes control and the 'teacher' steps back to assume the role of sympathetic supporter. In this way, the child becomes more familiar with new concepts until they eventually become incorporated into the child's repertoire of understandings.

The implications of this approach for pedagogy rest upon intersubjectivity and the quality of the interaction between 'teacher' and child, with learning progressing from imitation and instruction to independence:

> In learning to speak, as in learning school subjects, imitation is indispensable. What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions. (Vygotsky, 1962, p18)

Vygotsky emphasised that for learning to occur, an adult must be sensitive to individual children's existing level of competence and assist them through their *actual* level of development in order to realise their *potential* level of development. For every aspect of learning, there is a period of time when teaching is most fruitful because the child is most receptive at that stage (Vygotsky, 1962). Montessori called this the *sensitive period*, a term used in biology to describe the periods in ontogenetic development when the organism is particularly responsive to certain stimuli (Vygotsky, 1962, p189). The biological term refers to specific periods of *time* in development, but Vygotsky coined the phrase *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) to refer to the *distance* between what a child can do on his or her own and what the child can do with competent assistance:

> … the zone of proximal development … is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.
>
> (Vygotsky, 1978, p86)

Given that in a Vygotskian frame, the interaction is chiefly mediated through talk, what the child internalises are the meanings and forms generated in verbal exchanges that are themselves sociocultural and historical products. Learning is therefore both culturally saturated and transformative: the gradual internalisation of speech leads to the appropriation of sociocultural values and higher levels of thinking, and the child's intellectual growth is contingent on the mastery of the social means of thought, that is, language (Vygotsky, 1962, p94). In this process, learning depends on a principled concordance between the learner's capabilities and what the culture offers, a person in the culture who can sense what the learner needs and deliver it and shared agreement about how this intersubjective arrangement is supposed to work canonically in a particular culture (Tomasello et al, 1993).

Due to Vygotsky's untimely death from tuberculosis, his theories remained sketchy in parts and largely untested in practical fieldwork (Bruner, 1985). However, his ideas have been scrutinised, adapted and adopted by many subsequent theorists and have forged new attitudes in education towards the role of talk in learning.

2.5 Vygotskian theories of language and learning in practice

To investigate how Vygotsky's ZPD could be applied in a teaching situation, Wood et al (1976) conducted a series of experiments to show how a sensitive adult can structure and support a child's learning. Their studies incorporated tasks that, according to Piaget's account of infant development, pre-operational children could not complete, investigating whether, with sensitive help from their mothers, young children could learn to construct a pyramid of 21 wooden blocks with an assortment of pegs and holes. To complete the task, children had to learn how to co-ordinate each block's size, type of peg or hole, and position the blocks in a size-ordered series of levels. None of the children completed the task without help, but some as young as three were able to if the mothers offered sensitive, 'contingent' assistance, that is, if they responded to the child by changing the level of control depending on their

assessment of the child's ability to proceed. Overall, Wood et al identified six adult techniques that were associated with the children's successful completion of the task:

- *recruiting* the child's interest
- *reducing the degrees of freedom* to simplify the task by breaking it into sets of sub-routines which the child can master
- *maintaining direction* by showing enthusiasm and sympathy to keep a child in pursuit of a particular objective, and encouraging the child to take the next step
- *marking critical features* by highlighting features of the task that are relevant so the child can learn to discriminate between correct and incorrect construction
- *controlling frustration* by making the problem solving less stressful, but without creating too much dependency on the tutor
- *demonstrating* solutions to a task in the expectation that the learner will then imitate the tutor.

Wood et al (1976) coined the term 'scaffolding' to describe the process of contingent, graduated assistance. This approach is reflected in the Foundation Stage Curriculum through repeated reference to 'appropriate intervention' and through guidance that practitioners 'must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by a knowledge of how children develop and learn and a clear understanding of possible next steps in their development and learning' (see Appendix 1.3).

Wood et al (1976) showed how the breach between what a child is actually capable of and potentially capable of is narrowed by good quality interaction with a more able person, choosing the children's mothers to support their learning through the complex and demanding processes of scaffolding that required high levels of trust and intersubjectivity. Bruner (1996) discusses how in an educational setting, where there is inevitably a power/knowledge imbalance between teacher and child, it is incumbent

on the teacher to understand what the child already knows, to ensure the child is familiar and comfortable with the discourse and format of the activity, and to maintain collaboration and negotiation, despite the asymmetrical nature of the relationship.

Edwards and Mercer (1987) and Edwards and Knight (1994) researched changes in classroom practice as a result of Vygotskian theory, particularly regarding the role of the teacher, moving away from the Piagetian model of overseeing a large number of learners and towards the use of scaffolding in classroom contexts initially to guide small groups, then monitor them less closely until they are able to use the acquired language and ideas in a variety of situations. Yet the principles of scaffolding, which are based on mothers guiding individual children through their various ZPDs in dyadic interaction, are difficult to apply in classroom situations, partly due to the staff/child ratio, but also because the teacher rather than the child usually initiates task-based activities, so there is no assurance that the activity falls within individual children's ZPD. Edwards and Mercer (1987) suggested that learning which is pre-planned and teacher-led runs the risk of being ritualistic rather than principled, where children go through the motions of completing the tasks they are set, but with no final handover of knowledge. Even spontaneous contributions that children make are still influenced by teacher control, as the topic is set by the teacher, and the teacher controls whether the child's contribution is taken up or not.

However, Rowland (1987) and Mercer (1994) have suggested that scaffolding in a group situation can work if teachers adopt a democratic teaching style and allow the synergy of a learning group to develop, where children are able to see the reasons for learning, and are free to experiment with and talk about tasks. The resulting learning is a cyclical process of invention and rediscovery mediated through contingent talk.

Furthermore, children can and do learn without scaffolding, albeit less effectively or efficiently. For instance, with specific reference to the development of speaking and

listening skills, Lloyd suggests that as children are often inadequately scaffolded in the classroom, they have to learn autonomous ways of processing verbal information and solving problems. Left to their own devices in this way, children's speaking and listening skills develop but can be variable and often inadequate (Lloyd, 1994).

Rogoff (1990) adapted the notion of scaffolding to create a broader concept of 'guided participation', taking into account how different adults support children's learning, providing a bridge between familiar and unfamiliar skills, arranging and structuring problem solving and gradually handing over knowledge or skills:

> In guided participation, children are involved with multiple companions and caregivers in organized, flexible webs of relationships that focus on shared cultural activities…(which) provides children with opportunities to participate in diverse roles.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Rogoff, 1990, pp97-98)

For Rogoff, intellectual development is a process of 'cognitive apprenticeship', where young children do not simply follow the guidance offered by adults or peers, but are active in their quest for knowledge, often seeking and even demanding the sometimes unwitting help of those around them to solve all manner of problems, and using verbal and non-verbal interactions as tools for their apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1989). The younger the children, the more they use and look for non-verbal cues:

> Young children are so skilled in obtaining information from glances, winces, and mood that one of the greatest challenges of testing preschoolers is to avoid nonverbal actions that may be construed as cues.
> 　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Rogoff, 1989, p73)

With regard to classroom practice, Wertsch (1991) picks up on the importance of interpersonal relations in Vygotsky's sociocultural model of learning and questions the validity and relevance of isolating 'cognition' from other mental processes,

proposing a more holistic approach to 'mind' that includes self and emotion in the processes of learning.

Cross-cultural research has illustrated how Vygotskian approaches can be applied to children learning through forms of communication other than talk. For example, research by Kearins (1981) on aboriginal children's visual spatial memory found they used extremely effective non-verbal strategies to note and then recreate an arrangement of coloured cards. When compared to European 'white' Australian children (Kearins, 1986), who used mostly verbal strategies, the aboriginal children outperformed their 'white' compatriots. Similarly, in their observations of learning in a Mayan Indian town, a tribal village in India, middle-class urban Turkey and middle-class urban North America, Rogoff, Mistry and Mosier (1993) found different cultural values regarding literacy, academic discourse and 'interpersonal coordination'. In the Mayan and Indian settings, the children played alongside adults, learning to participate in adult activities through 'active observation' (Rogoff et al, 1993, p157), where adults actively managed the children's keen attention through demonstration rather than direct instruction, which in turn promoted their understandings of complex social events and skilled practices. In the middle class Turkish and North American homes, where the children were segregated from adult activity, learning was 'managed' by the adult using instructive discourse to negotiate structured learning events. These socially and historically situated practices were equally valid and effective, but what was emphasised in one culture was rarely seen in the other, leading Rogoff et al to conclude that 'combining the approaches of both cultures would improve the processes of children's learning' (Rogoff et al, 1993, p165).

Dyson (1993) also adopts a broad approach to symbol making, including words, pictures, movement or any tangible form that human intention can infuse with meaning and suggests that by using diverse symbols, children join with others in their communities to share the same 'imaginative universe' or 'worlds of possibility'

(Dyson, 1993, p23). This is in line with Geertz's proposal (1983) that people who share a culture share 'local knowledge', including similar ways of imbuing meaning into sounds, movement and drawings.

These cross-cultural studies illustrate how dominant theories of child development and education have emerged in narrow socio-economic contexts and reflect an ethnocentric bias behind Vygotskian approaches to learning through talk, mirroring Vygotsky's own background of personal tuition in a Jewish family where debate was highly valued (Wertsch, 1991). Thus context-specific cultural accounts have come to 'masquerade as universal statements' (Woodhead, 1999, p9) about what is 'normal' or 'appropriate'.

Whether through sensitive and contingent talk, through observation or through non-verbal cues, a sociocultural perspective implies that understanding and learning are not abstract, self-contained processes occurring in isolated psyches, but are embedded in socioculturally situated contexts. Not only do the different communicative practices of observation, imitation and talk shape learning, but learning in turn also shapes the mind (Bruner, 1996). If learning is socioculturally situated, then it must also be heavily imbued with the transfer of canonical sociocultural values as part of social interaction. If there are Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1962) during which capable others can aid learning through scaffolding (Wood et al, 1976) or guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) using speech or action that is heavily endowed with cultural meanings, then as Bruner (1986a) suggests, the individual is vulnerable to cultural and political manipulation during the process of learning. Here, the insights of poststructural theorists offer new tools with which to interpret the dynamic relationships between language, power, learning and identity.

2.6 Language, power, learning and identity

2.6.1 Discursive practices, voice and identity

Hymes argued for the study of ethnographies of communication to reflect how language is situated in the 'flux and pattern of communicative events'. By emphasising the social nature of discourse, Hymes implied that acquiring 'communicative competence' in speech communities, with their particular ways of approaching and enacting the world, is an educative and formative process:

> Membership in a speech community consists in sharing one or more of its ways of speaking – that is, not in knowledge of a speech style (or any other purely linguistic entity, such as a language) alone, but in terms of knowledge of appropriate use as well. (Hymes, 1996, p33)

For Lave and Wenger (1991), the concept of community is crucial for understanding how knowledge is located in the lived world. Their interpretation of a community of practice does not imply well-defined, socially visible boundaries, but implies participation in an activity system within which participants share understandings about what they are doing:

> A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p98)

The practices of a community create a broad curriculum for newcomers, who, as legitimate peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the 'community' is about. In this apprenticeship model of learning, legitimate peripheral participants can learn both through asymmetrical master-apprentice relations and through peers and near peers through the circulation of information and through the observation and imitation of practices. An extended period of 'legitimate peripherality' (Lave and

Wenger, 1991, p95) provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practices their own. Immersion into a community of practice therefore not only involves learning the practices and discourse features required for membership of that community, but during the process of learning, the identity of the novice is changed and modified:

> As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. In this view, learning only partly – and often incidentally- implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings. Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they have meaning. The systems of relation arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p53)

This perspective calls into question psychological constructs of the person as 'a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe' (Geertz, 1979, p229), which Harris (1981) refers to as a myth. Far from being unitary and coherent, the subject is constituted in a range of subject positions through the discursive practices of the social world, where the individual can choose from a 'field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized' (Foucault, 1982, p221).

The notions of discursive practices and identity expressed by Hymes and Lave and Wenger echo Bakhtin's interpretations of voice. Bakhtin extends Vygotsky's claims about the mediation of human activity through signs by identifying how historically, culturally and institutionally situated actions are at one and the same time components

of the life of the social system on an intermental plane, and of the individual on an intramental plane. Bakhtin argued that linguistic approaches focussing on units of language (eg words, utterances) as though they 'belong to nobody' (Bakhtin, 1986, p99), could not provide an adequate account of language and learning. For Bakhtin, 'voice' must by definition be social as its resources emerge in society. Voice not only involves the speaking subject's perspective, conceptual horizon, intention and world view but also emerges in a social milieu where it is never totally isolated from others' voices, thus 'any utterance is a link in the chain of speech communities' (Bakhtin, 1986, p84). Bakhtin used the term 'addressivity' to denote how voice reflects both the voice(s) producing an utterance and the voice(s) to which the utterance is addressed. This notion of at least two voices in any utterance, the *person doing the speaking* and the *person to whom the speech is addressed*, is the foundation of Bakhtin's theoretical construct of 'dialogicality', where rather than owning and transmitting meaning, as implied by structuralist linguists, language users 'rent' meanings from social language, and the social language in turn shapes what the individual's voice can say (Bakhtin, 1986). Thus one voice speaks through another voice in a multivoiced, dialogic socioculturally situated utterance.

Bakhtin further identified how different spheres of life develop their own speech 'genres', which individuals learn unwittingly, often without even knowing they exist, in the same way as they learn their mother tongue (Bakhtin, 1986). This implies that when speakers decide to say something, with all their individuality and subjectivity, the utterance is shaped and adapted to fit the generic form required by the social circumstances of the utterance. The ability to adapt to different speech genres is therefore crucial:

> Many people who have an excellent command of a language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication precisely because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in the given spheres.
>
> (Bakhtin, 1986, p80)

Wertsch (1991) suggests that through the processes of acquiring speech genres, other's and one's own perception of one's identity are moulded. From this perspective, a major part of finding a voice and concomitant identity in the institutional context of school means learning the appropriate discourse techniques and skills expected of each particular setting.

By illustrating how sociocultural forces shape mediational means, Bakhtin implies that:

> … mediational means have a predisposition to be used more easily for certain purposes than for others, and … this predisposition may not be based on ideal or maximally efficient forms of individual mental action. In the case of language … (this means) … that certain patterns of speaking and thinking are easier, or come to be viewed as more appropriate in a specific setting than others.
>
> (Wertsch, 1991, p38)

As Wertsch (1991) points out, Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality reflects the collectivist orientation of Russian culture that meaning is based in group life. Yet by starting with the social and showing how language slots in, Bakhtin's theories have contributed to understandings of how diverse systems of sign-making, including language, are used in different sociocultural and institutional settings. This strand of theoretical development will be discussed further in 6.3 below.

At this point, it is useful to define what is meant by 'identity' within the scope of this thesis. Edwards and Knight (1994, p10) suggest that the dimensions of identity most central to education are 'self-concept', defined as viewing oneself without making value judgements, and 'self-esteem', which adds a value dimension to self-concept. Picking up on Harre's (1983) description of identity as an organizing principle for action, Edwards and Knight point out that individuals tend to work at what they find easy, for example, a learner with a self-concept as an effective drawer might choose to do a lot of drawing. Low self-esteem can also lead to positive action where an

individual acts to remedy an identified 'weakness'. Conversely, if the individual feels that the gap between the current and desired ability is too great to be overcome, then the individual may feel helpless and do nothing other than find someone or something else to blame, thereby protecting self-esteem. With regard to language use, individuals may be able to choose from alternative discourses within a given setting, adopting a discourse where they feel more comfortable, more in control and thus more able to boost their self-esteem. From this perspective, issues of power, control and identity are fundamental to action and communication.

2.6.2 Power, control and communication

For Foucault, it is impossible to separate truth from power: the most that can be done is to detach 'the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault, 1980, p3). For Foucault, power in modern society is both invisible and multidirectional, omnipresent rather than simply top-down:

> …power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical relationship in a particular society.   (Foucault, 1984, p93)

From this perspective, power is not 'thing-like' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p85) and located in one source, but is present in a matrix of relations at a given time in a given place. Everyone is caught up in a web of elusive yet pervasive power, both those who appear to exercise it and those who appear to be subject to it. According to Foucault (1982), there may well be unequal relations of power, but unless they are traced to their actual material functioning, they escape analysis and create the illusion that power is exercised only by those at the top. Nor is there inherent logic in the exercise or stability of power. Rather, 'at the level of the practices there is a directionality produced from petty calculations, clashes of wills, meshing of minor interests'

(Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p188). Within these 'clashes' there is room for individual agency as individuals adopt different beliefs and perform different actions against the background of the same social structure. This implies there is a space in front of social structures where individuals decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to perform:

> … power is exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free … (by which) … we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized.   (Foucault, 1982, p221)

Within educational establishments, Foucault recognised that power is not only transmitted by means of language, but is exercised in a complex interplay between power relations, systems of communication and activities:

> Take for example an educational institution: the disposal of its space, the meticulous regulations which govern its internal life, the different activities which are organised there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character – all these things constitute a block of capacity-communication-power. The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes of behavior is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the 'value' of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by the means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy).
>
> (Foucault, 1982, p218)

Poststructuralists have been accused of being 'armchair radicals' (Thomas, 1993, p23) as their critiques focus on changing ways of thinking about the world, but do not

offer action based on those changes. However, Bourdieu has developed a post-structuralist approach that recognises and allows for the complexity and dynamism of practice. In Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977), human action is constituted through a dialectical relationship between the individual's thought/activity, the 'habitus', and the objective world or 'field', where 'field' represents the structured system of social relations that determine and reproduce social activity 'functioning as a regulatory device which orients practice without producing it' (Bourdieu, 1977, p21). Thus, for example, the field of education is made up of identifiable, interconnecting relations, with primary, secondary and tertiary as sub-fields that connect with and partially share the principles of the superordinate field, whilst all having their own particular characteristics that reflect the shifting aims and objectives of different phases of education (Grenfell and James, 1998). Yet the defining principles of the field are only partially articulated, implied tacitly rather than overtly stated.

The 'habitus' represents the subjective embodiment 'of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms … habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those' (Bourdieu, cited by Harker, 1992, p16). Thus the habitus consists of a system of generative schemes within each individual, acquired and adjusted subconsciously through social interaction in different fields, where each individual system of dispositions occurs as a structural variant of a given social group. By existing in social spaces, individuals encounter fields, but they do so equipped with their own generating structures. The habitus forms affinities or disaffinities with the fields encountered and the resultant interaction is a dialectical process of negotiation, where the field structures and is embodied in the habitus and the habitus constitutes the field as a meaningful world endowed with sense and value:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'as a fish in water', it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted.'

(Bourdieu cited in Wacquant, 1989, p43)

The theoretical notion of habitus therefore permits a focus on how, in practice, an individual's personal history is reflected in that individual's social encounters. This creates a powerful tool for investigating how structure is reflected in small scale interactions, and how small scale activities/interactions form part of a dialectic between individuals and overarching structures. In an educational setting, this allows insights into how:

… the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences … and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.'

(Bourdieu, 1977, p87)

Grenfell discusses how habitus and pedagogic field go beyond the simple notions of learning through 'scaffolding' or learning as personal exploration, neither of which approaches capture the dynamics of processes, tensions and conflicts involved in learning (Grenfell and James, 1998). Field and habitus highlight the relations between the teacher, who through pedagogic habitus reproduces subject value systems, and the pupil, who, in a relationship with a pedagogic other, transforms from unknown to known the taught subject and associated value systems:

Pupils learn when they interpret and take control of knowledge, but this arises in relationships which are imbued with field and habitus specific generating structures.   (Grenfell and James, 1998, p87)

Integral to the notion of habitus is the anonymous, pervasive *modus operandi* of practice, where much of the mastery of practices is transmitted through body hexis (Bourdieu, 1977) without attaining the levels of consciousness or discourse. The role of the apprentice is to observe and assimilate the coherent principles of practical action in each new field. Bourdieu's 'practical theory' therefore adds a new dimension to the works of Lave and Wenger, Hymes and Bakhtin, and links with contemporary theoretical developments in the field of linguistic research that investigate how meanings are learnt and expressed through a variety of communicative 'modes'.

2.6.3 Multimodal communication and meaning making

As discussed in Sections 2.5.1 and 2.6.1, a sociocultural framework permits a pluralistic perspective of communication and learning, where not only language but also images and physical activity are viewed as socially organised, sign-making activities and as key components in the construction of meaning. Recent research in the field of social semiotics has begun to explore forms of meaning-making other than language, including drawing (Ring, 2001; Anning and Ring, 2001), model making (Pahl, 1999a and 1999b), physical actions (Franks and Jewitt, 2001) and combinations of 'modes', such as pictures, diagrams, gesture, words (Kress, 1997, Kress et al, 2001). These studies investigate how children act multimodally 'in the things they use, the objects they make, and in the engagement of their bodies' (Kress, 1997, p97) and their findings, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, suggest that:

> … a serious look at the multiplicity of modes which are always and simultaneously in use shows conclusively that meaning resides in all modes and that each contributes to the overall meaning of the multimodal ensemble in quite specific ways. (Kress et al, 2001, p1)

From a multimodal perspective, meanings made with language are interwoven with meanings made with other modes, and this interaction itself produces meaning. The use of different modes, with their different materiality, leads to meaning being *expressed* differently, and necessitates consideration of the 'affordances' (Kress et al, 2001) of different modes, their constraints and possibilities for making meaning, and the ways different modes offer different perspectives and therefore different potentials for learning. This in turn necessitates consideration of how meanings are *interpreted* differently, and are not always accessible to or understood by all participants.

Thus a multimodal approach highlights issues around the fluidity of meanings of different semiotic modes, including language, that carry socioculturally differentiated currencies and which can be invoked or referred to at particular moments for particular purposes, gaining their meaning from the precise points in time and space where they are momentarily rendered relevant (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002). Pink emphasises the situated interweaving of multiple modes in her study of visual images:

> This approach … aims not simply to 'study' people's social practices or to read cultural objects or performances as if they were texts, but to explore how all types of material, intangible, spoken, performed narratives and discourses are interwoven with and made meaningful in relation to social relationships, practices and individual experiences. (Pink, 2001, p5-6)

Kress et al's research (2001) draws on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics that combined the study of grammatical systems with social semantics, influenced in his approach to the latter by Malinowski's anthropological proposal that the meaning of spoken language is inextricably bound to the 'context of situation' (Malinowski, 1923). Based on this dual systemic approach to language, Halliday defined three essential functions of any communicative system: the *ideational function*, communicating states of affairs; the *interpersonal function*, communicating

social/affective relations between the participants and the *textual function*, communicating how the utterance fits into the context of other elements of the text and the wider environment thus producing contextual coherence (Halliday, 1985). However, the temporal descriptive terminology of linguistics is problematic when used for representing the spatial simultaneity of visual images and physical movement (Kress et al, 2001). For example, the use of the term 'text' implies clear boundaries around a unit of analysis, such as a word or utterance and fails to convey the processes of 'text' production:

> The process of social meaning making – of social semiosis – is what gives rise to the making of the text. But the boundaries of the text … are not the boundaries of meaning making … The text and its boundaries do not stop this process of semiosis: they provide a punctuation only …   (Kress, 2000, p134)

Heath and Hindmarsh (2002) are less committed to textual units of analysis, and adopt a more heuristic approach:

> Through detailed scrutiny of particular cases, fragments of action and interaction, analysis is directed towards explicating the resources, the competencies, upon which people rely in participating in interaction.
>
> (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002, p107)

These issues of how to measure the potential of diverse, interwoven semiotic modes when the boundaries of meaning go beyond the frame of expression and are extended across 'texts' or 'discourses' are currently contentious and unresolved issues in the development of new theoretical approaches to multimodal communication and meaning making. However, they do not detract from the need in an age increasingly dominated by multimodal forms of communication to develop robust theoretical approaches that take into account how meanings are expressed and interpreted in different modes.

2.7 Conclusions

The theoretical framework for this thesis is founded on a sociocultural approach to learning, allowing an account of the relationship between the children's communicative and meaning making strategies that recognises their social, cultural, institutional and historical contexts. Yet processes of learning are closely linked to psychological issues, where theories constructed in a particular paradigm have tended to focus on the universals of ahistorical mental processes. Cole argues that whilst child development and learning are culture specific, there are underlying processes that are not just about cultural variation:

> A full understanding of culture in human development requires both a specification of its universal mechanisms and the specific forms that it assumes in particular historical circumstances.   (Cole, 1992, p731-2)

Historically, the world of education has interpreted and embedded many different psychological theories into institutional practice, so their influences on perceptions of childhood and learning cannot be ignored. This chapter has discussed how functional approaches to learning can be traced back to empiricist theory, how Piagetian research has implied sequential and universal processes of assimilation and accommodation, whereas Vygotsky's work has addressed issues of appropriation, the sociocultural situatedness of mediated action and the social origins of higher mental functioning. These approaches have constructed conflicting yet powerful normative models of development and learning that have sedimented 'in the set of taken-for-granted practices that exist today' (Walkerdine, 1984, p164).

However, cross-cultural studies have highlighted some of the ethnocentric assertions that have been made about how young children learn. By focussing on the socially situated nature of communication, ethnographic approaches to the study of language have shown how children learn particular discourses as they become members of

particular communities of practice, and how those discourses in turn begin to shape identity. Bakhtin's notion of how different voices are represented within each utterance adds a further dimension to the study of how identity is created and expressed through multiple voices.

Cross-cultural studies have also highlighted how children make and express meaning through modes of communication other than talk, and current research into multimodal learning, and how different modes constitute learning differently, reveals the complexity of meaning-making processes. This approach has profound implications for views of learning and has become central to pedagogic discourse (Kress et al 2000).

To gain deeper, situated insights into the links between children's diverse communicative strategies and emerging identities in different social settings, this thesis combines sociocultural and multimodal approaches to learning with Bourdieu's notion of field and habitus to theorise how individual children adopt and use different communicative strategies against the background of the same social structure.

Chapter 3

Review of research into young children's language development and learning

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews research on young children's language development and learning from a broadly sociocultural field, as discussed in Chapter 2. The term 'field' is used to allow a review of research from different disciplines that reveal distinct yet compatible perspectives on the social construction of human behaviour. These include studies from the traditions of: conversation analysis; linguistics; linguistic ethnography; social semiotics; psychology and studies which take a broader view of children's learning in British and global education.

Central to this thesis is the relevance of layers of overlapping, dynamic contexts in which young children learn to make and express meaning. The research studies are therefore presented and compared under the headings of immediate, institutional and sociocultural contexts. Immediate context is interpreted as including the physical, interpersonal, linguistic and non-linguistic contexts of children's interactions, enacted in the institutional contexts of the home or school, which in turn are situated in the sociocultural values that form the backdrop of the stage where the children's lives are played out. Contexts are viewed as inherently social and fluid, reflecting and framing interaction (Wertsch, 1985b), and constituted by participants' differing or shared perceptions. As suggested by Mehan, contexts are:

> … constructed by the people present in varying combinations of participants
> and audience … constituted by what people are doing, as well as when and

where they are doing it. That is, people in interaction serve as environments
for each other. And, ultimately, social contexts consist of mutually ratified and
constructed environments.   (Mehan, 1980, p136)

The chapter concludes with a discussion of potential long-term benefits of early years
education and research definitions of 'effective' early years pedagogy.

3.2 Children's early language development in a social context

Although children's language development may be well underway when they enter
preschool aged approximately 3 years, it is still in its early stages (Wells, 1985). To
understand how their talk and other communicative strategies develop in preschool,
consideration must be given to the kinds of experiences that have contributed to their
communicative competences during early infancy.

In Chomsky's structuralist account (Chomsky, 1965), humans are equipped with
innate, universal features of mind in the form of an internal Language Acquisition
Device (LAD) that enables humans to process and produce grammatically complex
language. Chomsky's theories have developed over time, but the genetic component
for language acquisition continues to be central as an 'initial state' or universal
grammar (Antony and Hornstein, 2003). Although criticised for studying abstract
rules of grammar in a social vacuum, his work has drawn attention to young
children's sensitivity to rules and patterns in language, and cross-cultural studies have
observed certain developmental milestones that appear universal. For example,
Schieffelin and Ochs (1983) have found that although the social contexts in which
language is used with infants varies extensively across cultures, children still begin to
acquire language at similar ages, whether talk is directed to them or they are
immersed in the talk of others but not addressed directly. There continues to be active
debate about innate language features, for example, Pinker and universal systems of
grammar (1994). Evolutionary theory of species-specific behaviour (Ainsworth et al,

1974) further supports the concept of innate structures by attributing the chief motivation for early instinctive interactive traits to survival and the need to be taken care of.

In her review of different linguistic perspectives on the emergence of language, Snow proposes that certain innate social capacities within the developing child contribute to the emergence of language, and that these capacities should be considered in the study of child communication:

> The social preparedness of the infant to get engaged in language interactions plows fertile ground for learning about communication.
>
> (Snow, 1999, p262)

Bruner (1983) proposes that although the capacity for language learning may have biological and evolutionary roots, exercising that capacity depends on the individual adapting to modes of acting and thinking that exist in the culture, not in the genes: in order to function effectively, any LAD must have a LASS - a Language Acquisition Support System.

Similarly, the psychologist Schaffer (1989) suggests that new-born babies are predisposed to attend to particular kinds of stimuli and that they structure their responses in particular ways, adapting their perceptual and response tendencies to mediate their interactions with the social environment. As babies grow, they become capable of joint gaze attention and intersubjectivity (Tomasello, 1995) and cultural learning becomes entwined with learning to communicate (Tomasello et al, 1993). This cultural learning and learning of language emerges within the warmth of a carer/child relationship:

> Infants obviously develop awareness, emotions and intentions in companionship with familiar and sympathetic persons months before they

understand words, and they come to understand words in the context of shared awareness and purposes before they produce any.   (Trevarthen, 1995, p13)

Bruner (1983) further observes how pre-linguistic games between infants and carers help provide the tools for later language development. For example, by playing Peek-a-boo with her baby, a mother is unwittingly introducing the notion of turn-taking which is a key feature of the structure of talk. Snow (1999) emphasises how playful games involving sounds and gestures provide a fertile environment for the emergence of language:

> One might well expect, given that infants are creatures of many wants, that their emerging capacity for communication would immediately be put to use for instrumental purposes – to order adults around, to request objects, to solicit help, to demand attention. Indeed, these directive goals are evident in children's earliest utterances as well as in their preverbal communicative acts … Strikingly, though, a very high proportion of the early words, gestures, and vocalizations of young children is produced in the context of participation in games and game-like formats rather than with directive intent.
>
> (Snow, 1999, pp264-5)

In short, playing with language helps children learn language, and a high proportion of children's early attempts at language occur in the context of play, in an atmosphere of familiarity and emotional reassurance. Citing research over many years in developmental psychology, Trevarthen illustrates how early 'protolanguage' (1995, p11) is expressed through facial expression, hand gestures, body movements and sounds, in early 'conversations' embedded in close relationships between children and their parents and carers. In social cognitivist theory, Bandura (1986) discusses how learning in a sociocultural context begins in early infancy with imitative behaviour that is subsequently internalised, becoming part of the child's self-concept.

Sociolinguistic research has also drawn attention to the context-specific rules of appropriacy (eg Holmes, 2001), usually learned initially at home in early infancy during the course of mother and baby play.

The linguist Wells (1987) investigated how new-borns' biological preadaptation to initiate and engage in interaction leads to the cultural transfer of meanings. For example, if a baby does something, the parent gives meaning to the baby's action, transmitting cultural meanings to the child that shape the child's behaviour about what is/is not culturally acceptable and meaningful. Thus the production of signs is mediated through intersubjectivity by the expectation that they will be understood as intended. Wells proposes that language only begins to emerge when intersubjectivity combines with infants' desire to express their needs more precisely.

Ninio and Snow (1988) have also observed that infants' early word combinations often occur when a child is interacting with an adult in a joint attentional format:

> Considerable evidence suggests that adult recognition of and responsiveness to children's communicative intents is demonstrably helpful to children in acquiring language. In fact, all of the factors mentioned in any standard review of what constitutes helpful adult input to children … presuppose a social, communicative, intentional child attempting to express his or her own intents. In other words, it is the pragmatically effective child with the capacity to express some communicative intent who creates the opening that adults fill with social support.   (Snow, 1999, p267)

There is therefore a considerable body of research from different academic fields suggesting that certain social capacities are key factors in the emergence of language, including the child's innate sociability, close relationships between the child and caregivers/parents, the variety of different interactive contexts they encounter and the ability to discern some order in complex social interactions. These perspectives imply

that there are certain pre-requisites, skills and contextual factors that influence learning through interaction, and these remain central to making and expressing meaning well beyond early infancy. As Ogden (2000) discusses in an educational study of older children entering primary school, many have not acquired sufficient strategies for understanding others to engage in extended reciprocal interaction with peers or adults, although they may have developed successful strategies in more familiar contexts:

> … it is important to recognise that shared activities have a 'social context' which involves relationships between participants, their previous interactions, the content and goal of the activity.   (Ogden, 2000, p222)

3.3 The relevance of context

Bruner (1983) discusses how context has often been conceptualised as a frame assumed to be present as a 'surround' for talk, but not amenable to close analysis. Yet his own observations suggested that adults and children select and construct contexts within talk and that talk and context are intrinsically linked.

The following categories have been compiled to conceptualise in text form the many layers of context that enshroud the interactions of the children in this study. The categories derive chiefly from my readings of Bruner (1983, 1884, 1986a, 1996), Wells (1985, 1987), Duranti and Goodwin (1992), and Graue and Walsh (1998), but my definitions vary from theirs:

> **1** *the immediate context* the task and physical setting, 'formats' (Bruner, 1983) for gaining entry to those settings, interpersonal relations, linguistic and non-linguistic contexts
> **2** *the institutional context* the home or the playgroup and network of relationships and roles within and between those settings

3 *the sociocultural context* the overarching sociocultural settings that impact upon individuals' daily lives, for example, how individuals are positioned by and resist sociocultural norms, particularly with regard to the positioning of children in education systems within Britain, as part of the Western world

This approach resembles Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human behaviour and his perception of individuals as partly positioned by and partly as active agents in the shaping of their environments, where 'the interaction between a person and environment is viewed as two-directional, that is characterised by reciprocity' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p22). From this perspective, interconnections between contexts can be as decisive for action or development as events taking place within a setting. Furthermore, how the participants perceive the settings is of utmost relevance. This approach is compatible with Bourdieu's notion of the interplay between habitus and field, and therefore provides a firm basis for later theorisation of the data.

3.4 Immediate contexts

'Immediate context' here refers to: the *physical space* the child is in; the *task* being performed; the *formats* used to gain entry to those spaces and tasks; the *interpersonal relations* between the people present and how they perceive their own and others' identities, purposes and activities and the *verbal and non-verbal interactions* between the participants.

3.4.1 Immediate context: physical space and task

Communication between people always occurs in a social and physical setting, but as Wells (1985) points out, the relationship between the utterance and the context is neither simple nor constant:

What is said both constitutes the context as being of a certain socially recognizable kind and, at one and the same time, is constrained by what that context is recognized as being. The relative importance of these two influences varies according to the nature of the physical environment as it is socially perceived, the previous shared interactional experience of the participants and their individual purposes on any particular occasion. This is equally true of adult-child interaction, even though most conversation involving young children is strongly tied to what is perceptually present.

(Wells, 1985, p65)

Two major early years studies conducted in the 1980s, the Bristol Study (eg Wells 1985) and the Oxford Research Project (Sylva et al, 1980) both found links between immediate contexts and talk. Wells' SSRC-funded Bristol Study tracked children's spoken language and reading skills development in three phases, from 1972-1977. In Phase 1, the language of 128 children was studied at 3 monthly intervals for 2 ¼ years, half aged from 15 months, half aged from 39 months. In Phase 2, the developing reading skills of 20 of the older group were observed in school once a month. In Phase 3, the younger children were video and audio recorded and tested on entry to school to assess their 'readiness' for formal education and again at age 7. Throughout the study, parent interviews and teacher assessments of the children's overall academic, linguistic and social abilities were recorded.

The study focussed on possible links between children's language development and later academic achievement, which had been suggested by previous research based on Chomsky's work of syntactic rule learning (eg Central Advisory Council for Education, 1963). By contrast, Wells' study built on Halliday's systemic functional grammar to explore relationships between the children's emerging formal systems of language, functional uses of language and conversational contexts.

The study observed a decrease in the children's uses of talk in 'Physical Care' and 'Eating', attributed to their increasing ability to manage these activities for themselves (Wells, 1985, pp116-117). Similarly, child talk declined in 'Looking at books/reading' as books were used with the very young to teach vocabulary, whereas by about 2 ½ years, stories were read aloud to them. Speech decreased in 'Play with Adult' and 'Play Alone' but increased in 'Playing Games with Other Children and with Adults', 'Role-Play alone/ with Other Children' and 'Watching TV'. Overall, children's talk peaked around the age of 42 – 54 months. The study noted activity-related gender differences in talk: boys talked significantly more than girls when playing alone or with adult participation. Girls talked more than boys in the contexts of 'Helping' and 'General Activity'.

The Bristol Study categories were primarily activity based, with little detail of who the children were interacting with, or where the activity was taking place. Wells also noted that the general trends shown in the Bristol Study's overall results obscured strong individual differences in patterns of speech use. Overall, the study concluded:

> One of the most important influences on the performance actually observed is the situation in which it occurs. (Wells, 1985, p341)

The Oxford Research Project (Sylva et al, 1980) aimed to investigate the quality of preschool children's interactions by identifying how long children stayed on tasks, who they talked to and for how long. The study observed 120 preschool children for 2 x 20 minute sessions, noting their activity on a code sheet every 30 seconds. 80 per cent of the total code sheets had no dialogue in them at all, leading the Project to conclude:

> When teachers, playgroup leaders and psychologists conjure up an image of a child at preschool, they imagine him in fantasy play with others, or chatting away to a teacher. According to our observations, the typical child is careering

through the garden on a bicycle, blowing bubbles at the water table, or quietly

watching another child paint. He is not yet a conversationalist at preschool,

even if he is at home.   (Sylva et al, 1980, p81)

The Project's findings concluded that in general, preschools were not an ideal

environment for children to learn the skills of conversation. Rich dialogues were

found to occur most frequently in quiet, intimate settings, whereas playgroups

specialised in the opposite. Like Wells (1985), the Oxford Project found close

correlations between the type of activity and the amount of talk. In certain settings,

children tended to speak with adults, and in others, they spoke to children. The

highest proportion of child-child exchanges were found in the following rank order:

> Informal games
>
> Gross motor and simple social play (eg rough-and-tumble, on swings)
>
> Group routine (eg milk-time)
>
> Non-playful social interaction, with no instrumental task
>
> Pretend play   (Sylva et al, 1980, p87)

Most child-child exchanges were observed in activities with no intrinsic goals, where

children could negotiate the task goal and needed to cooperate to carry on the activity.

Although playgroups had more total talk, twice as many child-child exchanges took

place in nursery class than in playgroups. However, the talk in nursery classes tended

to be single utterances rather than dialogue (Sylva et al, p90). Adult-child exchanges

occurred most frequently in task-oriented and structured activities, often when both

adult and child appeared confident the child already knew the answers to the adult's

questions. Children initiated and sustained dialogues while concentrating on a task,

usually when seeking adult approval or help.

Technical Papers released by the current Effective Provision of Preschool Education

(EPPE) Project (DfEE, 1999b) indicate that out of all types of preschool provision,

playgroups achieved the lowest scores for 'language and reasoning', and for the

provision of a variety of preschool activities (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 6a) (see Chapter1 Section 1.2.2 for details of EPPE study). EPPE also found that in pre-school settings with only limited indoor space, there was a higher incidence of 'anti-social, worried and upset' behaviour, which could impact negatively upon children's overall learning. This quantitative finding implies that a range of tasks, along with a lot of physical space is beneficial to children's well-being and subsequent involvement in activities.

The qualitative support study to EPPE, Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) (DfES, 2002) revealed more detail about EPPE's statistical analyses through longitudinal case studies of 12 EPPE preschool settings deemed to be 'good' or 'excellent'. REPEY focussed on adult pedagogy, reporting that particularly effective adult-child interaction involved 'sustained shared thinking', but that such incidents were rare, occurring most frequently during tasks involving the specific teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The findings closely mirror those of Sylva et al (1980) discussed above. In settings where shared thinking was most encouraged, there was a higher incidence of child-initiated interactions, which appeared to feed into a more positive child approach to learning during adult-initiated activities (DfES, 2002).

In contrast to the REPEY findings, which focus on adult pedagogy, in her observations of school-aged children, Crystal (1998) found that playing games, particularly make-believe or games with set rules, was the richest environment for child language. In these contexts, the acquisition and use of ludic language, such as oath-taking ('cross your heart'), getting possession ('I bags that one') gave the speaker the power to make things change in the real world. For younger children, fantasy play and self-directed speech were the richest sites for language play, such as experimenting with word sounds and making up amusing nonsense sentences.

Similarly, Bodrova and Leong (1998) found that during play children were often highly motivated to communicate with each other and to enforce the limits of fantasy play, partly to exercise control, and partly to ensure continuation of the game:

> By submitting to constraints, children are required to practice self-regulatory behavior. At the same time, play is also one of the most desirable activities so that children are extremely motivated to abide by the limits set by the play. Thus play provides a uniquely motivating context in which children can develop the ability to self-regulate their behaviors through imaginary situations, roles and rules.   (Bodrova and Leong, 1998, p177)

In a home setting, Sorsby and Martlew (1991) observed significant differences in types of talk in relation to type of task. In their long-term study of two and four-year olds, Sorsby and Martlew observed that mothers tended to engage in more abstract topics during book reading than during playdoh model-making tasks.

The above-mentioned studies have highlighted many associations between setting, type of task and talk. Yet by focussing on talk, they have not explored the diversity of strategies children use to make and express meaning. In her review of psychology studies into how children solve problems, Thornton (1995) discusses how children use combinations of verbal and non-verbal strategies to achieve their goals:

> … each of these strategies has a sort of "history" in the child's experience … the more successful a strategy has been in a particular situation, the more likely it is that the child will choose it again in that situation, as well as in other, seemingly similar tasks.   (Thornton, 1995, p65)

Furthermore, the above studies do not offer detailed accounts of how individual children's diverse communicative strategies develop over time and across settings.

3.4.2 Immediate context: gaining entry and formats

Linked to the notion of tasks and physical spaces is how to gain entry into the activities in those spaces. As mentioned in Section 3.2, Bruner (1983) suggested that in mother/child dyads, infants learn ritualised linguistic procedures or 'formats' that arrange speech encounters:

> A format is a standardized, initially microcosmic interaction pattern between an adult and an infant that contains demarcated roles that eventually become reversible. (Bruner, 1983, pp120-121)

According to Bruner, formats are initially asymmetrical, until through practice and ritual, the formats become habitual to the child. As children grow older, they learn not only *how* to use formats but also *when* to use them, and with *whom* in different contexts, such as when to request, how to address a person etc– all learnt through interaction with others in different settings, where different views of appropriacy prevail. Bruner (1983) suggested that as a child becomes more familiar with particular formats and contexts, so that child's signalling of context becomes more conventional and the child develops skills to become context-mobile, assessing and/or imposing context upon new situations.

Sylva et al (1980, p81) identified some, although scarce, preschool learning of 'conversational rules', such as how to begin and end dialogues, particularly the explicit teaching of correctness during adult-led small group discussions, regarding waiting for a turn to speak and allowing others to contribute.

Research on the processes of preschool children learning different rules or 'formats' in different contexts is sparse. In the field of sociology, Corsaro (1997) has highlighted how pre-school children use verbal and non-verbal strategies to gain entry to others' play, co-ordinate play and generate shared meanings. With regard to

gaining entry to schooled activities through talk, Heath's ethnographic findings illustrate how the dominant pedagogic discourses of US education are more familiar, and therefore more accessible, to white middle class children than they are to other socio-economic or ethnic groups (Heath, 1983). Similarly, Bourne (1992) identifies how school-aged children in a multi-ethnic classroom can be marginalized by the pedagogic discourse of the teacher, when that discourse is at variance with the child's sociocultural expectations as expressed through language. Using Bourdieu's notion of field as an organising principle of the school setting, Bourne illustrates how the teacher legitimises, or illegitimises, certain ways of proceeding, and uses this distancing not only to gain control over the children, but also to maintain the core principles of her pedagogic habitus.

3.4.3 Immediate context: interpersonal relations

As discussed in Section 3.2, many studies conducted in the Western world have shown that infants' early language learning usually occurs in an emotionally rich adult (usually mother)/child dyad. Bruner has suggested that emotional states are embedded in children's understandings of language, and that rather than consider cognition and emotion as separate states, the term 'perfink' could be used to reflect the way children perceive, feel and think at the same time (Bruner, 1986a, p69).

In their study of girls within 3 months of their 4th birthday, Tizard and Hughes (1984) observed that mothers were more sensitive to their children than nursery teachers, and that an absence of sensitivity has adverse effects upon communication. Stern (1985) also noted how children and parents achieve a working correspondence on a moment-to-moment basis, both responding to each other in a mutually reinforcing way. Stern proposed that in early infancy, this attunement reflected the degree of fit between the child's expectations and interpretations of others' responses and others' intended responses. If attunement was disrupted, the child was unhappy.

Pahl (1999a) argued that young children are driven by a complex web of impulses to produce communicative signs, and that the importance of their feelings or affect during these processes must not be underestimated. Whilst some negative emotional fall-out from major emotional incidents, such as births, deaths and divorce, may be recognised, there is insufficient recognition and understanding within education of the deeper psychological forces that motivate children's expressions of meaning more generally.

Trevarthen (1995) proposed that trust is integral to the degree of attunement between parent and child, and as children reach pre-school age, trust remains a dominant feature in children's willingness to communicate, but given reassurance, young children can learn to place their trust in others (Trevarthen, 1995).

The linguist Snow (1995) illustrated how child-directed speech (CDS) by adults and older siblings differs from speech among peers, as it is often syntactically simpler, more limited in vocabulary and complexity than non-CDS. In her review of 1970s CDS research, correlations were found between CDS and child language comprehension, but no links identified between CDS and child language production. Snow noted CDS research lacked subtlety and tended to over generalise the effects of CDS, failing to take into account contextual factors, such as task, the person the child is talking with and the child's developmental readiness. More recently, in case studies of 3 children, the linguist Sokolov (1993) observed that the more 'telegraphic' the child's language, the more likely the parent was to fill in missing words and that parent-child finetuning may have an impact on child language production.

A further interpersonal factor that appears to impact upon young children's language use is status. Sachs and Devin (1976) found that 4-year-old children were sensitive to the differences in status and competence between adults, peers and younger children. Tizard (1979) found that in nursery schools, children were five times more likely to address another child as to address an adult. Sylva et al (1980) found that in Oxford playgroups, children were three times more likely to address a child than an adult. In

a year-long naturalistic study of 25 pairs of friends aged between 3 and 5 years, Hughes and Dunn (1998) observed how more equal status between friends produced striking differences in talk and behaviour, leading to conversations that were more vigorous, mutually oriented and elaborated than talk between non-friends.

Bruner (1986b) stressed that the key to a child's mastery of language is the confidence that there will not be adverse consequences as a result of mistakes. If adults or older children insist a child say something 'correctly', this frequently results in certain expressions 'going underground' and not being used for a while afterwards (Bruner, 1986b, p80). In educational research, Barnes (1976) discussed how children of any age can be silenced by uncertainty about what is expected of them in the classroom, and this could be the source of the myth of the child who seems to come into school with no language.

Many of these research findings run counter to Piagetian concepts of young children's egocentricity and 'stages' of development, yet these continue to be found in early years' studies. For example, in their review of research findings, Tassoni and Hucker (2000) present five social stages of play: Solitary Play from age 0-2 years, with little interaction; Spectator Play from 2-2.5 years, watching others but not joining in; Parallel Play from 2.5-3 years, playing alongside, but not together; Associative Play from 3-4 years, beginning to interact and cooperate in friendships, often mixed-sex; Cooperative Play from 4 years plus, playing together with shared goals and dividing into single sex groups (Tassoni and Hucker, 2000, pp7-8). These stages are not presented as discreet yet their progressive nature is not questioned.

The REPEY Report (DfES, 2002) found during interview that staff in preschool settings with the richest peer and adult:child interactions attributed their success to their ethos of deep respect for children's emotional states, the staff's knowledge of individual children and subsequent better matching of support during learning. In just one setting, positive cognitive outcomes were found for children although little preparation, little shared thinking and poor scaffolding were observed. However, this

setting had developed close working relationships with the middle-class parents, providing work sheets and activities to be completed at home. Thus, alongside the development of positive relations between staff and children, staff/parent relations also appear to be highly significant.

This section has discussed a wide body of research across disciplines that has found many facets of interpersonal relations that impact upon children's uses of talk and learning, including: the level of attunement between interlocutors; how fine-tuned the language of the interlocutor is to the child's language comprehension and production; the adult's responsiveness to the child; adult:child ratio; perceived status of the interlocutors; children's perceptions of risk and negative outcomes; home-school relations and the ethos of the setting.

3.4.4 Immediate context: linguistic context

The term 'linguistic context' refers to the way talk invokes context and provides the context for further talk, not simply taking place 'in' particular contexts, but often defining the context:

> The dynamic mutability of context is complicated further by the ability of participants to rapidly invoke within the talk of the moment alternative contextual frames. (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992, p4)

Bruner (1983) suggests one constraint of constructed contexts is that they must be cognitively manageable and must follow conventional uses of language within a common culture. For example, Jane offers John a cup of after-dinner coffee, he replies 'No thanks, I've got to hit the sack early tonight.' Jane can understand from this a cultural link between caffeine and sleep. Had he replied 'No thanks, I'd rather not be a pair of ragged claws', Jane may not have understood the allusion to the

sleepless depression suffered by T.S.Eliot's Prufrock (Bruner, 1983). As Mercer suggests:

> For communication to be successful, the creation of context must be a co-operative endeavour. Two people may well begin a conversation with enough prior knowledge to be able to achieve some initial joint understanding without making a great deal of information explicit. But as the conversation progresses, speakers must continue to provide relevant information … if new shared knowledge is to be constructed. (Mercer, 2000, p21)

Contextual cues must help participants understand and keep track of what the speaker and listener have in mind. Bruner (1983) and Gumperz (1992) discuss the 'tricks' individuals use to do this. But mastery of these tricks develops with experience, and young children's grasp of how to make clear or accurately interpret the intended context of an utterance is uncertain.

Findings from the Bristol Study have shed light on context construction by analysing how children use language in conversational exchanges to realise their ideational and functional meaning intentions (Wells, 1985). In addition to situational contexts, as discussed in Section 3.4.1 above, the Bristol Study coded the conversational contexts of the utterances, but due to time and budget constraints, only the utterances by other speakers immediately preceding or following a child utterance were included. However, their findings indicated that the meaning and form of the preceding utterance was likely to have a considerable influence on the child's utterance. Key factors in children's language use were the quality and quantity of talk, although clear definitions for these terms were not given (Wells, 1985, p57). Wells (1985) observed how staff often refused to cooperate with child talk or censured certain topics, thereby setting the boundaries for the child's utterances. Unlike at home, young children did not overcome this institutional censorship:

> … (the child's) interactive behaviour is an extremely adaptive response to his social situation and … the view of the child's communicative competence we wish to convey here is one in which rules are invoked and manipulated in accordance with unique situational features. (Wells, 1981, pp181-182)

Wells (1985) and Tizard and Hughes (1984) both observed teachers used far more closed questions than mothers at home, whose questions were more open-ended and provided a supportive framework for children's further talk. The REPEY report (DfES, 2002) noted that questioning strategies observed in the preschools closely resembled those in KS2 classrooms identified by the Oracle Project (1996): Oracle identified 34.6% of KS2 teacher questions as 'closed' and 9.9% as 'open', while REPEY found preschool practitioners used 34.1% closed and 5.1% open questions, with 60% of questions categorised as 'other' tending to be 'socially related caring questions', such as 'are you alright?' The questioning strategies observed did not promote or initiate joint constructions of knowledge.

3.4.5. *Immediate context: non-linguistic context*

The term 'non-linguistic context' here refers to the ways participants use their bodies, gesture and behaviour as a resource for framing, organising, adding to and interpreting talk:

> … just as nonvocal behavior can create context for talk … so talk can create context for the appropriate interpretation of non-verbal behavior …
>
> (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992, p3)

Wells suggested that despite changes in the form interaction took as children passed from pre-speech to speech, progressing from gestural to vocal to linguistic communicative acts, 'the continuity in the nature of the interactional process …is striking' (Wells, 1985, p398). Non-verbal communication remained crucial to

children's communication and adult interpretations of their meaning, as 3 and 4 year olds continued to rely on non-verbal strategies to supplement their linguistic resources.

Tough (1976) discussed how young children often have problems with the physical production of speech, finding it difficult to coordinate actions of the mouth, tongue and throat to articulate the language they know but cannot yet pronounce, producing words such as 'poon' instead of 'spoon'. Tough suggested that children often rely heavily on non-verbal signs and intonation to overcome the shortcomings of their 'manipulation' of words, but that children's non-verbal communication was prone to misinterpretation. Nadel (1993) observed how three year olds at playgroup shared ideas by imitating actions to make up for their lack of language. Trevarthen has also noted how children aged 30+ months use non-verbal signs as a negotiating tool:

> This is an age when toddlers like to imitate in games with their peers, and, when words are not so readily found or understood, imitative play is used as a way to negotiate ideas and actions.   (Trevarthen, 1995, p14)

Trevarthen's findings suggested that by the age of four, children have usually acquired more speech and can negotiate play themes by talking, arguing and making up stories together.

In a 21-month video study of his daughter, aged 3 years 8 months, and her girl friend, aged 4 years, McTear (1985) distinguished between non-verbal behaviours that convey information unintentionally, for example dress and gait, and non-verbal behaviours that function primarily as communication, for example pointing and nodding. However, he found many non-verbal behaviours difficult to categorise, for example, hesitations and eye movement often occurred below the level of consciousness and could therefore be considered non-intentional, yet they were used as communicative techniques. McTear found intentional non-verbal devices, such as

gaze, touching or pointing were used to attract or direct attention, initiate talk, elicit responses, accompany requests and to negotiate turn-taking. Hall (1981) also made the distinction between intentional and non-intentional non-verbal signs, arguing that culturally learnt yet unconscious non-verbal signs mould individuals' communication and behaviour.

Kendon (1990) has researched how adults and children use posture shifts as framing devices for talk and how movement synchrony is achieved between interactants and can be used to indicate tacit compliance or disagreement. As a psychologist, McNeil (1985) argued that gesture is not 'nonverbal', but forms a part of the same psychological structure as language. Rather than 'conjecturing psychological functions' (Streeck, 1993, p276) Streeck adopts a linguistic stance to examine the roles gestures play for speakers and listeners, showing how gaze and gesture are finetuned to speech, allowing participants to make full use of symbolic resources.

In her review of gesture studies conducted mainly in the field of psychology, Goldin-Meadow (2000) argued that gesture gives privileged access to information that children know but do not say, serving as a window to the mind of the developing child. Gesture also appears to be involved both directly and indirectly in cognitive change: indirectly by communicating silent aspects of the learner's cognitive state to potential agents of change, such as significant others in the ZPD; and more directly by easing the learner's cognitive burden by allowing speakers to convey thoughts that may not easily fit into the categorical system that their language offers. Thus gesture and speech are complementary aspects of knowledge, allowing multiple representations of concepts, and some tasks may be more suited to expression through gesture than others. However, Goldin-Meadow concluded that gestures can be idiosyncratic and therefore problematic for analysis as they do not follow socially agreed codes to the extent that language does.

In her study of 5 year olds from different cultural backgrounds in an urban classroom, Dyson (1993) observed a complex interweaving of oral narratives, drawing and writing and argued for a multimodal approach to analysis, as pulling apart children's different modes of expression as separate entities destroyed the power of the children's composing activities. Similarly, Kress suggests:

> Children act multimodally, both in the things they use, the objects they make, and in their engagement of their bodies; there is no separation of body and mind.
>
> (Kress, 1997, p97)

Kress (1997) observed how young children create symbolic objects and representations from the resources available to them by making models from household waste items to explore systems of representation through their own productions. In the process of transforming objects from one mode to another, Kress argues that children are developing the foundations of early literacy by acquainting themselves with the basic structures of representation, as embedded in the sociocultural environments in which they are produced.

Franks and Jewitt (2000) have argued that although action, defined as including verbal action and gesture, posture, 'face-work' and movements in and through space, is a highly theorised aspect of social life, it has been neglected within educational research. Drawing on social semiotic theories of meaning making, including Leontiev's proposal that human activity is generated out of a triadic relationship between a human subject, the use of a mediating device or tool, and a particular object or goal (Leontiev, 1981), they explored how action exists as a 'subsystem' within the wider context of historically developed social norms and conventions. Drawing on data from the 'The Rhetorics of the Science Classroom' (Kress et al, 2001), Franks and Jewitt concluded that action is not simply an illustration of language, but action and speech do different things and realise different yet complementary meanings within the multimodal environment of a science classroom,

indicating that speech and actions have different 'functional specialisms' that 'interweave to rhetorically make meaning; to shape pupils views of the world in complex ways which language alone cannot realise.'(Franks and Jewitt, 2000, p217). Kress et al (2001) discussed how the materiality of different modes impacts on the meanings made, often expressing different communicational functions, and coined the term 'affordances' to explore the communicative properties of different modes and their constraints and possibilities for making meaning.

Pahl (1999a, 1999b) investigated how 3 ½ to 4-year-old children in a multi-ethnic nursery school made meaning across tasks and across modes. Focussing on the children's model making, Pahl observed how the concrete reality of children's models reflected links being made in the children's inner thoughts, and how through observing children's model-making, the processes of Vygotskian internalisation become visible. If an object reminds a child of something else, the child is able to develop it structurally, to transform it materially so it becomes the thing in the child's mind, for example, a child plants a 'seed' (a dried pea) in a 'garden' (an egg box, filled with shredded paper to represent earth). Pahl proposed that children's transformations of objects reflects their interest in form and function: the 3 dimensional pea and the egg box has more potential for conveying meaning than a planted seed drawn on paper.

Lancaster (2001) investigated how cognitive processes in a 2 year old's interpretations of a written text with pictures were mediated through language, gesture and gaze. Lancaster argued these physical expressions serve as visible indicators of reasoning used whilst engaged in discovering how a system of symbolic representation works, and are accessible to interpretive analysis, revealing the dynamism of meaning making through the child's practical and material engagement.

Ring (2001, 2002) reported on longitudinal case studies tracking 7 children's drawings at home, preschool and school to investigate how, through their interactions

with more experienced others, the children are encultured into ways of using speech, gesture, body language, narrative, manipulating objects and mark making. Ring illustrated how the children received different messages from home and school settings about how modes of representation are valued, and their symbolic representations were guided towards the conventions of representational drawing and emergent writing. In the home as infants, the children received non-critical acceptance of all their mark-making, with little adult direction. Where parents directed the children, the task was often abandoned through the child's frustration. In the school settings, there were rich opportunities for drawing, which staff viewed as part of collaborative learning, and as experiential manipulation of objects, yet they tended to be most impressed by marks that could be identified as conventional pre-reading/writing skills. Ring also found highly gendered approaches to drawing, with boys tending to work in 3-dimensional models and girls in 2-dimensional drawing.

Iedema (2003) argues that the transformative dynamics of socially situated meaning-making are not adequately explained by current multimodal approaches and proposes the additional analytical perspective of 'resemiotization', focusing on the dynamic emergence of representations across contexts and across modes and exploring how meanings are created and transformed as they traverse the potentials of different semiotic systems and practices. For example, the adult tendency to 'resemiotize' young children's actions into words functions as a form of social acceptance of the child's message, but the child's negotiation of meaning is framed, limited and shifted to the adult's agenda and interpretation, comprising a shift in ideational semantics. Iedema suggests that by studying the social unfolding of the processes and logic of representation, resemiotization gets closer than multimodality to the 'meaning-maker's perspective' (Iedema, 2003, p50).

In the current large-scale EPPE (DfEE, 1999b), although non-verbal cognition is acknowledged as part of the British Ability Scales (BAS) to assess children's cognitive attainment, it is only recognised of cognitive relevance 'for considering

cases where limited language experience or restricted language development may be adversely affecting the child's overall score' (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper7, p22). Overall, to date there has been a dearth of research into multimodal aspects of preschool children's communicative and meaning making strategies in new social environments.

3.5 Institutional context

The immediate contexts discussed above are embedded in and interactive with overarching institutional, social and cultural contexts. This section now focuses on research into children's communicative strategies and identity in preschool educational and home contexts.

3.5.1 Becoming a pupil: the domains of home and school

Children entering preschool are faced with the daunting task of deciphering new rules about how, when and what it is appropriate to talk about, without the help of their familiar caregiver to guide or support them, constituting a significant extension of a child's communicative competence. As Willes (1981) commented in her study of children aged 3-5 in the Nursery and Reception Classes of a Midlands state school:

> In taking on his new role of pupil, the newcomer to school has to put to the test of use the language learned in interaction at home. He has to find, or to extend his resources to include the language of a learner, one among many, in an institutionalised setting. He has to wait his turn, and recognise it when it comes, to compete, to assert his rights, and sometimes to give ground. He has, in short, to discover what the rules of classroom interaction and behaviour are, what sort of priority obtains among them, and how and when and with what consequences they can be broken.   (Willes, 1981, p51)

Street (1993, 1998) has developed the notion of 'sites', such as the settings of school or home, and 'domains', such as different literacy practices, to conceptualise how practices cross sites. For example, a child completing homework is physically in the home site, but working in a school domain. Street argues that rather than attributing the differences in children's school achievements to socio-economic or ethnic factors as much past research has done, to understand the relationships between school achievement and home conditions, it is essential not only to study the different practices employed in different sites, but also to recognise the whole spectrum of communicative practices and competences by studying:

> … the micro ways in which people deploy linguistic resources, including how they link communicative practices from one domain, such as literacy, with another, such as visual resources. It is this communicative competence, knowing when and how to use resources from different channels, that affects abilities to operate in different domains.   (Street, 1998, p3)

In Australia, longitudinal research in 6 middle-class Melbourne kindergartens (Coleman, Perry and Cross, 1982) and 24 preschools in lower socio-economic areas (Cross and Horsborough, 1986) indicated that preschool teachers used more complex and longer utterances to children than mothers, and that the teachers' language was less sensitively attuned to the children than the mothers'. Cross (1989) found mothers had a comparatively positive conversational style, permitting their children to take a leading role in and initiate conversations, whereas teachers had a more demanding, less adjusting style that appeared to force the children either to use more complex grammatical structures and longer sentences or to retreat into the safer option of silence. During their first year in pre-school, there were no significant increases in the amount or complexity of language of either middle or working class children, and all children spoke more to their mothers than to their teachers.

In the USA, Heath's (1983) study of the language experiences of children in three local communities in the American Piedmont Carolinas, code-named Maintown (a cluster of middle-class neighbourhoods), Roadville (a white working-class community) and Trackton (a black working-class community), focussed on the effects of cultural and social class differences in children's narrative style, illustrating how the discourse rules and conventions of the home differ from those in school. Heath's study highlighted how children from homes with markedly different speech styles to those used in school were often incorrectly perceived in school to be of low ability and/or under achieve. In the words of one of the black mothers:

> My kid, he too scared to talk, cause nobody play by the rules he know. At home, I can't shut him up   (Heath, 1983, p107)

In Britain, and contrary to professional beliefs at the time, Tizard and Hughes' (1984) study of 4 year old girls' language use at home and at nursery school found that the home provided a far more favourable environment for children's intellectual and language needs than nursery school. However, they drew marked social inferences from their data, interpreting middle-class mothers' tendency to ask more "Why?" questions as a potential explanation for middle-class children's more inquisitive utterances in school than working class children. Tizard and Hughes also proposed there was a 'working-class mothering style', where mothers tended to talk with their daughters about domestic and mothering skills rather than general knowledge, thus producing more subdued, passive pupils, who teachers responded to differently, trapping working class girls in a cycle of low teacher expectations and under-achievement.

These conclusions, and their implication that differences in working class practices should be pathologised and corrected, were fiercely contested by Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), who argued that social science research on the working classes often oversimplifies and fails to understand the complex reality of working class values and

practices. Although they recognised their own working class backgrounds in the data, they did not recognise Tizard and Hughes' interpretations of that data. What Tizard and Hughes saw as middle-class maternal sensitivity, Walkerdine and Lucey saw as the enslavement of mothers who concealed the practical realities of domestic duties from their daughters and misguidedly educated them to believe in the unattainable myth of the ideal happy family:

> Does a woman become a sensitive mother if she can become a conjuror, pulling play out of work, like rabbits out of a hat? Both sets of women are 'managers' of a domestic economy, but under very different circumstances and with very different modes of regulation. Some have to say 'no' very often, while others can seem to offer an abundance of everything. How then one group must seem like saints, while the other are so obviously sinning against the great god of developmental psychology, of children's needs.
>
> (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989, p84)

In contrast to Tizard and Hughes, although Wells (1985) found strong correlations between the nature and quality of the interaction between children and their families and those children's level of language development and use at age 42 months and subsequent school achievement, these were not related to social class. McCabe and Peterson (1991) observed that children's developing extended discourse skills were vulnerable to differences in the interaction style of their caregivers: children with parents who ask topic-extending questions were found to produce longer and more coherent narratives than children with parents who ask diverting or detailed questions.

These studies imply that categorising children as *more* or *less* competent at using language in educational settings is too simplistic and overlooks how children are *differently* competent. For example, in their review of cross-cultural analyses of older children's literate activities, Hull and Schultz (2002) explored how out-of-school

literacy practices flourished, yet these practices dwindled in school due to social and cultural misunderstandings.

The EPPE study (DfEE, 1999b) found that the home learning environment, but not social class or parental education, correlated with increased conformity and cooperation in preschool, indicating that 'what parents do is more important than who parents are' (DfEE, 1999b, Technical Paper 7, p29). Through parent interviews and observations, the qualitative REPEY study (DfES, 2002) found more precisely that parent and child joint involvement in learning activities was closely associated with better cognitive attainment. The study concluded:

> If we accept that parents provide sensitive, socioculturally 'embedded' learning environments for their children then it is likely to follow that where there is some consensus and consistency in the home and school's approach to children's learning and the curriculum then more effective outcomes could be achieved. (DfES, 2002, p98)

3.5.2 Developing pupil identity

Edwards and Knight (1994) discuss how within our society, individuals learn the boundaries and possibilities of their various social roles, for instance being a child, a parent, a leader etc. Being a learner in a preschool setting is one of these roles, and the groundwork of early years education in forming pupil identity should not be underestimated:

> Clearly, early years practitioners do not act like horse trainers and break in the wild-eyed children who are likely to create chaos in learning environments. But they do need to ensure that children learn the terms and conditions of their roles as learners. Teachers therefore need to create in young children a sense

of learner identity. This identity is based on a recognition of what being a
learner in an educational setting means and the behaviour it allows.

(Edwards and Knight, 1994, p10)

Edwards and Knight (1994, p13) identified the main categories used by adults and
learnt by children in schools as: good (not naughty); big (and good and clever); little
(too little to do X); neat (not messy); listening (not talking); kind (not selfish) and
liked by teacher (not ignored). Harre (1983) emphasised how developing a sense of
oneself as an *effective* learner is crucial in the early construction of pupil identity,
linked with the relationship between an individual's perception of self and what that
individual consequently undertakes to do. The idea of identity as an organising
principle for action draws attention to the importance of young children developing a
sense of self as a person who can succeed at activities, highlighting the importance of
the contexts and interactions in which self-concepts are learnt. Katz (1996) identified
different aspects of self esteem that adults can support: involve the child in age-
appropriate real tasks that give a sense of achievement; support children while
waiting; always follow through on promises to build up trust; model positive
behaviour and provide children with choices so that they have some control over what
they do.

Maybin (1994) drew on Bakhtin (1986) and Volosinov (1973) to explore a dialogic
model of meaning making, highlighting how 10-11 year olds draw on other people's
voices as part of their negotiation of ideological development. The children's
utterances and exchanges were peppered with others' voices that were internalised as
inner dialogues, so thought processes invoked particular relationships and contexts
from past conversations. Thus one of the ways children constructed their sense of
identity was by taking on other people's voices and interweaving these with other
dialogues and references to other contexts.

Gillen (1999) investigated the expression of pre-school children's identity in a
nursery class attached to a white working class Roman Catholic primary school,

focussing on their pretend play with telephones, where the absence of visual clues meant that identification had to be achieved by auditory means. Gillen concluded that in the freedom offered by this pretend play children succeeded in creating their own voice, echoing Vygotsky's proposal that children's creation of imaginary situations is not fortuitous, but allows children to free themselves from situational constraints (Vygotsky, 1967, p13). As Bruner states:

> … play is a projection of interior life onto the world in opposition to learning through which we interiorise the external world and make it part of ourselves. In play we transform the world according to our desires, while in learning we transform ourselves better to conform to the structure of the world.
>
> (Bruner, 1986b, p78)

3.6 Sociocultural context

> … the process of learning how to negotiate communicatively is the very process by which one enters the culture.   (Bruner, 1984, p1)

As children learn to communicate in the social worlds they are born into, they interpret social and cultural meanings and develop a sense of social identity. However, talk does not necessarily convey clear meanings: children have to wrestle with word meanings, observe how they are used in different social and linguistic contexts, try them out, make mistakes and try them out again in different arenas. Similarly, as discussed in Section 3.4.5, children learn other socioculturally situated sign systems. In this way, culture is constantly shared and recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members, and sociocultural webs of meaning are central to children's interpretations of the worlds they inhabit. As Geertz argues, 'culture is public because meaning is' (Geertz, 1973, p12).

Walkerdine argued that schooling is a major site for the transference of sociocultural values, with an often-concealed agenda to mould citizens who will sustain the beliefs and priorities of the status quo:

> The school, as one of the modern apparatuses of social regulation, defines not only what shall be taught, what knowledge is, but also defines and regulates both what 'a child' is and how learning and teaching are to be considered. It does so by a whole ensemble of apparatuses from the architecture of the school to the individualised work-cards.   (Walkerdine, 1985, p207-208)

Maybin (1992) discussed how the particular ways of using language that children learn in the classroom have deep roots which extend far beyond institutional purposes to underlying cultural beliefs about the nature and purpose of different kinds of knowledge, the ways people's relations with each other should be structured, and the relationship between language and learning.

Similarly, Edwards, T. (1992) drew a contrast between 'talk between equals', where talk is organised as it goes along, as none of the participants has any particular right or obligation to ensure its smooth running, and talk in which the age, gender, social status or role of one or more participants carries certain communicative privileges and responsibilities, such as in most British educational establishments, where 'classrooms have traditionally been marked by highly asymmetrical relationships, the transmission of knowledge creating very unequal communicative rights (Edwards, T., 1992, p72).

Barnes (1992) highlighted how every time we speak we transmit messages about who we are and where we belong, providing a basis for judgements about our capabilities and prospects. Such judgements are potentially damaging for children's self-perception and teachers' expectations of children's abilities:

People can be disadvantaged by sounding disadvantaged – by speaking

haltingly, or declining to use whatever language is associated with 'getting on'

in the world. Similarly, their failure to 'get on' in the world may be

conveniently explained away by treating their speech as evidence of poor

ability or low ambition.   (Barnes, 1992, p69)

As Walkerdine (1985) pointed out, the Western world has come to value highly the role of talk in learning, and its absence has been pathologised. However, as culture evolves and becomes more invaded by and open to multimodal ways of communicating, so educational research needs to develop understandings of how children learn to communicate in different modes.

3.7 The potential long-term benefits of pre-school education

In Britain, the value of full-time education is rarely questioned, yet as discussed in Chapter 1, there has been less conviction regarding the benefits of preschool, partly due to: the long chain of causality between pre-school input and adult outcomes; the complexity of potential cognitive and social benefit derived from effective early learning; the lack of clarity over what 'effective early learning' means and lack of knowledge about what actually goes on in diverse pre-school settings.

In 1960s USA the federally-funded Head Start programme recognised the potential for pre-school education as a major weapon to fight President Johnson's 'War on Poverty' (Woodhead, 1985). However, evaluative studies of the programme in the 1970s and 1980s showed that it did not lead to significant long-term increases in IQ tests (eg Smith and Bissell, 1970). Sylva (1994a) pointed out that although accurate in themselves, the simple input/output models used in these tests failed to recognise the benefits of early learning in terms of social and economic outcomes. Sylva's own studies implied Head Start had positive if short-term (approximately 3 years) effects

on children's self-esteem, scholastic achievement, motivation and social behaviour, most markedly for black children from economically disadvantaged homes (Sylva, 1994a, p86). A series of reports on different aspects of the long-term outcomes of Head Start consistently showed that compared with a control group, children who had experienced high quality pre-school education were less likely to be referred to special education classes or to repeat grades (Lazar et al, 1982, cited by Woodhead, 1985, p134), and were more likely to complete high school and find employment (Royce et al, 1983, cited by Woodhead, 1985, p134).

The Perry Pre-School High/Scope Programme reported lower levels of delinquent behaviour (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1993) and cost-benefit analyses of the project suggested that for every 1,000 US dollars invested in the pre-school programme, a saving of 4,130 US dollars was made in reduced education costs, legal processes and income support allowances (Woodhead, 1985, p135). More recently, Schweinhart and Weikart (1997) investigated pedagogy and outcomes, finding little difference in the academic performance of children receiving direct instruction in pre-school, but a significantly higher incidence of emotional disturbance.

The potentially positive social outcomes suggested by USA preschool projects contrasted to popular and professional opinion in 1970s Britain, where the importance of the home for young children's learning continued to be prioritised (Ball, 1994). For example, in her review of research into the benefits of early learning, Tizard reported to the SSRC 'it seems certain … that without continuous reinforcement in the primary school or home, pre-school education has no long-term effect on later school achievement' (Tizard et al, 1974, p4). These conclusions coincided with the recession, and as mentioned in Chapter 1, the combined effects of lack of cash and lack of conviction put paid to the development of preschool provision.

Lack of conviction was again reflected in Margaret Clark's review of large and small-scale British research on the effects of pre-school attendance (Clark, 1988). Clark

reported that although attendance at pre-school appeared to have positive educational and/or social benefits for most children, many of these benefits were not found to last beyond infant school, and it was unclear which kinds of provision brought about the most successful outcomes.

Overall, British research evidence has proposed that 'high quality' early education leads to the most lasting cognitive and social benefits for children (Ball, 1994), yet definitions of quality have been elusive. Ball suggested quality is linked to the early-learning curriculum, the selection, training and continuity of staff, staff:child ratios, buildings and equipment and parental involvement (Ball, 1994, p18). The criteria used in the EPPE study (DfEE, 1999b) reflect these values, although by using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), key factors such as child:staff ratios are not included in their study.

The 'effectiveness' and 'quality' of provision therefore appears central to long-term benefits, yet defining an effective pedagogy has been, and continues to be, elusive.

3.8 What is 'effective' early years pedagogy?

There is very little research on how different early years practitioners perceive their roles and how their different approaches impact on children's learning. In Scotland, through observation and interview of practitioners in voluntary, local authority and private sectors, Stephen et al (1999) found that trained teachers emphasized conditions for learning, play leaders emphasized social skills and children's engagement in activities and nursery nurses focussed on practical life skills. In a small-scale study of practitioners' theoretical understandings, Wood and Bennett (1997) found practitioners expressed both Piagetian non-interventionist views and neo-Vygotskian approaches to support children's learning.

Pascal and Bertram (1997) have proposed that 'effective learning' can be achieved through joint involvement of teacher and child, where the child has focussed, persistent attention on a task or activity and is assured of the adult's attention in a symbiotic relationship, each stimulating the other to deeper engagement with the task. In preschools, REPEY (DfES, 2002, p44) found the richest exchanges between staff and children occurred during shared thinking, when staff sensitively extended children's play, such as joining in socio-dramatic play, rather than by using 'over directed or didactic teaching'. Sustained shared thinking occurred mostly during 1:1 or 1:2 adult:child exchanges, but as such moments were rare, the total amount of shared thinking was very low. The study concluded:

> The evidence suggests that there is no *one* 'effective' pedagogy. Instead, the effective pedagogue orchestrates pedagogy by making interventions (scaffolding, discussing, monitoring, allocating tasks), which are sensitive to the curriculum concept or skill being 'taught', taking into account the child's 'zone of proximal development', or at least that assumed in the particular social grouping.   (DfES, 2002, p43)

However, REPEY focussed on *teacher* pedagogy, acknowledging that child-initiated learning episodes, which constituted half of all interactions in settings rated as good or excellent, were not included in their analyses (DfES, 2002, p53).

In summary, there is very little qualitative research into and informed understanding of what constitutes 'effective pedagogy'. Indeed, a recent small-scale study of practitioner understandings of play and learning found a 'desperately-felt need of all the practitioners for support in understanding underpinning theories of children's cognitive processes' (Moyles and Adams, 2000, p364).

3.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, research has been reviewed to illustrate how layers of sociocultural, institutional and immediate contexts interweave to shape young children's communicative experiences and learning. Research into infants' early language development has shown how learning to talk is inextricably linked to emotional and social contexts, where diverse socially constructed sign systems are interdependent in the constructions of meaning. Research has also been discussed that suggests educational establishments, whether preschool or school, are success-defining institutions, where children acquire self images that are influenced by their own and others' perceptions of their competences, including communicative competence. Comparatively recently, research from a social semiotic perspective has begun to investigate how physical action and visual 2 and 3 dimensional modes act and interact as socially organised sign-making systems in the construction of meaning, leading to the proposition that different modes provide different views of the world and offer different potentials for learning.

Research into the effects of pre-school education is sparse, but has identified some short-term cognitive gains and long-term social benefits. Over the years, 'quality' of provision and 'effective pedagogy' have been identified as key, yet definitions of these terms have been far from clear. Recent studies have begun to identify aspects of 'effective pedagogy', but overall, very little is known about how different adult approaches or peer interactions impact upon children's learning.

This study investigates questions raised about 'effective pedagogy', particularly with regard to children's multimodal meaning-making and communication, the role of the practitioner in promoting and facilitating the interrelationship between different modes of learning, and the role of research to theorise multimodal meaning making rather than focussing on a narrow band of spoken and written signs.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

> People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do;
> but what they don't know is what what they do does.
> (Foucault, personal communication, cited by Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p187)

This quotation encapsulates the driving force behind this study, which, in the light of changes to early years' provision discussed in the preceding chapters, foregrounds individual children's communicative experiences during their first year at pre-school. The study needed a methodological framework that would permit both a sharp focus on the children's communicative strategies and a wider perspective on the overlapping and opaque layers of institutional, social and cultural contexts in which they were situated. As Bruner (1997) suggests, such enquiry is not amenable to 'nomothetic science':

> … the nomothetic aims to convert intuitions and hunches about recurrent
> regularities into causal statements by the use of logical and empirical test
> procedures. Its outcome eventually takes the form of robust scientific theories,
> preferably framed in logico-mathematical terms. But certain domains of
> knowledge seem not to be amenable to such standard nomothetic science,
> particularly domains in which humans are transactionally involved, reacting to
> each other in anticipation of how the other might react as in daily life … To
> comprehend such circumstances, we characteristically use another way of
> making sense. Its objective seems less to prove or verify than to construct a
> meaningful *narrative,* or story … Rather than testing our intuitions about the
> causal or logical basis of experienced regularities as in the nomothetic mode, we

seek in the second mode to explicate experience by converting it into a narrative structure … but narrative necessity, unlike logical or inductive proof, does not yield unique or preclusive descriptions: there can be several equally compelling stories about the same set of 'events'. (Bruner, 1997, p71)

The study was also exploratory. Although research questions had been proposed at the outset, these questions were not designed to provide incontrovertible answers. The methodology needed flexibility and detail to permit the exploration of different possible interpretations of the data during analysis, drawing on the range of broadly sociocultural approaches discussed in Chapter 2, and needed to allow for changes in the children's behaviours over time.

Bearing these factors in mind, a naturalistic, longitudinal approach was adopted, using ethnographic case studies of individual children to portray the detail of their experiences and of different participants' different interpretations of the events observed. Furthermore, a descriptive analytic account would allow scope for multiple interpretations from the different perspectives of different readers of the study.

In this chapter, I discuss the epistemological and ontological assumptions behind this methodological approach, and consider the implications for the internal and external validity of the study, for the role of the researcher, for data collection methods, for interpretations and representations of the data collected and for ethical issues.

4.2 Epistemological assumptions

… any piece of research always carries within itself an epistemology – a theory about knowledge and truth and their relationship to the world or 'reality'. This epistemology is never 'innocent' because it always contains within itself a set of values - which means there is always a *politics* of research, an implication of research with power relations. (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p149)

Epistemological beliefs about what can be known are intrinsically linked with ontological beliefs about what exists, about the nature of the world and about what 'reality' is. Interpretations of what is meant by 'reality', and the value and purposes of research to investigate reality have fuelled exhaustive academic debate encompassing issues far too numerous to revisit in this project.

A positivist/empiricist epistemology tends to generate research that emphasises the determinacy of knowledge: that there is a single, rational truth to be known that is generalisable, frequently predictive and has a universal rather than embedded rationality. However, as Kuhn (1970) points out, researchers have inescapable personal histories shaped by culture, values, discourses and social structures that a positivist paradigm fails to take into account.

This study takes an interpretive stance, where human action is understood and interpreted within the context of social practices, yet this renders the knowledge created partial and perspective-bound. Interpretive approaches have been criticised for lacking rigour and systemacity, for being too subjective, of little relevance to other contexts or other moments in time, for being personal and lacking the research-defining qualities of validity and reliability (for a review of critiques see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

However, an interpretive paradigm draws attention to the complex, double-sense-making processes of research, where both the actions of those researched and of those conducting the research must be made apparent. In order to 'know', researchers must be aware of their pre-understandings, and recognise that these understandings are grounded in the perspectives offered by their own situatedness. Rather than attempting to 'bracket' these understandings, they are used as a starting point for acquiring further situated knowledge. Though this may offer a limited horizon, Gadamer suggests that interpretive research is characterised by a 'fusion of horizons' (cited by Scott and Usher, 1999, p29): the researcher's horizon can be connected to other horizons and/or standpoints. An interpretive paradigm therefore involves a dialogue between the different 'truths' emanating from the situatedness of individual researchers and from the

situatedness of that which and those who they are trying to understand. Knowledge created in this paradigm is circular, iterative and spiral. No matter how full, interpretations and knowledge claims are always situated, incomplete and ambiguous.

Whilst agreeing with interpretive paradigms that observations can never be value-neutral or independent of interpretations, and that no single truth exists, this study adopts a post-structuralist approach, taking the argument a step further to explore how reality is unstable, in constant flux and how knowledge is constructed through the practices of language or sign systems. From this perspective, social subjects are not unitary, but are constituted and reconstituted in different subject positions through intersubjectivity, discourse and language. Rather than acting as a mirror to reflect a 'reality', the structures and conventions of language, or the codings of any signifying system, govern what can be known and what can be communicated. Furthermore, all readings of a text depend upon the historical/cultural moment in which they are read and upon the beliefs and judgements of different readers.

As discussed in Chapter 2, post-structuralism has been criticised for rendering uncertain others' assumptions whilst assuming as valid its own negative proposals. However, post-structural approaches have led to an awareness of the need to go beyond hermeneutics (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982) and to reconsider how to investigate not only the world that is constructed and observed by research but also the way that world is represented, written about or constituted in the research text.

An interpretive paradigm therefore highlights the situated, contextual nature of 'reality' and 'knowledge' and recognises that any research, through the formulation of questions, design, data collection, analysis and write-up, is as much about the researcher's beliefs and value systems as it is about the issues and people studied. A post-structural epistemology extends this position, highlighting the researcher's subjectivity, located differently at different times throughout the research process, and recognising the need to make explicit and to engage with the 'baggage' of multiple voices brought to research:

> A text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the author's meaning) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.   (Barthes, 1977, p146)

Many texts speak through this research document, constituting power-knowledge discourses through which the research is reported. Thus in addition to reflexivity, issues of textuality and representation are considered as central to the research project.

4.3 Ethnography as a research methodology

> As a first approximation, we can say that an ethnography is the written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people.   *(*Duranti, 1997, p85)

Hammersley (1992) discusses how ethnography has evolved against a constant backdrop of criticism, initially emanating from the positivist-interpretive divide and focussed on the 'unscientific' nature of interpretive claims, but latterly, emerging from disagreements within ethnography due to the diversification of ethnographic approaches. These criticisms have been voiced and disputed extensively elsewhere (eg Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, Hammersley, 1992, Thomas, 1993). Here I outline the recurring issues of representation, reliability, generalisability and the contributions of ethnographic research to practice.

Historically, ethnographic accounts have come to be valued for their ability to capture the complexities of particular social phenomena and to draw attention to conventions of social life that had been taken for granted. Many ethnographers have adopted the anthropologist Clifford Geertz' notion of 'thick description', originally conceived by Gilbert Ryle (Ryle, 1971), to test theory against the detail of observed behaviours. Yet

this approach begs the question of what data has been selected for description, inviting criticisms of naïve conceptions of validity and accusations that ethnography *makes* rather than *reflects* culture (eg Clifford and Marcus, 1986, Denzin, 1990) and bears more resemblance to fiction or art than to research.

If ethnographers recognise that there are 'as many realities as there are persons' (Smith, 1984, p386), and if ethnographic accounts are situated and particular, then how generalisable are their findings? Miles and Huberman (1994, p27) suggest that such questions miss the point of any form of qualitative enquiry, where the findings serve to 'put flesh on the bones of general constructs' rather than to generalise about all settings.

Ethnographic research is further criticised for contributing to knowledge within the research community whilst failing to inform practice and meet the needs of practitioners, but Hammersley retorts that 'the relevance of ethnography to practice is most likely to be general and indirect, rather than providing solutions to immediate practical problems' (Hammersley, 1992, p6).

In the light of these criticisms, what can this study gain from an ethnographic approach? Mitchell has proposed ethnography can develop the robustness of theory through the study of 'critical cases' (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984, pp237-241). Rather than using 'enumerative induction' as in quantitative, positivist research where cases are selected for their 'representativeness', Mitchell proposes using 'analytic induction':

> What the anthropologist using a case study to support an argument does is to show how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances. A good case study, therefore, enables the analyst to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena which previously were ineluctable. From this point of view, the search for a "typical" case for analytical exposition is likely to be less fruitful than the search for a "telling" case in which the particular

circumstances surrounding a case, serve to make previously obscure theoretical

relationships suddenly apparent.   (Mitchell, J.C. in Ellen, 1984, p239)

Criticisms of ethnography that it misguidedly assumes ethnographic description is more insightful than everyday descriptions (eg Hammersley, 1992) still throw doubt even on this latter rationale. However, ethnographic research differs from everyday observations in the rigour of its data collection and analysis, allowing detailed examination of the processes at work in ways that are elusive in the day-to-day-ness of lived practice. By rigorously illuminating the particular, the researcher is able to identify issues that exist in the theory, allowing for the formulation of new approaches in response to data. Thus ethnographic studies of 'telling cases' are particularly suited to this project, which aims to tease out patterns and peculiarities from the dynamics of everyday life.

4.4 Considering case studies

Graue and Walsh (1998) suggest that despite decades of qualitative and quantitative studies of early learning, research on young children has not attended closely enough to children's experiences in local contexts, in specific cultures, at particular points in time. They argue for a situated and complex portrayal of inquiry:

> Rather than sampling subjects to represent a population, we must be fiercely interested in individuals, particular individuals. The focus of enquiry must become intensely local …The lens of research must zoom in to a shot of the situated child. Her context is more than an interchangeable backdrop – it is part of the picture, lending life to the image portrayed by the researcher.
>
> (Graue and Walsh, 1998 pp8-9)

Longitudinal ethnographic case studies have offered this project a route to situated understandings of the fine-grained realities of individual children's experiences of the

new environment of playgroup, affording insights into 'what what we do does' (Foucault, cited by Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p187). As Simons argues:

> … case study research is needed now more than ever before to challenge orthodox thinking, to get beneath the surface of policy implementation to reveal in-depth understanding and, most importantly, to take a quantum leap in how we come to understand complex educational situations. (Simons, 1996, p231)

Different interpretations of the nature and purpose of case studies have led to debate about case study and theory, reliability, generalisability, appropriate forms of analysis and issues of representation in analytic writing. I now address these issues.

4.4.1 Case study and theory

Stake (1994) identified three types of case study in social research:

- o *intrinsic case study,* where each case is viewed as a unique configuration, of interest neither because the case is representative of other cases nor because it illustrates a particular issue, but because 'in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest' (Stake, 1994, p237)
- o *instrumental case study*, where a particular case is selected because it is expected to enable the researcher to explore or refine the understandings of particular phenomena or theories. Here, the case is of secondary interest to the issue.
- o *collective case study,* where an instrumental case study is extended to a number of cases in order to inquire into either particular or general phenomena.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p29) use the term *multiple-case sampling* to describe the study of a range of similar and contrasting cases in order to strengthen the precision and validity of single case findings. In collective or multiple-case case studies, cases are chosen because the researcher believes that understanding the different cases may lead to more informed theorising about a wider selection of cases.

However, these categories are heuristic rather than functional as the iterative paths of research understandings blur the dividing lines between intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. Indeed, in this study, I began by selecting cases for their intrinsic interest, my first aim being to understand each case in as full and complex a manner as time and access permitted. As issues that contradicted or illustrated my initial research questions emerged, I began to look across cases and refine my questions, looking again at individual cases. The final approach used here is close to Miles and Huberman's notion of multiple case studies, whilst encapsulating the particularity of each chosen case. This echoes Peshkin's approach that each case can be read with interest in the case itself, but it is also possible to learn from the case about some class of things (Peshkin, 1986).

4.4.2 Case Study and Generalisability

The generalisability or external validity of qualitative research has been long contested, with differences of opinion emanating largely from different interpretations of the role and purpose of research, further confounded by notions of generalisability that have evolved out of quantitative research.

'Generalisability' in quantitative research is used to refer to the representativeness of the sample, often selected by using statistical or random sampling procedures. The validity of this representativeness is then accepted as a basis for making inferences across wider populations. Viewed in these terms, 'generalisability' appears incongruous with the aims of qualitative research projects where, rather than sampling randomly across a large number of cases, data are frequently collected from a small number of purposively selected cases. Simons proposes that the notion of 'generalisability' needs redefinition for qualitative research, arguing that posing the question of generalisability 'assumes a polarity and stems from a particular view of research' (Simons, 1996, p225). This view, she suggests, fails to comprehend the 'unique and universal understandings' offered by case studies, and therein lies the 'paradox of case study' (Simons, 1996), that its very strength of investigating particularity and uniqueness, often with uncertain yet

insightful and potentially innovative results, is considered a weakness by policy makers who only know how to value certainty and empirical generalisation. Simons likens the role of case study research to that of the artist, who by capturing a single instance locked in time and circumstances, manages to communicate a deep and enduring truth about the human condition. Thus 'by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal' (Simons, 1996, p231).

For Stake, the strength of case studies lies in particularity rather than generalisation, and he proposes the concept of 'naturalistic generalisation', arguing that generalisation must be considered from the reader's perspective:

> Case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person *a natural basis for generalisation.* (Stake, 1978, p5)

On this basis, case studies can modify generalisations, either by producing counter-arguments that acknowledge variability and lead to the refinement of a generalisation, or by producing positive examples and increasing confidence in the generalisation (Stake, 1995).

Stake's argument is concordant with Goodwin and Goodwin's lament that 'the trouble with generalizations is that they don't apply to particulars' (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1996, p110). From this perspective, generalisability concerns studying the particular in order to identify generic processes on a theoretical and conceptual level, rather than accounting for practices in all populations:

> … Generalisation in ethnography takes a different form from other approaches, including those more rooted in empirical generalisation. Whereas in such cases, final claims are formulated in terms of generalisations across a range of contexts, researchers in the Ethnography of Communication hold to the

particularity of their field setting right till the end, insisting that the meaning of their informants' actions can only be grasped in their context as a whole.

(Erickson, 1977, p59)

This reflects a change in definitions of 'generalisability', moving away from an essentially quantitative notion of statistical sampling and privileging representativeness across a broad population, and towards a definition of 'generalisability' as challenging or refining existing theory. Miles and Huberman make this point with regard to case studies in general and to multiple case studies in particular:

> With multiple case studies, does the issue of *generalizability* change? Essentially, no. We are generalizing from one case to the next on the basis of a match to the underlying theory, not to a larger universe.

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, p29)

This is not to imply that multiple cases allow more general conclusions than single cases: the key is to select 'telling' rather than 'typical' cases, where the exception is taken as seriously as the rule. Furthermore, the terms of analysis must be of 'analytical induction' rather than 'enumerative induction' (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984, discussed in **3.** above and later in this chapter).

In this thesis, generalisability is viewed in Anderson's terms of 'Lessons Learned' (Anderson, 1998, p160), where a lesson is derived from a given case but has *potential generalisability* to other situations and settings whilst respecting particularity. As Street (2002) suggested, this gives the reader more of the responsibility, by saying:

> This is the situation I studied, and these are the things I found going on there. Look at it in detail. How does it compare with things that you've observed? Are your processes a bit different? What is it in our two situations that could account for these differences?' (Street, 2002)

This approach highlights the tentative and uncertain nature of theoretical propositions that must allow for differences from one setting to another, differences over time and differences in perspectives within one setting. However, this does not imply relinquishing the notion of generalisability: the findings of this study are linked to existing theories of young children's communicative strategies and to the findings of past and contemporary studies in the field, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Generalisability pivots on the robustness of the conclusions drawn based on the depth and accuracy of data representation, and the need to convince readers of the research that the conclusions drawn are consistent with the evidence provided.

4.4.3 Case Study and Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to whether the findings make sense and the account is an accurate and credible representation of the phenomena studied (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Silverman (2000) discusses three frequently criticised weaknesses in qualitative research pertaining to internal validity:

1. a reliance on a few choice or anecdotal examples
2. little discussion of the criteria for selection of examples, so the reader cannot determine the representativeness of the data presented
3. if data are presented in tabular or abstracted form, then the original content of the raw materials is lost, leaving the reader with no basis for alternative interpretations of the data.

During data collection, analysis and write-up of this study, method triangulation, a clear data trail, respondent validation and 'thick description' (Ryle, 1971, Geertz, 1973) were used to provide a convincing account of the phenomena studied. These four dimensions of internal validity are now discussed.

4.4.3.1 Method Triangulation

The data collection methods in this study were selected for epistemological and practical reasons: to provide multiple avenues to arrive at multiple 'truths'; for

triangulation to gauge the reliability and validity of emerging findings; to overcome the considerable technical difficulties of recording young children' s quiet voices in a noisy environment and to capture the multiple modes used for meaning making. An overview of the features and purposes of these methods is set out in *Figure 4.1* below:

Figure 4.1: Data Collection Methods

Method	Features	Purpose
Initial Observation	Extended period of contact as helper and observer	Become familiar with particularities of setting and begin to understand local meanings; become a familiar presence in setting
Audio and Video Recordings	Precise record of naturally occurring interactions	Understand complexities and dynamics of processes of interaction
Field Notes	Memo-like, noting own and others' comments on events, plus details of child interaction beyond narrow video lens	Add to audio and video data, document own thoughts and feelings, plus others' comments; begin to identify themes
Research Diary	Reflective journal written mostly at home	Document development of study and own subjective values; reflect on and develop Field Notes.
Interviews	Semi-structured group and individual interviews and informal 'chats'	Gain insights into others' perspectives over time and in different ways; check for consistency in participants' views

Documents	Detailed background information and curriculum details	Gain understandings of wider societal and cultural contexts, and of thinking behind Foundation Stage Curriculum
Consultation	Structured meetings and informal conversations with participants during data collection, transcription and analysis.	Respondent Validation

(Table adapted from Silverman, 2000, p90)

Visual and audio methods of data collection were chosen to explore how the children used a range of resources to mediate through words, noises, gaze, facial gesture and body movement. This approach reflected the belief behind the research questions that the creation of symbolic meanings is highly social and multimodal, and that focussing exclusively on audio recordings of the children's speech - a mode not yet fully available to them - would create a false impression of the children as communicatively limited and fail to paint a full picture of their communicative strategies.

The above data collection methods resulted in a large data resource, including:
- o approximately 40 hours of video observations with audio soundtrack
- o 130 pages of time-coded video log, plus 42 page synopsis of video log
- o 34 hours of target child audio recordings (same moments in time as video recordings to clarify target child utterances; only some home observations were separately audio recorded)
- o approximately 300 pages transcriptions of target child audio recordings
- o approximately 8 ½ hours audio recorded parent and staff interviews
- o approximately 190 pages interview transcriptions
- o 103 x A4 pages handwritten Field Notes
- o 64 x A4 pages handwritten Diary Notes

All audio recorded data was transcribed, and all video data was logged, but for the purposes of analysis, data were reduced to 5 or 6 sessions per child, spread as evenly as possible across the year (see Appendix 4.1). Throughout analysis, the remaining data was referred to repeatedly to check for confirming or disconfirming evidence.

4.4.3.2 Video Recordings

During a pilot study conducted in Autumn 1999, I experimented with a compact digital video camera (JVC - DVL9000). The chief virtues of digital video technology were found to be: compact size; ease of use; manoeuvrability; filming was not obtrusive; a side opening monitor allowed the researcher freedom from holding the camera or peering through the viewfinder; any video frame could be printed as a still.

Different positions for the video were trialled: a tripod gave the camera stability but its splaying legs risked either tripping up or being knocked over by participants; mounting the camera on a wall bracket was impractical as the playgroup studied had two rooms, both with partially concealed areas, such as the Home Corner. Ultimately, the most flexible uses were found to be simply holding the camera or resting it on a shelf or table. Occasionally, members of staff and children made video recordings.

The pilot study highlighted the narrow focal range of a standard lens, so a JVC X0.6 wide-angle lens adaptor was clipped on the standard lens. Using the full width of this lens and the full depth of the built-in zoom allowed considerable flexibility when recording, from capturing an individual child's facial expression to panning out to show the general activity in each room. Frequently, the video image of the target child was obscured by others passing in front of the camera. Re-positioning the video to accommodate the children and adults' many movements was not problematic, but care was taken to sacrifice data rather than intrude on the participants' activities.

During the first few weeks of filming, the children showed an awareness of my presence, sometimes watching what I was recording, asking what I was doing and why.

I explained I was learning about playgroup, and older children occasionally gave me lengthy directions as to where things were and who was who, many written in Field Notes. They soon became familiar with the presence of the video, and with the many distractions in the setting, their interest transferred elsewhere. In general, the children seemed less aware of the video camera when I was not holding it, so most of the video footage was recorded with me standing or sitting near the camera, glancing at the image in the side monitor.

However, it was never safe to conclude that the children were oblivious to the camera. For instance, on one occasion the camera was positioned on a shelf inside the Home Corner and I was sitting at a table nearby, glancing into the Home Corner through one of its windows. Two girls were inside 'preparing a meal', seemingly unaware of the camera's presence. When they sat at the table to eat their 'meal', one girl stood up again, walked to the camera, placed a cereal packet in front of it and returned to her seat. They made no reference to the camera, but smiled at each other and continued 'eating'. This act indicated that not only had they been aware of the camera, but there were private times when its presence was unacceptable. Issues arising from children's rights to privacy are discussed in more detail in Section 4.6 below.

Although the quality of the audio track on the video recordings was high, surrounding sound frequently made the children's voices inaudible, as did the distance between the camera and the observed children, so separate audio recordings were made.

4.4.3.3 Audio Recordings

During the pilot study and the first term of data collection, a small tape recorder with a clip-on microphone was used running simultaneously with the video recordings. The recorder was placed in a 'bum bag'[1], worn by the target child with a lapel mike, or a member of staff would wear the 'bag' with the mike on her sleeve and position her arm near the target child. After several weeks, more lightweight and less cumbersome

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[1] Children had a choice of bags, including plain, gold, camouflage, Barbie and troll

equipment was found in a Sony 'Memory Stick IC Recorder'. This battery operated compact digital recording device with highly receptive recording allowed up to 130 minutes' recording on a Memory Stick, downloaded onto computer and played back using on-screen editing software. This compact device could be slipped into a child's pocket, with a mike attached to the child's clothing, allowing a maximum of uninhibited movement for each child and a maximum of captured data. The children occasionally incorporated the recorder into their play, using it as a camera, ticket-punch, telephone, walkie-talkie, torch and calculator. The locking device on the recorder ensured it continued to record throughout such games -it even survived being regularly dropped into the Sand Tray.

However, by no means all of the children's talk was distinct on the audio recordings, partly due to the children's quiet or unclear speech and the volume of surrounding noise. Written notes of the children's talk were also sometimes made in Field Notes and referred to constantly during transcription, discussed in Section 4.5.1 below.

4.4.3.4 Field Notes

During the Pilot Study, I experimented with two methods for Field Notes: standard observation sheets used by the staff for child studies (derived from Sylva et al, 1980) and unstructured notes. The observation sheets were designed to record each child's interactions every minute for 10+ minutes, and as such replicated rather than added to the video data. Unstructured notes allowed more flexibility, adding detail to the child's movements and utterances when these were obscured; noting activities outside the range of the video lens; recording my thoughts during data collection and transcription. When possible, participants' comments were written verbatim to retain their voices in the data. The video time code was written next to each Field Note, an invaluable reference during transcription and analysis, clearly situating my reflections and others thoughts in the data. Looking back over the notes, it is possible to track where some ideas have sprung from, and to reflect upon why those ideas occurred to me at those particular points in time.

4.4.3.5 Diary

A hand-written Research Diary was kept throughout the study, written anywhere and at any time and slotted into a diary folder. For each entry, the time, date and location were noted. Written initially as an aide-memoire, the diary evolved with time, containing passages of reflective writing, hastily sketched diagrams of half-formed ideas, many crossings out and lots of arrows linking ideas and observations. Field notes were sometimes developed in diary notes, including further data collection plans, and possible emerging themes. Transcription was a particularly fertile time for the diary as potential patterns began to emerge, to be confirmed or contradicted by later work. This process of noting, confirming and disconfirming data created an internal dialogue that led me to question how and why I had formed particular judgements or conclusions.

The diary also recorded my emotional responses during the study, invaluable when read with the benefit of hindsight, revealing how and where my Self coloured my interpretations, as discussed in Section 4.4.4.2 below. For example, I became distressed when a girl was allowed to cry, with little comforting, for 11 minutes as staff felt her display was stubbornness. At the time I felt I should not interfere, and later became so angry when watching the incident on video I decided to exclude it from the final data. However, I later revoked that decision when I realised the incident had triggered a line of thought that had developed into a theme of different perspectives of institutional power. The Diary Note helped me identify where the theme had originated, leading to a fine-combing of the data set for examples and counter examples of similar incidents. It also highlighted the ambiguous position of the researcher, discussed in Section 4.4.4.1.

4.4.3.6 Documents

Documentary evidence was used for limited and specific purposes, including:
- o Gathering statistics on pre-school provision in England
- o Gaining an understanding of the Local Education Authority's view of training and provision within the county studied

o Gaining an official assessment of the general standards within the setting from recent Ofsted Inspection Report of the setting

o Understanding early years curriculum and assessment as portrayed in official publications

All documents were read critically, and where possible, data was gathered from different sources and compared. Consideration was given to who the documents had been written by and for, who had paid for them to be written, and what their purposes appeared to be.

4.4.3.7 Interviews

Interviews were conducted to gain background information about participants' views on the ethos, values and role of this particular playgroup as a pre-school provider and to investigate how different participants generated differently plausible accounts of the playgroup context and of particular children. During semi-structured interviews, core interview questions (see Appendix 4.2), phrased to be open and exploratory, probed issues arising from informal chats with staff and parents during initial and ongoing observations. Glesne and Peshkin conceptualise interviewing as:

> … the process of getting words to fly … you want your … questions to stimulate verbal flights from the important others who know what you do not. From these flights come the information you transmute into data.
>
> (Glesne and Peshkin,1992, p63)

An interview is a unique speech act (Mishler, 1986), which has its own unique characteristics and unequal power issues. No matter how seemingly 'unstructured', all interviews are structured in some way by the organised or contrived presence of the researcher and the informant. The interviewer, as author of the questions and instigator of the interview, wields unquestionable authority, yet is simultaneously dependent on the authority and accessibility of the interviewee's knowledge and perceptions. Interviewees may be intimidated by the interview process, and tailor their answers to

their perceptions of 'correct' answers rather than feel confident to give opinions. The interviewer must plan carefully, be flexible to the participants' needs and responses whilst still trying to accomplish the research aims. To allow for flexibility, two interview formats were used: semi-structured interviews and unstructured chats.

Semi-structured interviews with mothers: These gained insights into the parents' perspectives on each child, and into the parents' choice and expectations of preschool. Termly interviews were conducted in each child's home, usually on the day of home observation sessions. In the two girls' homes, only the mothers were present as the interviews were conducted during the day while the fathers were at work. One boy's father worked from home and joined us for some of the interview time. Home visits were made in the early evening for the other boy, often with not only the mother and partner present, but also siblings and their friends. In all cases, the majority of the interview time was spent with mothers, therefore it is more appropriate to refer to these as 'mother' rather than 'parent' interviews.

Although the same core questions were asked of all mothers (Appendix 4.2), the length of the interviews varied from 18 to 58 minutes, depending on the mothers' responses. Some mothers answered the questions thoughtfully but 'efficiently', occasionally adding extra information and discussing aspects of their child's development. Others talked at length about many aspects of the child's life, interests and development, expanding upon the questions asked and raising many personal issues, some outside the remit of the study. Although on such occasions I drew the mothers back into topics more closely related to the research, these longer sessions were invaluable for building mutual trust and respect, discussed further in Section 4.6 below. All the mothers appeared to welcome the opportunity to talk about their child, enquiring about my insights into their children's activities at playgroup. This was particularly important for one mother who worked and was unable to attend playgroup, who stated many times that my visits made her feel much more involved in her son's pre-school experiences.

Semi-structured interviews with staff: After consultation with the staff, it was decided that for economy of time and ease of location, staff interviews would be conducted as a group and held over lunch at the playgroup, preceding staff planning meetings. All staff gave permission for the group interviews to be recorded. In fact, the quietest member of staff pointed out that as they all had to struggle with the pressures of transcribing children's speech when conducting child studies for training, it would seem 'cruel' to sit and watch me attempt to do the same as they spoke (June, 'Diary Note' 5.12.00). Three staff group interviews were held, one each term from October 2000 – July 2001.

To help counter the effects of any staff nervousness, each interview began with specific questions, for instance the age and family background of children, before moving on to more general enquiries (see Appendix 4.2). With time, I found the most effective way to get the participants' perspectives was to arrive obliquely at issues. For example, to explore the staff's perspectives of their roles and responsibilities, I began by asking specific questions about the curriculum, what they did in particular tasks, probing their answers with questions about whether they viewed themselves as 'teachers', 'carers' etc. I also asked similar but differently phrased questions at consecutive interviews, to check consistencies, inconsistencies and nuanced meanings in their responses.

The interviews stimulated exchanges of experience and lengthy discussions between staff about their practice and perspectives of individual children, triggering further exploration of the issues raised, and feeding into core questions for later interviews.

The interviews always included humour and joint reconstruction of past events, reinforcing the positive ethos of the group. The staff commented that group interviews offered them the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and gain insights into each other's views. Although there was a clear hierarchy within the group, with the playgroup leader often answering first, all members of staff participated, prompted and encouraged not only by myself but also by each other and they often arrived at agreement having explored issues from different standpoints. Overall, the meanings that emerged from these interviews seemed to be more influenced by the social nature of the

group interaction than by individual perspectives. To get richer detail about individual experiences and perspectives, I used informal 'chats' during lulls in playgroup activity, or whilst helping individual staff members to set up or dismantle activities.

'Chats' as interviews with staff and parents: Throughout data collection, I had countless conversations 'on the fly' with members of staff and parents, writing direct quotes in the Field Notes, paraphrasing as soon afterwards as possible and developing them more fully after the session, cross-referencing to transcribed data and/or transforming into questions for subsequent interviews. I had many 'chats' with parents while they helped at playgroup, or when leaving or fetching their child from playgroup. This informal approach allowed access to the fathers and offered unique insights as 'chats' frequently arose from the participants proposing their own views on specific events as they occurred in the field.

Talking to different participants at different times throughout data collection, transcription, analysis and consultation, in different places and in different ways helped to triangulate for validity across respondents and across time and clarified meanings by identifying different ways the phenomena were being seen and interpreted, which in turn illustrated the complexities and multiplicity of the different 'realities' participants were experiencing within the same setting.

4.4.3.8 Data Trail

> With respect to internal validity, the strongest argument in favour of the case study is that it incorporates a chain-of-evidence, a tight and interconnected path of recording evidence so the reader who was not present to observe the case can follow the analysis and come to the stated conclusion. (Anderson, 1998, p159)

The evolution, selection and display of data are central to the credibility of any qualitative study. How does the researcher move from hundreds of pages of transcripts, field and diary notes, and scores of hours of video and audio recordings to producing a final report? The data must be organised in such a way as to leave a clear 'audit trail'

(Halpern 1983, Lincoln and Guba, 1985) or chain of evidence that can convince readers the research findings are based on a critical evaluation of all the data.

Figure 4.2 indicates in diagrammatic form how the different data collection methods were combined for data analysis:

- Parent and staff interviews (***A***) were combined with documentary analysis (***C***) to investigate different views on and expectations of playgroups as preschool providers (***E***).
- Parent and staff interviews (***A***), child observations at home and in playgroup (***B***) and the Field and Diary Notes (***D***) were combined to give insights into different perceptions of the children studied (***F***).
- Using 'constant comparison' (Silverman, 2000) the different data sets were explored to construct narrative child profiles, using 'thick description' (see Section 4.4.3.10 below) to give the reader more situated understandings of the particularities of each case child (***G***). Constant comparison began with a focus on each child in turn: by reading audio transcripts with provisional coding and early analytic field and diary notes; comparing these with the video log, and early analytic notes. Categories began to emerge from this stage of comparison.
- All the video sequences were reviewed first without and then with sound, and further categories emerged, often indicating contradictory findings.
- The next stage involved sorting the many categories into conceptual 'bins' that corresponded to the research questions, with a separate 'bin' for 'stray' categories and re-coding of the data.
- This extremely time-consuming process was repeated for each child.
- Comparisons were then made between the cases and in a further layer of abstraction, after consultation with staff and parents (***I***), a range of emerging issues was selected for final analysis (***H***), drawing on material from all stages of data collection and analysis.

Figure 4.2 Data Analysis Plan
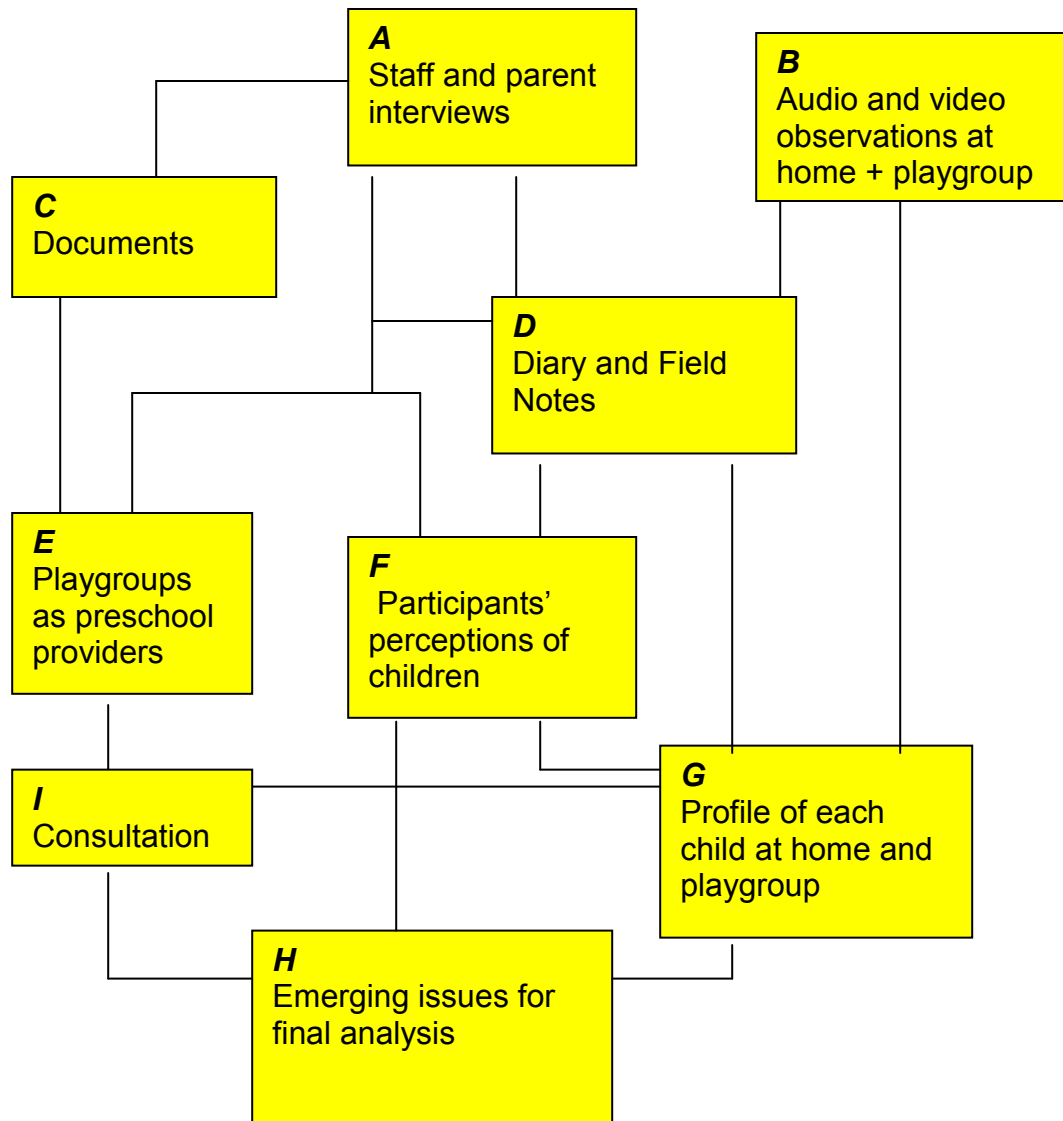
Miles and Huberman's Qualitative Analysis Documentation Form (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p283, see Appendix 4.3) was adapted to record and plot each analytic theme. The visual immediacy of this format made the data more accessible and acted as an aide memoire, mapping where data had been selected from and highlighting neglected areas to which I returned when writing the final analysis.

4.4.3.9 Respondent Validation

In addition to method triangulation, respondent validation can aid interpretive research explore the multiplicity of realities and meanings attributed to any single act by different participants and by the researcher. As discussed in Section 4.4.3.1, during data collection and early analysis, I frequently spoke with adult participants to gauge their responses to emerging issues. Their comments fed into the Research Diary, where trails of ideas can be traced as they developed over time. These embryonic themes began to shape data collection. For example, I began the study by observing one child for set periods of time at each activity. The data seemed to imply that different types of interaction occurred at different activities, and after consultation with staff I began to categorise activities, gradually sharpening the research focus. Thus the processes of data collection, early analysis and respondent validation developed as intertwining spirals.

After completion of data collection, I returned to playgroup with video extracts for consultation with staff of emerging themes. For each theme, I proposed different possible interpretations that gave rise to debate, again feeding back into the interpretive process. Similar discussions were held with the mothers and children as we watched short clips of the video together. Although the children's recall was sometimes sharp and they enjoyed watching the videos, these sessions were less successful than I had hoped, but have enabled me to plan future possible methods of consulting children.

Consultation allowed the research to be conducted *on and with* the participants. However, the participants' power was limited as they were not fully informed of the precise research questions until after data collection, and the research was not a fully collaborative project as participants did not co-author the thesis. Furthermore, consultation sessions were time-consuming and required a level of commitment that I felt exceeded the participants' expectations. We therefore focussed on a few issues in depth rather than all aspects of the findings. Occasionally, the collaboration sessions reinforced rather than breached the divide between researcher and researched, as parents and staff became aware of the research discourses and practices that had begun to invade the texts.

4.4.3.10 Thick Description

'Thick description' has been used in this doctoral text to capture and portray context-rich and meaningful descriptions of the individuals and social worlds studied. Gilbert Ryle first coined the term 'thick description' in a series of philosophy lectures exploring how to describe what Rodin's *Le Penseur* is doing (Ryle, 1971). His lectures illustrated how 'thin', superficial descriptions of human action fail to contribute to our understandings by excluding the situated contexts and histories of the actors. Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1989b) adopted this notion to promote a way of recording and presenting data that captures the fine detail of the worlds observed, making local meanings more accessible, portraying the complexities and ambiguities of social life and allowing reflection on other locations and more general social processes:

> We need a way of turning its varieties into commentaries one upon another, the one lighting what the other darkens … bringing incommensurable perspectives … into conceptual proximity such that … they seem somehow less enigmatical than they do when they are looked at apart.   (Geertz, 1983, p233)

In this thesis as full a description of contexts as seemed feasible in a doctoral study have been presented in the analysis chapters, but the process has not been straightforward. Detailed descriptions led to *extremely* lengthy drafts, and swathes of detail have been cut. Although fewer in number, the remaining rich descriptions aim to enable the reader to form a level of independent interpretation in addition to the interpretations presented by the researcher.

4.4.4 Case Study and Reliability

'Reliability' refers to the integrity of the processes of the study, the breadth of data collection and its appropriacy with regard to the research aims, the degree of consistency of data collection and categorisation of data on different occasions, and the extent to which the categorisations and findings have been validated. In other words, reliability essentially concerns 'quality control' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p278).

There is therefore overlap between validity and reliability in terms of overall quality of data collection, analysis and presentation, many aspects of which have been discussed above. Here I focus on two further aspects of reliability: the role and status of the researcher as a participant in the study setting and the researcher's subjective values.

4.4.4.1 Being a Participant Observer

A fundamental issue in an interpretive paradigm is accessing the meanings that different people attribute to the same or different things at the same or different times. To do this, ethnographers frequently assume the role of 'participant observer' in the research setting. This role was first identified by the anthropologist Malinowski (1935) as a way of observing particular communities from within, whilst participating in as many social events as possible. Yet the dynamics of being a participant observer are by no means straightforward, and lend researchers open to criticism of writing biased and partial accounts (eg Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Geertz (1983) adopted the psychoanalytic terms of 'experience-near' and 'experience-far' to problematise the role of participant observer:

> An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone – a patient, a subject, in our case an informant – might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another – an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist – employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims … The real question is … how, in each case, ought one to deploy them so as to produce an interpretation of the way a people lives which is neither imprisoned within their mental horizons, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a witch, nor systematically deaf to the distinctive tonalities of their existence, an ethnography of witchcraft as written by a geometer.
>
> (Geertz, 1983, p57)

Scott (Scott and Usher, 1996, p145) refers to four participant-observer field roles: the complete participant, where the researcher participates whilst concealing her research identity; the participant-as-observer, where the researcher is open about the research and seeks to experience the studied world for herself by participating in and experiencing all the activities under investigation; the observer-as-participant, where the researcher adopts a more detached stance, not experiencing the activities for herself but making close and detailed observations; and lastly, the complete observer, where the researcher adopts a totally passive, distanced role. In this study, the aim was to observe others' practices and to voice others' views, not to extend or reinforce my own, therefore 'observer-as-participant' best describes the role I assumed in the research sites.

The goal of entering the mind of each and every participant is clearly beyond reach, yet the researcher must guard against assuming homogeneity in the participants' understandings. The researcher's and the different participants' perceptions vary according to the different perspectives afforded by their different locations within the research process and within the research setting. These locations generate and filter individuals' actions and understandings depending on their immediate and more long-term concerns. Moreover, the presence of the researcher plays a part in shaping the context in which the participants are observed, and this centrality of the researcher in the data must be addressed. The following extract from my Research Diary illustrates these issues on a very practical level:

Coming into the kitchen, where the mum was preparing dinner for the children while chatting with one of her teenage daughters, I felt very uncomfortable about intruding on a busy family's evening. I apologised for being a nuisance and offered to come back another time, but the mum was very welcoming, offering me a seat at the table. The girl left, leaving the chat with her mum unfinished. I apologised again, but constantly being apologised to is also an imposition. The mum and I chatted while she was busy, but my mind kept turning to where I had been positioned by accepting the seat offered, which was right next to a huge cage with chinchillas in. I wasn't going to be able to get a wide enough video angle on the

room and the chinchillas' noise would dominate the recordings. When the children were called in to eat, I stood up and lent against the kitchen cabinets, which they might have thought was motivated by politeness, but in fact was contrived so that I could set up the video on the side, partly obscured from the children's view by the chinchillas. (Research Diary 30.01.01)

This extract highlights the dilemmas of being an observer as participant, motivated and positioned by the research requirements for data, by the families' and staff's ways of positioning me physically in one location, and socially as a combination of researcher/ new acquaintance/ 'teacher' from playgroup/ visitor or intruder in their home. Throughout the research, I attempted to find what Duranti (1997, p101) refers to as 'blind spots' in the field. That is, to find the least intrusive place to stand or sit, slightly out of the way so that participants in a conversation would not feel obliged to include me in their talk, making my participation minimal rather than central. This was far harder to achieve in the children's homes than it was in playgroup, but with continued visits, parents and children appeared to get used to ignoring me, or pretending to ignore me, for at least some of the time.

Underlying these personal and theoretical aspects of being a participant observer are epistemological beliefs regarding how other people's social realities can be understood and represented and the poststructuralist conclusion that 'there are no true accounts, only different ways of interpreting reality' (Travers, 2001, p159). It is therefore essential to address the subjectivity of the researcher in the construction of this study.

4.4.4.2 Exploring Subjectivity

our understanding of others can *only* proceed from within our own experience, and this experience involves our personalities and histories as much as our field research. (Ellingson, 1998 in Jackson, 1989)

Given that ethnographic evidence derives from the researcher's personal knowledge of the contexts and participants, it follows that the researcher's subjectivity in the selection of theory, collection and interpretation of data, and construction of knowledge must be problematised. Here, a reflexive stance towards my own social, political and personal location is taken to clarify the limitations of the study and to help the reader see behind the researcher's 'eye'. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) name this approach 'reflexive ethnography', where the researcher's reactions and interpretations are recognised and exploited rather than resisted. Peshkin (1988) also argues for an open exploration of one's own personal history:

> By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it … By this consciousness I can possibly escape the thwarting biases that subjectivity engenders, while attaining the singular perspective its special persuasions promise.   (Peshkin, 1988, pp20-21)

I have adopted Peshkin's notion of multiple 'I's to explore my subjective values. However, reflexivity is not simply a matter of being open about one's personal views and standpoints. It involves analysing how these are woven into the interpretations of the data. As detailed in Section 4.4.3.5, my Research Diary included accounts of my subjective and emotive responses to the issues, theories and people encountered during the research. From these writings, distinct yet interdependent facets of my subjectivity began to emerge: the political I, the ethical I, the playgroup worker I, the researcher I and the non-researcher I, as discussed below.

The political I
I hold a strong personal conviction that the main purpose of education is to help all individuals explore, identify and realise their inner strengths and talents. This view of learning is generally present in Child Development discourses, yet is difficult to reconcile with recent political trends pushing the formal pre- and proscribed teaching of

Literacy and Numeracy skills and assessing success by a child's ability to perform in narrowly defined tests, as discussed in Chapter 1. A Diary Note made before beginning the pilot study reflected my concerns:

> *Tangible results, league tables. What is the effect of this control of education? By shifting the emphasis away from children and on to results, away from content and on to form and appearance, what happens to children's self-exploration and self-expression? If you can't quantify self-realisation and self-fulfilment, is there a risk educators will lose sight of these values as they are constantly monitored in a results-oriented regime? Then what happens to children's voices? What do they learn to say?* (Research Diary 27.10.99)

In pre-school education these are topical issues, particularly since the introduction of early years assessment and the return to single school entry. I am sceptical of the value and purpose of tests of children's 'ability' against which primary schools can measure how much 'value' they have 'added' to the children's learning. If early years assessment scores are to be interpreted by schools as a reliable measure of a child's abilities, then there is a risk that other key factors will slip further into obscurity, such as how children engage with and make meaning, the child's sense of self and confidence as a learner and a communicator in the school environment.

The ethical I

Conducting research is an exploitative activity. There are clear and obscure power issues between the researcher and the researched as the researcher observes, records and comments on the lives of other people. Ethical issues are explored in Section 4.6 below, but here I note my personal aversion to infringing on another's rights to privacy, which placed me in innumerable dilemmas throughout the research, particularly during observations of young children, who may not have known how to, or fully understood their right to, refuse their consent. The children were at a vulnerable point of transition as they entered a new environment and there was always the risk that the very fact of

being observed might engender negative feelings that either the children, parents or both might associate with attending playgroup.

I concluded the most suitable way to negotiate my way through the minefield of others' feelings was firstly to gain the consent of the parents and staff, asking them to help me identify if the research process was adversely affecting the children. I spoke with the children individually about the recording equipment, encouraging them to hold and use it in an attempt to demystify its presence. This also allowed the children to get to know me, and I them, slowly building up a relationship of trust. I made a point of never saying 'no', but making boundaries by explaining why they might reconsider some of their ideas. For example:

> *... while Michael was videoing some toys on the mat Holly called outside playtime. He seemed torn between going outside and holding the camera. I smiled and he asked if he could take the video on the tractor. I wanted to say yes – I was so pleased he felt free to ask and that he wanted to – but I also wanted to say no because the camera might not survive intact. So I asked how he would hold the camera and steer the tractor. He asked if I would help him and rushed out with me, before the other children, to 'claim' a tractor. Outside, the issue was no longer about the camera but about his desire to get the new John Deer. Once he was in it, he rode off as fast as he could across the playground. The situation had been turned around, and he had used my presence to give him immediate access to the most-desired outside toy. At least he was happy and he was getting something out of it!* (Diary Note 20.10.00)

This extract illustrates how decisions were taken on a moment-by-moment, situated basis, and rarely by myself alone. It also illustrates how participants, with a healthy degree of power sharing, can manipulate the research process to their advantage.

The playgroup worker I
During preliminary informal meetings I gave reassurance to staff and parents that the purpose of my research was to examine children's ways of communicating, and *not* to

evaluate the performance of the staff or playgroup, declaring my high opinion of the staff and sympathy for the demands of their work. Yet my history as a playgroup worker coloured my observations, so I documented my responses to incidents as they occurred and re-examined them in the light of hindsight when I had more time to reflect on my own subjectivity, as illustrated by the following Diary Notes:

> *Zara got <u>really</u> upset that she couldn't have the same colour cup as Helen, sobbed for ages …refused to drink or eat … She needed someone to help her calm down – there were plenty of them … but they 'ignored' her. Why? Parent helpers usually do let her have the same colour cup. How's she supposed to tell the difference? Is this part of the deal? Learning you have to follow the rules even if you don't know what the rules are or why they exist.* (Diary Note 04.04.01, after observing Zara)

> *Jake and others at the table talked about the colours of their cups. Staff spend a lot of time on games etc going over colours – this seems like a good opportunity for consolidating colour words rather than having 'battles' over rule-learning. Will try to bring this up at next staff interview. (*Diary Note 09.05.01, after observing Jake)

> *Mentioned the cups issue briefly while chatting after interview. Staff said distribution of cups = practical matter of not enough colours, plus children have to learn to accept rules (so it's part of disempowerment then) but staff are considering buying new cups all same colour.* (Diary Note 24.07.01, after Staff Interview)

Talking with the staff helped me view the playgroup and its logic from the perspectives of the participants and to uncover the tensions behind their actions. During data collection, I also worked in playgroup 1 morning per week to help out with an unexpected staff shortage. The experience of re-joining the staff afforded many insights, but it also placed me in a shifting role, between observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer, although I did not officially collect data when working. Overall, this helped me to become more 'invisible' as a researcher, but again, it frequently led to me shifting into 'helper' mode to the detriment of data collection. For example:

Tallulah was very quiet during today's observation , but during Showbox I took Martin to the toilet because everyone else was busy. Later, Sarah mentioned that Tallulah had talked to the children as a group about her toy when she came up to collect it. I'll have to watch for that in future. (Diary Note 14.02.01)

The researcher I

Assuming the role of researcher in an environment that I knew as a mother and staff member involved working out new relationships not only with the staff, some of whom I knew as mothers, neighbours and co-workers, but also with the setting as I began to see familiar things in a different light. I was particularly careful to tread gently during interviews and to recognise my own value systems and the interviewees' vulnerability. My questioning could have rocked their confidence, running the risk of undermining or attacking their values or of leading them to construct values around their perceptions of what I wanted to hear. Beyond the site of my study, as a researcher I was accountable to a wider community of national and international research, where particular formats and conventions had to be learnt and adhered to**.**

The non-researcher I

This is a complex 'I', including the 'I' as *mother*, *woman*, *wife, daughter*, *sister* and *child.* These 'I's all contribute in some way to my subjectivity, influence the ways I live life, and have influenced the ways I have conducted this research. Being a mother of three children with different pre-school experiences of local playgroups has been without doubt a catalyst for this research. Playgroup was the only locally available pre-school and my eldest child, a girl with an Autumn birthday, spent *two* happy years making, sticking, painting, drawing, running round, listening to stories, making believe and talking quite freely to anyone and everyone. My second child, a Summer-born boy with a particular speech difficulty that made his words unclear, spent *one* year running round, listening to stories, making believe, talking directly only to one friend who acted as his interpreter whenever he needed to address others. My youngest child, an Autumn-born boy, attended the playgroup chosen for the site of this study and after an initial

shyness, spent *two* years becoming involved in an increasing range of activities, initially playing with one particular friend and speaking to one adult but by the time he left, he spoke confidently to all familiar adults and children.

When my eldest child started school, I learnt at the first parents' evening in late October that she had settled well, but had been ardently trying to negotiate a two-day working week and five-day weekend. At least this indicated that she was confident in class and that her voice was being heard, even if this particular campaign was falling on unreceptive ears. On my second child's first parents' evening I was told that he rarely spoke but that he had learnt to hold a pencil. At home, he had been 'drawing' since I could remember, but the playgroup had reported he was unable to hold a pencil. He probably never had in playgroup. There was a marked difference in his performance at home and at school, and for years he continued to have misplaced low self-esteem about his academic abilities. This highlighted the central role that self image plays in education, how this is constructed differently in class to at home, and has led me to question the wisdom of a single entry policy where four year olds are expected to perform as five year olds. It also reflects tensions and conflicts between my different 'I's: the *mother I* wanting the child to feel valued in a system that the *political I* disagreed with.

My third child started school on his fifth birthday, and was assessed by the teacher using Baseline Assessment tests, that is, a series of tasks on a scale of zero to five. He had scored highly on everything except 'patterns', where he scored '0' as he had not recognised the word 'pattern' as a way of describing the layout of rows of squares and circles. The problem was one of vocabulary, rectified within moments, but that still left him with a low score on 'patterns', against which the school could measure 'value-added'. This illustrated the fallibility of Baseline Assessment, and led me to question the validity of any speaking/listening-based test of young children in a new environment. It also highlighted the importance of children's experiences of speaking and listening and the teaching of specific school-oriented vocabularies in preschool.

What do you do with subjectivity?

Peshkin (1988) argued that no research is void of subjectivity, but how can the researcher openly weave her subjectivity into the texture of the research writing? Several strategies have been adopted in this study. Writing a reflexive diary, cited throughout the thesis, has helped to heighten my awareness of the processes of distortion and projection of data as they are filtered through my 'I's. Reflecting on and openly stating my subjective values has helped me explore the conflicts in my beliefs and practices. However, recognising the researcher's subjectivity renders the validation of interpretation problematic. The key is to be aware of, and to make the reader aware of, these processes and of the resultant uncertainty of research claims. As Bruner suggests:

> There can be several equally compelling stories about the same set of 'events'.
> And since these 'events', so-called, can and usually do include the
> indeterminable intentional states of people involved in the story, they may never
> be subject to total confirmation.   (Bruner,1997, p71)

Thus the text as produced in this thesis should be read as one of many possible interpretations of 'reality', but one that is constructed in such a way as the reader can follow the 'chain-of-evidence' (Yin, 1994) by tracing how threads of meaning are drawn from the different observational and reflective data collection methods, all woven into the analysis. Yet this openness is still not enough. Interpretation and researcher bias are further dependent upon and contorted by issues of representation.

4.5 Representation

> All representations are misrepresentations.   (Stake and Kerr, 1994, p2)

How can children's developing/non-standard pronunciations and highly complex uses of movements, gestures and gaze be faithfully or adequately represented in the written forms required by ethnographic reporting and academic writing? With regard to audio data, once utterances are transcribed, the printed text tends to 'take over' the spoken

word, not only by physically separating the words from the speaker's voice, and stripping them of their nuances, but also by extracting them from the complexity of the rich and situated contexts in they were uttered.

Representing the complexity and dynamism of moving video images in written form is yet more problematic. Clifford's argument that ethnographic research constructs narratives or 'fictions' (Clifford, 1986, p6) that can only ever tell a part of the story also applies to representation as part of the process of interpretation. Foregrounding linguistic descriptions ran contrary to the aims of this research project, yet some form of transcription was needed to make the data more accessible for analysis and write-up. In this section, I discuss how decisions were taken on data representation, including transcription, and how different methods of data collection contributed differently to the construction of the research findings.

4.5.1 Transcribing the data

> Any kind of inscription is, by definition, an abstraction in which a complex phenomenon is reduced to some of its constitutive features and transformed for the purpose of further analysis. (Duranti, 1997, p137)

Duranti discusses how in the act of transcribing, the researcher begins analysis by selecting a small subset of the actions the speaker performs, simplifying and constructing a theoretically informed, and therefore biased, account that reflects the researcher's perception of the relevance of the data. Yet the researcher has a responsibility to the speaker, to represent the speakers' words in a way that retains their 'voices'. The researcher must also consider the reader. If a transcript has too much information it can become difficult to read. If it is clearly laid out and follows accepted conventions, then it may be more accessible to a wider audience. Although phonetic transcription would have produced a more honest account of the young children's frequently unconventional pronunciations of words and sounds, orthographic transcription was chosen to make the texts more accessible to a wider readership.

However, a few techniques and symbols have been used in the transcriptions to overcome some of the pitfalls of using strictly conventional orthography:

- o the symbol '#' is used to indicate that the sound following the symbol is pronounced in a non-standard way eg '#dis apple' indicates that the sound 'd' was not a clearly enunciated /d/, but it sounded more like /d/ than / /

- o conventional spelling has been adapted to reproduce more accurately stylistic or vernacular characteristics of speech eg 'I dunno' rather than 'I don't know'

- o [indicates simultaneous speech

- o … indicates a pause between utterances

- o // indicates when speakers 'interrupt themselves', either by suddenly changing the topic of talk or by changing the tone

Gestures and movements are bracketed in italics, so the reader can more easily distinguish between the speakers' words and actions. In addition, a multimodal format and still images (see Section 4.5.3 below) are sometimes used where the focus is on the multimodality of children's communication.

Decisions must also be taken about the beginnings and ends of extracts, rarely clearly demarcated in lived social interaction. In this thesis, extracts are either bounded by 'natural' breaks in the interaction, or the boundaries are made explicit on an extract-by-extract basis. The word 'natural' is defined as either a break in eye contact/ physical proximity or an interruption that changes the topic and/or direction of interaction. Some boundaries are clear, whilst others defy definition and in these cases the boundaries remain interpretive. For example, a seemingly completed exchange could continue minutes, hours or days later, and not all parts of the exchange can be known and included.

4.5.2 Theorising multiple modes of representation

Learning to recognise the multiple ways that young children express themselves is central to this research project, leading to a broad view of the term 'voice'. The data collection methods generated issues of how to represent the complex dynamics of separately collected images and sounds. Morphy and Banks discuss how images collected in fieldwork assume new meanings in academic writing where they are 'separated from the world in which they were meaningful and placed in a world in which they will be interrogated and interpreted from a multiplicity of different perspectives' (Morphy and Banks, 1997, p16). Pink (Pink, 2001) explores this dilemma in her discussion of different approaches to visual ethnography:

> Ethnographers usually re-think the meanings of photographic and video materials discussed and/or produced during fieldwork in terms of academic discourses. They therefore give them new significance that diverges from the meanings invested in them by informants, and from meanings assumed by ethnographers themselves at other stages of the project.   (Pink, 2001, p99)

Pink notes that anthropologists and ethnographers are divided in their approaches to the role of the visual in the construction of knowledge. For example, Wright (1998) argues that knowledge is produced through the translation and abstraction of subjective visual images into written text. In this approach, the authenticity and authority of images may become the basis for systematic knowledge, but the images themselves may not have a place, other than as occasional illustrations, in the final product of the research. Pink proposes an alternative approach 'that begins with the premise that the purpose of analysis is not to translate 'visual evidence' into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge' (Pink, 2001, p96). In this approach, analysis involves making meaningful links between different research resources such as video, photographs, audio, field notes, research diary, academic writing, local written and visual texts and objects. Each medium represents a different type of knowledge, each contextualising the other. Rather than attempting to piece these

different representations together to form a 'complete' picture, the researcher should explore the experiences and contexts from which the video recordings, field notes and other materials were produced and articulate how these different representations produce different strands of knowledge and different 'truths'. This study therefore re-presents data in a variety of ways to evoke different aspects of the behaviours observed.

4.5.3 The processes of representation

As discussed in Section 4.4.3, I began the process of data analysis by making a 'video log', including time codes, a diagrammatic layout of where the participants were positioned, an 'outline' description of the interactions and comings and goings and a wide margin for later categorisation and/or analytic remarks (See sample Appendix 4.4). I then transcribed the audio recordings, which not only gave a different perspective on the sounds and images of the video, but frequently added the voices of the target children and their interlocutors. Watching the video sequences without video soundtrack, but with the audio soundtrack lent another perspective to the data. Synchronising these two data sets to run simultaneously was extremely challenging as the following Diary Note records:

> If watching video with synchronised sound on audio then I feel under terrible pressure _not_ to stop the video and review, as lining up the time is a nightmare. So I have more freedom if I _view only_ to begin with and forget the sound. _Then_ come back and do sound. If I flag up issues on video and separately on audio transcript it'll be interesting to see what overlaps there are.   (Diary Note, 02.07.01)

For most of the collected data, it was only at this stage of synchronisation that I was able to hear the target child utterances clearly whilst watching the target child's actions, but, as outlined, the practical difficulties and constraints of performing this task meant this stage of the analysis was far from conducive to analytic reflection. Also, the audio track was often difficult to decipher, and I frequently used the audio transcript as a reference, working simultaneously with three different data sets: the video image, audio

sound and audio transcript. Bit by bit, it became possible to piece together each child's words and actions over many combined and separate 'viewings' and 'listenings'.

These processes of analysis brought to light fundamental issues regarding reproducing visual images in text form. It is impossible to convey the complexity and quantity of information of even a few minutes of video recording, let alone 40 hours. Data selection criteria were needed: initially, data were reduced to 5 or 6 playgroup observation sessions per child, plus home observations, again using analysis documentation forms to focus on emerging themes (Appendix 4.3).

Combining separately recorded audio and video data of the same moments in time sometimes introduced clarity and reduced ambiguity, but equally frequently introduced further ambiguities. The Field Notes and Research Diary contributed complementary but differently conceived data. A comparison of how the following 20-second extract of data was represented by different data collection methods illustrates many of the issues encountered. The original audio transcript read as follows:

Extract 1: original audio transcript

Tobias:	this is a bo' … this is a boat this is a boat this is a boat
Jake:	ba ba ba (makes lots of noises)
Tobias:	this is a boat … this is a big boat
Jake:	(noises)
?:	an #dis is a big bo too ... boo boo boo …
Tobias:	#dis is wheels
Jake:	(engine noises)
?:	this is a bo too
Aaron?:	that's #the wheel (Jake 04.04.01, p9)

After viewing the video, the same extract expanded to include details of the boys' movements, and clarified who was talking. With the aid of the video, the ellipses that

had indicated pauses between words all gradually disappeared as those moments of silence on the audio tape were replaced by the actions visible on screen:

Extract 2: revised audio transcript (Videocode 32:36 –32:55)

6	Tobias:	*(banging biscuit on tablet)* this is a bo' [*(moves biscuit around*
7		*table)* this is a boat this is a boat this is a boat
8	Jake:	[*(returns to table, sits,*
9		*gaze to T)* ba ba ba *('walks' his biscuit across to T)*
10	Tobias:	*(lifts his biscuit high in air)* this is a boat
11	Jake:	*(lifts his biscuit up to T's)*
12	Tobias:	*(moves his biscuit towards J's biscuit in mid-air)* this is a big boat
13	Jake:	*(imitates T's action, banging his biscuit against T's)*
14		an #dis is a big bo' too *(holding biscuit up to T's)* boo boo boo
15	Tobias:	*(takes a bite from biscuit, looks at shape made by his teeth)* #dis
16		is wheels
17	Jake:	*(takes a bite from biscuit, makes noises while eating, stands*
18		*biscuit on table)* this is a bo too
19	Aaron :	*(holding biscuit out on table, points to J's biscuit)* # that's #the
20		wheel

I then used a multimodal model of transcription, with a matrix to break down the interaction into separate components of talk/vocalisation, gaze and action:

Extract3 Format for Multi-modal description (adapted from Lancaster, 2001)

Time	Participant	Language/Vocalisation	Gaze	Action
32:36	Jake		ahead	sits with biscuit in mouth
	Tobias	this is a bo	own biscuit	holds biscuit on table
	Aaron		from biscuit to Tobias	

	Harriet		straight ahead	eating biscuit
32:38	Tobias	this is a boat this is a boat	to own biscuit	bangs biscuit up and down and moves it across table
	Aaron		to Tobias' biscuit	holds own biscuit, mimicking Tobias
	Jake		to Tobias	takes biscuit out of mouth
	Harriet		to own biscuit	eats own biscuit
32:40	Tobias	this is a boat	to own biscuit	bangs biscuit up and down on table
	Aaron		to Tobias	mimicks Tobias
	Jake	#ba #ba #ba	to Tobias	'walks' biscuit across table to T's biscuit
	Harriet		to own biscuit	eats own biscuit
32:42	Tobias	this is a big boat	to own biscuit	lifts biscuit in air
	Jake		to Tobias' biscuit	lifts biscuit up to touch T's biscuit with his own
	Aaron		to Tobias	holding biscuit fairly still on table
	Harriet		to own biscuit	eats own biscuit
32:45	Tobias		to Jake's then own biscuit	lowers biscuit towards J's
	Jake	(noises)	T's biscuit	'attacks' Tobias' biscuit with own biscuit
	Aaron		T and J	keeps own biscuit

				fairly still
	Harriet		to own biscuit	eats own biscuit
32:48	Tobias		to Jake	eats own biscuit
	Jake	an #dis is a big bo' too boo boo boo	to Tobias then Aaron	eats own biscuit
	Aaron	(?)	looking at own biscuit, then to Tobias	points to biscuit then raises biscuit off table
	Harriet		to own biscuit	eats own biscuit
32:50	Tobias	#dis is wheels	to own biscuit	holds biscuit out, studies shape
	Jake		across room	bites from biscuit
	Aaron		to own biscuit	plays with biscuit
	Harriet		to Jake	
32:52	Aaron		to Tobias	biscuit on table
	Tobias		to A and J?	eating biscuit
	Jake		to Aaron	shows Aaron own biscuit
	Harriet		to Jake	eating biscuit
32:54	Jake	#dis is a bo too	to Aaron	holds biscuit vertically on table, moves it towards A
32:55	Aaron	#that's #the wheel	to Jake's biscuit	holding biscuit in right hand, points to J's biscuit with left hand

This matrix, here written in detailed 2-second intervals, reveals much more about the sequencing and simultaneity of speech, gaze and movement. The separate columns create parallel 'dialogues', where the reader can choose between a focus on the words,

the actions or the gaze, or can combine any of these elements. This format also allows the introduction of both central and 'peripheral participants' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). For example, Harriet's minimal actions were included, on the grounds that she was present, therefore should be included, but the reader can at least see her presence as opposed to the representation in Extract 2, where she had been left out as she was not involved in the talk. When I showed this multimodal format to different readers I gained different responses: some felt it interrupted the flow of the exchange or included too much distracting detail. Indeed, the level of detail was problematic when transcribing, as no matter how often I viewed the video, there were always elements I had not noticed before. This was also an extremely time-consuming mode of transcription.

Another way of conveying detail from this extract is through a still image of a particular moment 'frozen' in time, as in Extract 4 where a wealth of information is conveyed to the reader about the positioning of the children around the table, gaze direction, posture, facial expressions, other children, the setting and background:

Extract 4: Still Image (Videocode 32:44)

The Video Log covering the minutes around this brief exchange offers yet another perspective by detailing activity beyond the immediate milk table, including milk-time associated procedures, broken down by time codes:

Extract 5: Video Log

> 14:00   Harriet and Tobias fetch their juices from table. Jake talks with Tobias, then with Aaron, playing with biscuits
>
> 14:01   Harriet gives out cups
>
> 14:02   June gives out milk.

The accompanying Field Notes, although brief, depict a yet wider perspective, indicating what staff members are doing:

Extract 6: Milk Time Field Notes

> *Some adults are busy preparing activities at craft table in Room 2, so staff are all busy, not sitting with children .*

This note that the adults are not sitting with the children echoes a 'chat' several weeks previously with Holly, the playgroup leader, about how she encouraged the staff to sit with the children at the milk tables, and thus relates to staff training, intentions and practice, linking with the institutional and sociocultural contexts.There was no Diary entry made on this day, but during the next playgroup observation of Jake, the following note was made:

Extract 7: Diary Note

> *Jake played a lot with his cup during milk-time. I think I've noticed this before with cups and biscuits; he seems to be using them to act out private fantasy games, but because he's in a 'public' space, others imitate him and join in. Boys often seem to do this. Look out for it. See if girls do. Do boys copy girls and boys or just boys?*

<div align="right">(Diary Note 09.05.01)</div>

This allows the 20-second extract to be compared with other moments in time, and cross-case comparisons are suggested. The data is taken into the realm of theory when

Jake's actions are related to psychological constructs of children's play and constructivism: Jake's play constructing other children's play and vice versa. Gender issues are also mentioned, in a small way reflecting the impact of years of feminist struggle and research on gendered behaviours.

The accompanying CD (Clip 2, J2/5) shows the complex dynamics of the interaction through the narrow field of vision of the video lens, without most of the children's words, as these were only clearly audible on the audio soundtrack, yet with the actions shown in Extract 4 above, and snippets of talk from other tables, adults calling across the room, chairs scraping etc that for the sake of clarity have been omitted from the transcripts.

The task of combining data from these diverse sources was gargantuan, and practicable solutions had to be found. As discussed, data was systematically reduced, but how could the textuality of the different data sources, their overlaps and contradictions be made apparent to the reader? Both transcript presentation styles illustrated in Extracts 2 and 3 are used: the former during narrative writing, and the latter when focussing on words, gaze and action. In addition, still images are used occasionally, with staff and parental permission, when these convey information too complex to convey accurately in words, and sample video extracts are included in the accompanying CD.

Throughout the research process, I have reflected on how my personal and political agendas have influenced data selection and display, have sought counter-examples that question my analyses, and consulted participants for their views to verify or refute my interpretations. Overall, this openness about my biases should place the reader in a more informed position to interpret this research text, permitting the reader to locate how and where the knowledge proposals are situated. This study will inevitably speak differently to different readers, depending on their particular standpoints and beliefs. As Bakhtin proposed, the reproduction or reading of any spoken or written text is a new, unrepeatable event in the life of the text (Bakhtin, 1986, p106).

4.6 Ethical dilemmas

Ethical issues arise in all aspects of research, and are particularly salient when studying vulnerable members of society, and in this case, very young children experiencing change as they enter preschool and in the privacy of their homes. Denzin suggests:

> … our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us. (Denzin, 1989a, p83)

Once the setting and participants had been identified, letters were sent to all parents and staff, informing them of the research project, allowing them the right to be excluded from or exclude their child from the data (See Appendices 4.5 and 4.6). One child was excluded for personal reasons: the parents were reassured the child's image would not appear on any material and this agreement has been honoured. I met with the staff, case study children and their parents, broadly outlining the nature of the study, what it would entail in terms of hours and nature of observation, frequency of interviews and their rights to withdraw from and/or review all material used. This process is often referred to as 'informed consent', yet in exploratory or investigative research the notion of 'informed' is problematic, as the precise course to be taken by the research is unpredictable. A more fitting description for the consent gained in this project is 'provisional consent', that is, the participants' agreement was understood to be provisional upon the research being conducted within a broadly outlined framework and continuing to develop within their expectations. 'Provisional consent' is therefore ongoing and dependent on the network of researcher/researched relationships built upon sensitivity, reciprocal trust and collaboration.

Rather than following a pre-conceived code of conduct, the ethical stance of this research study evolved out of these relationships. The frequent ethical dilemmas encountered were resolved as they emerged in the field, in their local and specific

contexts, on a minute-by-minute basis, depending on the researcher's perceptions and interpretations of the dynamics of the participants' interactions, intentions and anxieties. Not adopting a coherent set of values does not imply neglecting ethical considerations, rather it suggests responding variously and reflexively to complex situations, which Simons and Usher (2000) refer to as 'situated ethics'. The following extracts, the first from Field Notes, immediately after an abandoned recording session, and the second written as a Diary Note during transcription of a parent interview, illustrate just two of many hundreds of large and small ethical dilemmas encountered:

> *This morning's session was frustrating. Tallulah was talking much more than usual, mostly to her mother and brother, but also a lot of self-directed speech. However, because she didn't want to wear the recorder … I couldn't record what she was saying, and she speaks so quietly I couldn't hear most of it out. She didn't mind me videoing her though, and watched bits afterwards. Maybe I could get someone to lip-read that!*
>
> (Field Note 21.03.01)

> *My role as researcher is blurred in the homes, where the mothers and I seem to be in a new kind of social 'bubble' somewhere between an acquaintance and a friend. The recording equipment and prepared questions for interview bring formality, but this seems to disappear as the interviews develop. I'm often treated more as a 'fellow' mother, and a confidante, sometimes playing the role of a counsellor, hearing deeply personal details of the participants' lives that have a place in our 'bubble' but no place in my research.*
>
> (Diary Note 18.10.01)

Decisions about when to stop observing participants, or about when not to transcribe data relate not only to my own personal understandings of privacy and respect, but also reflect my epistemological stance. Epistemological beliefs about *what* can be known are linked to ontological beliefs about *what exists* and to ethical beliefs about *how* the researcher can find out what can be known and *what the researcher should do* with what is divulged.

To counteract the seemingly unavoidably exploitative nature of research, throughout the project I have attempted to be adaptable, respectful and supportive towards all participants and to give something back. As discussed, the interviews and consultations with adult participants, and the subsequent representation of their views in the research text, have provided a platform for their voices and given the participants a sense of ownership over the data. The following comment from a member of staff after I had thanked the staff at the final interview is telling:

> *Well, thank you, it seems odd that we won't be having these sessions any*
> *more. I'll miss them and we'll all miss having you around. You must promise*
> *to keep coming back.* (Sarah, Staff Interview 24.07.01)

When conducting longitudinal research, meaningful relationships are built up, that the researcher cannot responsibly turn and walk away from. I have continued to visit the site of study, sometimes through arranged visits for consultation and sometimes 'social calls'. Similarly, I have met informally with all the mothers, both to gain their views on specific findings and to learn how their children are continuing to fare in playgroup, and now, in primary school.

For the children, their consent has mostly been in the form of a full right to withdraw from observation, and choosing whether to wear the audio equipment or not. Rather than relying solely on the children to express their feelings, their consent was almost continually assessed by myself, with the help of staff and mothers, through a growing sensitivity to their behaviours. If in any doubt about how comfortable the children were with the equipment, then I immediately stopped observing them, leading to time-consuming rescheduling. Occasionally, I was slow to react to the child's signals of discomfort, as I was so engrossed in the research issues, yet at least on some of these occasions, the staff felt comfortable to approach me if they were concerned. The children were also given the occasion to view, to play with and to talk about the videoed material. Furthermore, each child has a copy of their videoed sessions, and the parents a printed summary of the observations of their child as a permanent record of their children's busy lives in playgroup.

Protecting the participants' interests has been the primary ethical stance adopted in this study. As Price (1996, p207) argues, it is better to 'compromise the research rather than compromise the participants' This includes protecting anonymity. All the participants' names have been changed, and precise personal details have not been given. However, visual images are used from which the participants could be identified, and the display of these images is sometimes integral to the research. I have gained permission from the staff and parents to use some still and video images in presentations of this research, and am personally comforted by the thought that the children are now older and less easily recognised by those who do not know them well.

4.7 Conclusion

Longitudinal ethnographic case studies have provided this thesis with detailed, situated understandings of four 3-year-old children's communicative strategies. The ethnographic approach has also offered flexibility, allowing the direction of the fieldwork not only to change as the study progressed but also to be multi-stranded, with different data collection methods revealing different aspects and perceptions of the same moments in time. Returning to the Bruner quotation in the introduction to this chapter, the rigour of data collection and analysis confirmed the 'narrative necessity' of relating different perceptions of the same set of 'events'. As Denzin and Lincoln proposed:

> We stand at the threshold of a history marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms. At some distance down this conjectural path … we will find that this has been the era of … emancipation from …"the coerciveness of Truth," emancipation from … generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one colour.
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p185)

Chapter 5

The playgroup setting and selection of participants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the playgroup setting, its location and facilities, with details of the structure and organisation of a typical playgroup session, the range of activities offered, how the activities were categorised in this study and the process of selection of case study children. Using data collected through interview, the staff's experience, training and views on the early years' issues discussed in Chapter 1 are presented, particularly the dichotomy between early years care and education and how government early years initiatives have impacted on their practice and thinking. Parent views on these issues are also discussed and consideration is given to how theoretical approaches to learning form part of the 'taken-for-granted' practices (Walkerdine, 1984, p164) of the adult participants in this study. Overall, the chapter aims to familiarise the reader with the ethos, practices, beliefs and routines of the institutional setting and to give background information on the case study children's mothers' perceptions and expectations of that setting.

5.2 The playgroup setting

The study was conducted in a rural playgroup on permanent premises in the grounds of a small primary school. Unlike the majority of playgroups that operate in community buildings (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.4), these premises made it easier for staff to develop long-term projects that could remain on display rather than be dismantled at the end of every session. They also shared the school's outdoor play facilities, hall and piano.

5.2.1 Playgroup timetable

The playgroup offered 4 morning and 3 afternoon sessions for all children, plus 1 morning or afternoon session for 'rising fives' in the Spring and Summer terms, with a maximum attendance of 24 children per session. Most children aged 3 attended 2 - 3 sessions per week, and those aged 4 years 2 - 5 sessions per week. Children could not attend morning and afternoon sessions on the same day.

5.2.2 Layout of playgroup

The playgroup premises were divided into 2 classrooms, and Appendix 5.1 shows a plan of the two rooms with the layout of permanent equipment.

Illustration 5.1 *Room 1 (blurred to obscure non-case study children)*

Room 1 was used as the main point of entry and exit for children , with a corner for coats, spare clothes and bags, a notice board for parents and a 'reception' table, where parents could leave drinks or snacks for their children. Under this table was a brightly coloured 'Showbox' where children put items brought from home to show to the whole class at the end of each playgroup session. On arrival, the children remained in Room 1 until called for Registration in Room 2.

Room 1 contained some permanently installed equipment and some areas that were changed for each playgroup session. The permanent equipment included: a well-equipped Home Corner; Dressing Up area with hanging rails and shoe racks; a 'Creative Space' (a basic wooden structure decorated by the staff each half term into a different 'scenario' reflecting a curriculum focus, for example, a shop, spacecraft, building site or cave); a Nature Table; computer (old and not always working, children had to ask staff for the games); a Book Corner with a range of children's books and sofas, bean bags; a large Mat for 'Small World' play (cars, Brio train set, miniature plastic animals, dolls and a doll's house). There were also tables and chairs with different activities that varied from session to session, but always included some adult-led and some child-led activities (see Section 5.3 Categories). The room also contained a filing cabinet and equipment cupboard for staff use.

Room 2 had a storage area for materials and spare clothes. One wall was lined with open shelving containing toys and activities, which children were only allowed to use in addition to those laid out, with adult permission. An area for adult food and drink preparation included a fridge, oven and sinks, shelves for paper storage and drying racks for the children's artwork, with low-level washbasins for the children. A large carpeted area for whole group activities (registration, group story reading, music and movement) took up half the remaining floor space. When not used for Whole Group activities, the carpet housed larger pieces of equipment for gross motor development, such as climbing cubes and indoor slide. Tables were set out for crafts and painting,

alongside painting/chalk easels. A Sand Tray was pulled out for use at some point during most sessions and a Water Tray was occasionally erected.

Illustration 5.2 *Room 2*

Both rooms had a door that opened onto the school playground and a door separated the two rooms. Staff used this door to regulate the children's movements: when it was open children could use both rooms and when closed children had to remain in one room. This rule was not referred to during the period of data collection, yet by watching other children's movements, new members of the group learnt to follow the established code of movements. This illustrates Foucault's proposition that educational institutions are pervaded by power processes of enclosure and surveillance that silently regulate apprentices into situated codes of practice (Foucault, 1982).

5.2.3 Timing of a typical playgroup session

Each 2 ½ hour playgroup session followed a regular pattern, although the weather occasionally changed the order of activities:

- o Room 1: Arrival and Free Choice Activities (25-35 minutes)Room 2: *Registration*[1] *+ Whole Group Activity* (17-35 minutes)Room 1: *Milk Time* (11-22 minutes)

- o Playground: *Outside Play Time* (13-32 minutes)Rooms 1+2: Guided/Free Choice (usually 35-40 minutes)Room 2: *Show Box* (5-10 minutes)

5.2.3.1 Arrival and Pre-Registration Free Choice Activities

From arrival in playgroup until Registration the children played in Room 1 with free access to all the activities in that room. Room 2 was used by adults to prepare craft activities, or for private conversations with parents. At the end of this session, 'Tidy Up Time' was called and the children trickled through to Room 2 where they congregated on the carpet for Registration.

5.2.3.2 Registration

During Registration, the door to Room 1 was closed, while staff and helpers prepared the tables for Milk Time. In Room 2, one member of staff adopted a 'teacherly' position, sitting facing the children on the carpet. Other adults sat amongst the children, to 'police' them by encouraging them to sit still and to stay on the carpet. Once the children were settled, each child's name was called from the register and children were expected to respond verbally, although nods were also accepted as a response. The whole group then usually took part in a joint activity, such as listening to a story, reciting/acting out nursery rhymes.

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[1] Activities in italics denote Whole Group Activities that constituted roughly half of each session.

After the whole group activity, staff sent the children in small groups through to Room 1 for Milk Time using a range of 'mechanisms' for regulating the size of these groups such as: all children wearing shoes with laces, then Velcro, boots etc; in groups according to the village they lived in; what means of transport they had used to get to preschool, thus helping children to recognise, remember and use this information about themselves.

5.2.3.3 Milk Time

At milk time, children sat at tables in small groups or all together in a large open rectangle. Sometimes children chose where to sit, sometimes staff placed name cards as a seating plan, partly to help them recognise the shapes of their names and partly to seat certain children together or to keep them apart (Sarah Interview, Field Notes14.2.01), again illustrating how power processes were used silently to regulate child behaviour (Foucault, 1982). Occasionally, adults sat with the children. More frequently, they handed round refreshments, mopped up frequent spillages, maintained order, and drank their own coffee. Some adults used this time to finish preparing activities in Room 2. Children were dismissed from Milk Time table by table, often with a focus on early 'release' for good behaviour, using criteria such as the quietest/sitting up straightest table, and sometimes by staff calling out the name and colour of a plastic shape stuck on the centre of each table. Consistency in the range of topics of talk observed at milk time is shown in Appendix 5.2.

5.2.3.4 Outside Play

Outside Play usually occurred after Milk Time, depending on the weather, although the playgroup routine was sometimes spontaneously interrupted so children could enjoy a particular weather event, such as snow falling or a rainbow. Outside, children played with ride-on tractors, cars, tricycles, scooters, prams, pushchairs, balls and hoops, ran around or played an adult-led game, such as 'What's the time Mr Wolf?'

5.2.3.5 Post-Milk Free and Guided Choice Activities

During this final play session, children had access to the full range of activities in Rooms 1 and 2. Although most activities were Free Choice, all children were consistently invited to participate in a Craft or Painting activity. For this reason, these activities have been categorised as 'Guided Choice' rather than 'Free Choice' (see Section 5.3). Children were also occasionally guided away from or to activities, as encouragement to participate in a wider range of activities or as a disciplinary tactic. For example, a child behaving aggressively or over boisterously on one activity would be directed to another activity to calm down. If children persisted with disruptive behaviour, an adult would take them to the Book Corner, the only space with comfortable seating, to 'settle down' and talk about their behaviour. This tended to occur mostly with boys, and for some boys, their only encounters with the Book Corner appeared to be for these disciplinary chats. During all the observations, there was a far higher incidence of moving children for disciplinary reasons than for variation of activity, particularly with boys.

During fine weather, some of the activities were set up outside. For this study, these were still included as Free and Guided Choice Activities rather than Outside Play. During all the observations, the total time for these activities ranged from 27 to 64 minutes, with most lasting 35-40 minutes.

5.2.3.6 Showbox

Each observed session concluded with the whole group activity 'Showbox'. The Showbox was carried from Room 1 through to Room 2, where all the children and some adults gathered as during Registration. Sometimes, children were encouraged to bring in items beginning with a particular letter sound. Most children usually brought something in, although younger children brought in fewer items beginning with letter sounds. The seated adult selected an item from the box, asked who it belonged to and the corresponding child would come forward, and sometimes be asked questions about it by the adult or other children. This period resembled school 'show and tell',

but also allowed staff to clear up and set out the children's work for collection in Room 1.

5.3 Categories of playgroup activities

Many previous studies of preschools have categorised activities according to the intended skills they were aimed to promote. For instance, the EPPE study, using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms et al, 1998, p3), categorised preschool activities under the headings: fine motor, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number, use of TV, video and or computers and 'promoting acceptance of diversity'. Activities were then further categorised using the Structure of the Environmental Rating Scale-Extension (Sylva et al, 1998), according to the curricular subscales of Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Environment and Diversity. With different criteria as the focus of study in her investigation of the uses of Irish and English in early immersion education in Irish Naionrai (Irish speaking preschools), Tina Hickey distinguished between 'Language-centred' tasks, (songs and rhymes, story-telling, home corner, group games, card-matching, drama and puppets) and 'Object/Activity-centred' tasks (jigsaws, paint, dough, bricks, crayon, sand, outdoor play, water, athletics, clay and use of scissors), (Hickey, 1997, p82).

Neither of the above systems of categorisation, nor any encountered in other studies, appeared to fit the particular aims of this project investigating children's different uses of activities and different communicative strategies at different activities. Early analysis of the data indicated links between child communicative strategies and the degree of adult control in an activity, whether the activity was carried out in a clearly defined physical space for each child (such as a chair at a table) or in a more communal space, where each child had to negotiate access to or defend a space (such as the Home Corner or the Mat). These criteria gave rise to the categories: Compulsory Whole Group Activities; Guided Choice Tables; Free Choice Tables

adult-led; Free Choice Tables child-led; Free Choice Open Spaces and Other Activities (see Appendix 5.3).

The category 'Compulsory Whole Group Activities' includes Registration (with whole group activity on carpet), Showbox, Whole Group Music, Outside Play and Milk Time. During Registration and Showbox, adult-child interactions were brief and not always verbal. More extended exchanges developed between adults and older children in the group, with younger children observing and occasionally repeating others' utterances or chanting group utterances. Given the low incidence of the younger children's active participation in Registration and Showbox, Field Notes were taken rather than video/audio recordings. Similarly, Whole Group Music activities were documented in Field Notes only as the younger children, sometimes unfamiliar with the words of the songs, often remained mute, watching and listening. Furthermore, individual children's utterances were unintelligible due to the acoustics and high noise level.

Outside Play was excluded from the study for ethical and practical reasons. As described in Chapter 4, the children studied wore a digital recorder with attached microphone, and their movements were captured on video. Within the busy arena of playgroup, the presence of the video was largely unobtrusive, but outside, with the children running around, my 'pursuing' presence was far more evident. The audio equipment also became a hindrance for the children. Outside Play had a liberating air: it was a time when children were free to expel energy. Conducting my study impinged on that freedom, and I felt I had no right to deny or restrict their enjoyment. Observations were recorded in Field Notes and few interactions were noted for the case study children other than asking adults or peers for the use of a particular toy.

5.4 Selection of case study children

At the beginning of the Autumn term 2000, the Number on Roll stood as follows:

NOR September 2000 – July 2001, carried over from July 2000		**31**
Children started September 2000		**8**
Children aged 4, eligible for school entry, but remaining in playgroup until end Autumn term 2000		**7**
	Total	**46**

Children due to start	October 2000	**1**
	November 2000	**1**
	January 2001	**1**
	February 2001	**1**
	April 2001	**1**
	May 2001	**1**

During the first weeks of observation in September/October 2000, the process of selection began with the staff identifying their main criteria as: the stability of the child's home situation; how regularly the child attended; how well the child was settling in. The criteria I added to this were age (all candidates had to be near their 3rd birthday and new to playgroup), season of birth (at least one child entering playgroup in each school term) and gender (aiming to study one boy and one girl from each term's intake). In addition, a further criterion emerged from the playgroup staff's perceptions of the children's communicative abilities, resulting in a mixture of children defined by the staff as 'good talkers' and as 'quiet'.

Overall, six children were selected and their parents approached for permission to conduct trial recording sessions at playgroup, during which the staff, parents and myself could gauge whether the recordings seemed in any way detrimental to the child's time in playgroup. As Discussed in Chapter 4, I explained to each child I was

interested in what children did in playgroup, and encouraged them to use the recording equipment. All parents asked gave their consent. However, I did not continue to film 2 children, one because she not only objected to wearing the equipment but frequently hid after I had approached her, and one boy's attendance became infrequent due to illness in his family. This left 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls: Tallulah with a Summer birthday, Zara and Michael with Autumn birthdays and Jake with a Spring birthday. Detailed profiles of these children are given in Chapter 6.

5.5 The playgroup staff: experience and training

The members of staff had all worked in playgroup for between 3 to 15 years, with a combined total of 31 years' experience and all had Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA) approved qualifications (see Appendix 5.4). This level of experience, training and length of time in post was far higher than the average discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2. The staff's commitment and expertise were referred to favourably in the playgroup's most recent Ofsted inspection, which rated many aspects of their provision as 'good' and 'very good'.

The staff structure was hierarchical, with Holly as Playgroup Leader and Sarah as Deputy. Although Holly tended to chair staff meetings, was officially 'in charge' and had a natural authority gained from her many years' experience, most decisions were taken democratically. All staff worked part-time, with either Holly or Sarah present at all sessions, except on rare occasions when June led the group.

Each member of staff acted as a 'Key Worker' for individual children, forming a close relationship with those children and assuming responsibility for the monitoring and logging of that child's progress in playgroup. If children formed a closer attachment to a different adult, then the Key Worker would consult with that adult before recording the child's progress. Occasionally, Key Workers 'exchanged'

children, particularly if, due to a change in the days a child or worker attended, the Key Worker no longer saw the child frequently.

5.6 Staff perceptions of playgroups as preschool providers

As discussed in Chapter 4, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff to gain insights into their perceptions of individual children, their beliefs about the role of preschool education and the ethos of the playgroup studied. Core questions for these interviews (see Appendix 4.2) emanated from: my readings of research; observations during the pilot study in Autumn 1999; notes made in the field during data collection and my experiences of playgroups constructed over years of being a mother and playgroup worker. Data collected during interview were rich and broad-based, and fed back into the research, shaping its development, sometimes blurring but eventually helping to sharpen its focus. Here, a summary account is given of the main issues arising from staff interviews.

5.6.1 Preschool care or education?

Although all the staff members were emphatic that they were not teachers, they defined their roles as providing education rather than care:

> we are not here for care … we are here to educate the children and I see
> myself as a practitioner   (Holly, Staff Interview 01.05.01, p6)

The playgroup leader and deputy both mentioned the curriculum as an anchor for their roles, as 'everything we do is linked to the early learning goals so you can't say we're here just to … to be carers' (Staff Interview 01.05.01, p6, L33-43).

The crux seemed to lie in the definition of 'education'. For the playgroup staff, education included all the experiences the children encountered at preschool, with the crucial goal of 'learning to be independent' (Janet, Staff Interview 01.05.01, p7, L10), that included practical self-care, such as learning to dress/undress themselves and to ask to go to the toilet. Although the staff delivered the Foundation Stage curriculum they diverged from this in response to the children's perceived interests and/or abilities:

> June: I mean there's a hidden curriculum which is grasp whatever you can and just develop it don't you
>
> Others: yeh/yes …
>
> Holly: cos I always see it in the group that you set out … a task you've chosen…building as a topic say last term … and um we've given the children all the words all the experiences that we can through the set tasks through our planned curriculum and then they go off and they build something together or … you hear them playing together and they're … using little bits that we've given them and they're expanding them and using them in their own way … and that's what I see as our curriculum … and as you say *(to June)* the hidden curriculum is what they've taken out of it … all the rest is discarded it's chaff they just take out of it what they want
>
> (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p10)

Staff felt that 'education' also included learning routines and teaching the children how to conduct themselves in preparation for school, including learning the sessions had a certain structure, and learning 'to sit on the carpet which they understand through coming here to sit down and be quiet and listen to the story … rather than running riot in between the two rooms' (Staff Interview 01.05.01, p6)

The staff all agreed that acquiring the social skills required by schooling was the most important aspect of the children's time in playgroup, including gaining the confidence to make friends which in turn gave them opportunities to learn through talk and to experiment with language:

Rosie: what do you think children gain from playgroup rather than staying at home?

Holly: it's the [social side

Sarah: [social skills

Janet: [social (?) … sharing … taking turns… and making friends … and also … their language develops a lot quicker cos when they're at home they're talking to Mum /

Holly: /and Mum sometimes could be talking for them …whereas here they've got to do it for themselves … eventually well and also they come in here and they may have heard words and they can use them in here … to other children in their play and I think it speeds up the development of their language … coming in and sharing it with other children …using new words in role play… one example was Ian and he was singing softly like you do to get someone to sleep and I said 'that's a lullaby' and later he was singing 'a lullaby' and he was using the word … and I think sometimes they need to use it with their contemporaries rather than with adults because you know they're frightened of 'getting it wrong' with an adult but with other children it doesn't matter does it?   (Staff Interview 05.12.00, pp12-13)

5.6.2 Foundation Stage Curriculum

The staff expressed increasing tensions between the curriculum, their training and how they viewed their role in playgroup:

Holly: you know they're (the children) not there for all this … what we've learnt on the course to be passed on to them they're there to learn social skills and I think that yes they (the courses) are very good and they're very good at building (staff) confidence but I think they can go too far the other way …and spoil the spontaneity and the fun of a playgroup … and I think sometimes you have to take a step back and think 'yes yes they're supposed to be doing this and I'm supposed to be teaching them this this and this through these methods but sometimes you just have to step back and say they're two years nine months they're here for a bit of fun … to learn how to socialize and what am I doing this to them for?   (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p5)

In addition to heralding more curriculum control, staff felt that the introduction of state funding for preschool 4 year-olds, and planned payment for 3-year-olds, had begun to change parent attitudes. Although they felt some parents still regarded playgroup as 'cheap childcare', funding had made parents take 'more notice because they think oh this is you know government funding it's gotta be important' (Holly, Staff Interview 24.07.01, p11, L10-12).

Overall, staff were positive about the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and whilst they resented the long, unpaid hours record keeping demanded, they also felt that fewer 'quiet' children 'slipped through the net' (Holly, Staff Interview 01.05.01, p1, L26). They appreciated the flexibility of the new curriculum that was like 'an open-ended book' (Holly, Staff Interview 01.05.01, p14, L30) and carried over into the children's first year at school so children could pick up the goals at any point along the way, depending on their abilities and/or inclinations. However, they felt this advantage was contradicted by assessment on entry to school, which they strongly opposed.

5.6.3 Single entry to school and Baseline Assessment

Although the local education authority encouraged primary schools to adopt a single entry policy, this particular playgroup had built a relationship with the adjoining school allowing younger children to remain in playgroup until the Spring Term if appropriate. However, due to the pressures of school funding and Baseline, during data collection the school reverted to a policy of single entry despite parent reservations and playgroup staff recommendations to the contrary. Staff felt strongly that this move was counter to the interests of the children, reflected a move away from child-centred education, ignored individual children's 'readiness' and different 'stages' of learning, and that the child's perspective 'just does not come into it now' (Holly, 01.05.01, p11,L12).

The staff remained consistently negative about Baseline Assessment, yet its effects became evident in their practice. For example, during consultation with staff when discussing video extracts, Sarah, who during interview had felt that the staff had largely resisted the top-down pressures of Baseline and changing attitudes towards Numeracy and Literacy, was struck by the increased attention paid to number and letter work during adult-child interaction (Diary Note 23.11.01).

Staff had also noted that younger children could be invisibly disadvantaged by virtue of state funding and Ofsted inspection routines, reporting that in recent inspections in this and neighbouring playgroups, inspectors had only viewed the records of state-funded children, that is, of four year olds. Three year olds, whether due to start school the following year or not, were not funded at the time of the study, and their records, coincidentally or not, were not inspected. There was therefore a corresponding tendency for staff to focus on more complete record keeping for older children, which in turn meant keeping a closer eye on their movements, motivation and involvement (Group Staff Interview, 27.07.01).

5.6.4 Children's talk and learning

As discussed above, staff linked children's developing social skills to their confidence in talking, and further appeared to equate children's willingness and ability to talk with how much and in what manner the children were spoken to at home::

> Holly: there are children that come in and they have obviously spoken to a lot of adults and been spoken to …/
>
> Janet: /in an adult way
>
> Holly: in an yes in an adult way because their vocabulary is amazing and they know how to use these words and yet other children come in and they barely say 'boo' to you (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p12)

For staff, if a child was used to talking with adults in the home, then the child was more likely to talk to staff, regardless of their language skills. Furthermore, they had observed that many new children who had no particular peer friends in the group would address adults rather than peers:

> Holly: I think it's how the parents have spoken to them because if the parents don't talk to them … it doesn't matter how much language they've got if they're confident about chatting and talking … they'll talk to you so it depends … very much on the parents … how they interact with their children at that early stage
>
> Rosie: *(to Sarah)* you're nodding
>
> Sarah: yeh and sometimes also they'll speak to the adults before they'll speak to the other children won't they? … if they don't know any other children they'll speak to an adult before they'll speak to the children (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p13)

The staff had noted that children with older siblings were more likely to speak with other children, partly because they were used to talking to their sibling's friends and partly because they were more familiar with the notion and experiences of going to preschool. Children with friends in the group tended to talk to their friends, leading to talk with less familiar peers or adults through their friendships (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p13). Staff felt all new children, in varying degrees, found the playgroup environment daunting, and struggled to understand the systems, routines and words that were used to describe what went on in playgroup:

> Holly: it's all very scary …and although you may have told them perhaps they need that sort of physical side of being dropped off and picked up to reassure the verbal 'I'm coming back at twelve o'clock'
>
> Sarah: because they don't [know when twelve o o'clock is
>
> Holly: [what is twelve o'clock?
>
> Janet: or 'lunchtime' because children are hungry all the time aren't they?
>
> Holly: yeh *(laughs)* 'is it lunchtime yet?' *(imitating child's voice)*
>
> Janet: yeh it must be cos my tummy's rumbling
>
> (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p13-14)

These views correspond with Bourdieu's account of individual children's habitus encountering a new field and the processes of adapting to new structural formats in the social organization of their lives (Bourdieu, 1977). Here, staff recognized that children needed the repeated physical experience of arriving at and leaving playgroup as they did not have enough experience for the words used to carry clear meanings in their own frames of reference.

Staff estimated that 1–2 children in each average annual intake of 20 initially responded to the demands of playgroup by electing silence. In such cases, staff would address the child's peer group, 'so the conversation is left nice and open and easy so that they can then chip in when they're ready' (Holly, Staff Interview 24.07.01, p15,

L4). They would also talk with the parents, encouraging the mother or carer to attend with the child for a period, and to gain more knowledge about the child's interests and background. Staff felt it was highly important for children to talk, not only as they would need this confidence for later schooling, but also because talking about their learning was an essential part of the learning and feedback process. The extract below reflects constructivist and Vygotskian approaches to learning in the staff's training:

> Sarah: they might not talk but they probably listen don't they?
>
> Others: yeh
>
> Sarah: they're probably still taking it all on board
>
> Holly: but I think it's quite important that they do put their thoughts into words
>
> Sarah: yeh
>
> Holly: that they sequence their actions … but I think it becomes clearer to them if they can talk about it
>
> Janet: cos then also we become aware of if they've missed something/
>
> Holly: /yeh yes … if they don't talk
>
> Janet: we can then give them more can't we if they've got it/
>
> Holly: /yes cos they could've got something completely wrong and unless they tell you what they think you don't know/
>
> Janet: well that's it cos they can stand there nodding can't they?
>
> (Staff Interview 01.05.01, p19)

5.7 Mothers' perceptions of playgroups as preschool providers

5.7.1 Preschool care or education?

All the mothers worked part-time, and had other childcare arrangements: Zara, Tallulah and Michael went to childminders, and Jake attended a nursery near his mother's place of work. The children could only attend playgroup sessions if the

parents or childminder could transport them, and in a rural area where driving was essential, this severely limited the choice of childminder. This illustrates the issue raised in Chapter 1, Section 1.3, that sessional preschool provision puts negative pressures on working mothers and their children.

All the mothers viewed playgroup as preparation for full-time education rather than childcare. However, the mothers had different expectations of *how* playgroup prepared their children for school. Jake, Zara and Tallulah's mothers valued the opportunity to meet and socialise with other children who would be attending the same school:

> I think it's important for him to interact with other local children
>
> (Jake's Mum, 16.05.01, p6)
>
> I think that it was just to get her used to being with children and it's sort of a step before school   (Tallulah's Mum, 05.12.00, p5)
>
> I think you're sort of preparing them for school for being with a group of children her own sort of age   (Zara's Mum, 12.02.01, p4)

In contrast, Michael's mother felt playgroup helped instil discipline, and had 'taught him that he's got to sit down and it's more structured' (Michael's Mum, 26.06.01, p80), placing less value on socialization as he already had social skills:

> I can't see that it's made any difference (socially) cos he's always been with a group of children whether it's been here or at (his childminder's) because it is like a playgroup up there anyway   (Michael's Mum, 26.06.01, p8)

Both boys' mothers emphasized the importance of learning 'to do what when you're told' (Michael's Mum, 27.03.01, p7, L40); 'the fact that he's got to do as he's told when he's there I think that's a good thing isn't it ... it's preparation for school' (Jake's Mum, 16.05.01, p7, L23-24). All the mothers mentioned the importance of

learning routines that were similar to school, for example: 'the structure of the day' (Tallulah's Mum 22.05.01, p2, L45).

5.7.2 Children learning at playgroup

All the mothers mentioned how the wide range of activities offered by playgroup stimulated their children, that the children 'loved' playgroup and asked frequently when they could next go. They felt that this positive attitude stimulated learning, but even when prompted, they were not specific about what or how their children were learning.

Jake's mother felt that the most important aspect of her son's time in playgroup was his happiness: 'as long as he's happy that's the main thing … that's all I worry about' (16.05.01, p8, L19). Zara, Jake and Tallulah's mums stressed the importance of having fun and being happy, but Tallulah's was also conscious of the need to attend playgroup in order to keep up with other children:

> I didn't want her to be you know disadvantaged because they'd had a head start everybody else and that not only had she had the shock of going in (to school) without any … experience of being in a school environment then suddenly you know everybody was sort of was more ahead than she was and so she'd be struggling as well　　　　　　　　(Tallulah's Mum, 05.12.00, p9)

Neither Jake's nor Zara's mums were concerned about their children learning specific skills such as letters and numbers, feeling that these could be acquired later. However, Michael's Mum, who unlike the other mothers had a long experience of education (with five children ranging from 3 to18 years old), felt that playgroup should teach specific Literacy and Numeracy skills:

I think they need to go to school so the sooner he goes to playschool the better … I think they teach them you know (the childminder) doesn't teach him I mean now I've found out they're (playgroup staff) not even allowed to teach them to write their name are they? I mean that's stupid I don't agree with that

(Michael's Mum, 27.03.01, p6)

For all the mothers, the opportunity to learn to talk with adults in a school-like situation was important so children could learn to express their needs. For example, attending playgroup meant they had to 'be a bit more independent and … be confident enough to say she wants to go for a wee or whatever … the sort of interaction with the teacher-type person' (Zara's Mum, 12.02.01, p4). Jake, Zara and Tallulah's mums all felt it was also important for their children to get used to listening and talking to less familiar adults as preparation for school. Michael's mum mentioned this with regard to learning to listen to what he was asked to do.

5.7.3 Single entry to school and Baseline Assessment

The mothers expressed different views on early entry to school. Although Michael was due to spend two full years in playgroup, his mother would have welcomed an earlier start to school because she thought 'it'd do him the world of good to start now … I don't think he's ready for full-time school but I think he is ready for school … (for) the authority more than anything' (26.06.01, p6, L3-9).

In contrast, Jake's mother was very pleased that Jake would be staying in playgroup for almost 5 terms, and was against early entry. She had insisted on keeping Jake's Summer-born elder brother out of school until January, and felt that this had 'made <u>such</u> a difference … because he was one of the older ones then at playgroup … and his confidence just grew … and because he'd grown in confidence it had prepared him much better … and he settled straight away' (11.07.01, p5-6).

Zara's mother was pleased Zara would spend two years in playgroup before starting full-time school and had not given much thought to school, whereas Tallulah's mum sensed the imminence of school shortly after Tallulah joined playgroup, where she was due to stay for just 3 ¼ terms:

> I'm a bit worried because she starts school in September next year and if she's still only doing two mornings (at playgroup) and she's suddenly going to go to five (at school) and I think it's gonna be a hell of a shock for her so you know I think she should build it up at some point but not I mean I'll have to change my hours of working (to get her there)   (Tallulah's Mum, 05.12.00, p7)

The primary school had told Tallulah's parents that they were 'very keen on her starting in September' (22.05.01, p3, L7), as it was better for all children to do Baseline at the same time and they could not guarantee a place later in the year. Against their better judgement and the advice of playgroup, the parents agreed for Tallulah to start in September.

5.8 Conclusions

To conclude, this chapter has presented details of the institutional setting for this study to acquaint the reader with detail that will be needed to interpret data presentation in Chapters 6 and 7, and explained the categorisation of activities. The interview data revealed that mothers had different expectations of *how* playgroup prepared their children for school, with the boys' mothers placing more emphasis on discipline and structure, and three out of four stressing the development of social skills that would lead to more experience and confidence in talking to others.

Staff felt the key role for playgroup was to help children acquire the social skills needed for school life, including gaining the confidence to become independent and to interact with others by talking to peers and adults. Recognising children's signs of

readiness to communicate and engage with others in meaning making and how children learn through talk were identified as key to their delivery of education. They also felt that playgroup should prepare children for school by helping them get used to 'school' ways of behaving, such as sitting quietly on the carpet, taking part in group activities and following imposed routines. These structural routines were instilled in the children through talk and silently through example. Although staff disapproved of early entry to school and top-down pressures to teach Literacy and Numeracy skills, they recognised that their practice had changed, as they felt obliged to provide the children with the knowledge expected of them by the changes in education.

In Chapters 1 and 5, this thesis has portrayed how playgroups have developed over time as communities of practice, both on the macro-level of the development of preschool education and on the micro-level of this particular playgroup, cohort of staff, beliefs and practices. These levels overlap and contribute to the particular norms and conventions operating in the setting, that in turn shape the children's actions and ways of communicating. Beginning with detailed profiles of the case study children and contrasting their behaviours at home and in playgroup, Chapters 6 and 7 explore how the children's actions re-constructed and transformed the 'doing' of playgroup through the processes of mediated action and interaction.

Chapter 6

Child profiles at home and playgroup

6.1 Introduction

One of the greatest challenges when writing up the analysis for this study was finding a clear structure to convey the complexities of the issues that had emerged from the data. As discussed in Chapter 4, the study generated a wealth of data, only a portion of which can be discussed in detail in this thesis. However, rigorous coding of the transcripts, video log, Field and Diary Notes together with repeated listening to the audio recordings and viewings of the videos have ensured the extracts selected here for detailed analysis are representative of the data corpus, either because they represent recurrent or 'critical' incidents in the data (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984).

This analysis chapter answers the first research question:

1   During their first year at playgroup, how are some children constructed as more socially confident and better communicators than others? How do home perceptions of each child differ from playgroup staff perceptions?

Using a model based on Geertz' notion of 'thick description', profiles of the 4 case-study children are given, detailing how the children's confidence and ability as communicators were perceived by the mothers and playgroup staff, and how their perceptions of each child developed over the course of the study, as related through interviews. These perceptions are compared with video and audio observations, Field and Diary Notes on each child at home and during the deliberately contrasting playgroup activity of milk time[1]. Milk time was selected for scrutiny in this chapter

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[1] Details of the children's engagement in other playgroup activities are presented in Chapter 7

because, as discussed in Chapter 5, all children participated in Whole Group Compulsory activities for the same lengths of time, but for different lengths of time in Free and Guided Choice activities. Compulsory Whole Group Activities therefore presented a more equitable measure of individual children's communicative strategies in a similar playgroup context experienced for similar lengths of time. However, in the Compulsory Whole Group activities of Registration and Showbox, older children tended to dominate the child talking opportunities that arose. Outside Play was not audio and video recorded for ethical and practical reasons, as discussed in Chapter 5. Milk Time appeared to offer the younger members of the group the greatest opportunities to interact with others.

Chapter 6 concludes by identifying and theorising core factors in the dynamics of children's interactions at playgroup milk time and at home, and considers how these impacted upon the children's observed and perceived communicative abilities and strategies. These factors form the basis for answering research questions 2 and 3, addressed in Chapter 7.

6.2 Jake Case Study Profile

6.2.1 Jake Personal and Home Background

Date of Birth:	April 1998
Family:	Youngest of 3 children: sister aged 7 at beginning of study, brother aged 4, both at primary school adjoining playgroup, mother and father
Started playgroup:	3rd week in January 2001
Playgroup key worker:	Holly
Playgroup attendance:	Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon

Jake lived in open countryside on the site of the family agricultural business, which was run from home, so home was a very busy, social place: 'there's always somebody coming in and out' (Mother Interview 16.5.01, p2). Jake's mother worked part-time in a nearby town. During home visits, both the father and mother included Jake in their activities: the father came to show Jake newly-born creatures and take him on the tractor; the mother involved him in baking and chick-feeding.

6.2.2 Mother's perceptions of Jake

Jake's mother described him as a 'sweet', 'independent, confident, content, happy little boy' (Interview 16.5.01, p1, L20-21), who spent 'a lot of time outside … as much as he can …he's not much of a one for sitting down' (11.7.01, p1, L29-31).

She reported he had settled well in playgroup: 'he loves it … more than nursery … maybe it's because it's not so structured as nursery' (16.5.01, p3, L41-43), and he liked seeing his siblings in the adjoining school. She had observed when helping in playgroup that what he did there reflected what he did at home:

> Mum: any chance to play with sand or he can't wait to get outside and play
> on the tractors and things … he loves the glue …he doesn't bring
> many models home … he just likes the feel of it (glue)
>
> (Interview 11.7.01, p1)

Jake had no particular friends other than one of his brother's friends, Nick, who was still in playgroup.

Regarding his talk, his Mum described him as a 'very chatty' child , who talked 'the whole time in the car' (16.5.01 p2, L11) during their many journeys to and from nursery, playgroup and school. She also noted 'his speech has come on since starting playgroup' and that 'he's got more to say for himself' (16.5.01 p4, L13-15). By July, she felt that he had grown in confidence when talking to other adults, was more

relaxed in adult company (11.7.01, pp1-2), and that he talked to the staff in playgroup if necessary, but did not seek adult attention. In May, Jake's Mum had mentioned that he did not yet say some sounds clearly, but she did not feel this prevented others from understanding his speech. By July, she felt his speech was clearer and he was using a wider vocabulary (11.7.01, p3). At home, she had noticed he talked and sang more to himself, particularly during solitary play.

6.2.3 Staff perceptions of Jake

The playgroup staff, unaware of the parent interview, chose very similar vocabulary to describe Jake as 'sweet' (Sarah, Field Notes 27.4.01), 'happy to get on and independent' (Holly, Staff Interview 27.4.01) and 'thoughtful and considerate' (Holly, Staff Interview,1.5.01, p33).

They reported he had settled well, and had grown used to being left by his parents. By the end of the year, staff had a generally positive view of Jake, but none of them felt they had a well-informed view of what he did as, due to a combination of his hours of attendance and staff timetabling, no staff saw him more than once a week (Staff Interview, 24.7.1, p23). However, they all agreed that his favourite activity was 'glue', with Janet adding that 'his crafts take about 3 weeks to dry' (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p32). Sarah noted he enjoyed the Sand Tray (Field Notes 9.5.01).

Regarding his social confidence, Holly commented 'he joins in, doesn't get left out … he's a blender … it's easy to lose track of him… not bags of confidence but enough to get on with what he wants to do' (Field Notes 27.4.01). Sarah felt he had been quite 'timid' at first, but had grown in confidence (Staff Interview 1.5.01). Holly agreed that 'he knows now that he's important and that if he asks for something somebody will listen to him' (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p32). By July, staff felt strongly that only attending two playgroup sessions with additional nursery sessions was not beneficial for Jake, although they understood the mother's practical reasons for this arrangement. Staff were concerned Jake's only friend was Nick, who would be

leaving at the end of the year, and felt that although he mixed well generally, splitting his time between nursery and playgroup had a detrimental effect on his formation of new friendships within playgroup.

Regarding his talk, Holly thought Jake was 'quiet', but this was not a 'problem', because 'he's got such a sweet face and smiling eyes, I think he uses that and body language cos he doesn't say much' (Field Notes 27.4.1). They all found his speech a little unclear. By May, there was slight disagreement between the staff about how much he talked:

> Holly: he doesn't talk masses
>
> Sarah: but he does talk though
>
> Janet: he joins in doesn't he?
>
> Holly: well he joins in but he's not a big chatter (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p32)

Again in the July interview there was some disagreement, but staff still felt they did not see him often enough to be able to comment. Only Sarah was secure in her perception of his speech, stating 'he talks to me all the time … I see him quite often out of playgroup and he comes up and speaks to me' (Staff Interview 24.7.01, p23).

6.2.4 Summary of others' perceptions of Jake

There was consistency between staff and Jake's mother's perceptions of Jake as confident, independent, happy and active, rarely sitting down with pens, pencils and puzzles. At home, he preferred to be outdoors and in playgroup in more Open Spaces. He enjoyed playgroup, and having a friend had initially helped him settle. Staff and mother thought his speech had improved since starting playgroup, in terms of vocabulary, clarity, appropriacy and confidence. Staff had observed that his confidence had grown, but he was still fairly timid. They remained concerned he had no particular friends in his own year group. Splitting his time between nursery and playgroup, the only practicable solution available to the mother, was not perceived as

ideal, and contributed to infrequent contact with staff. Staff disagreed in their perceptions of how much he talked, but agreed he was quiet and used smiling and eye contact to communicate with others in the group, labelling him a 'quiet blender' (Holly 'chat', Field Notes 25.6.1).

6.2.5 Observations of Jake at home

Four home visits were made, but as Jake had fallen asleep on two of these occasions and home visits could only be made at certain times on certain days to fit in with the family's busy life, home data was only collected twice.

6.2.5.1 Home visit 16.05.01

On this first home visit, during 45 minutes' video observation, Jake spent 15 minutes outside, 5 minutes in the kitchen looking at a picture book on tractors and asking his Mum questions while she baked, 4 minutes running to and from his father's office, 2 minutes bouncing on the sofa cushions in the kitchen, 9 minutes occasionally talking with his Mum as he licked out the baking bowls and 10 minutes playing with a Brio Train Set on his own in the living room. While outside, Jake fed the goslings and explained to me where they had come from, supplementing his talk with actions. For example, when talking about what the chicks ate, he put his hand in a bag of feed and said '#dey eat #dis', and made his hands into the shape of an egg when he explained how the goslings had hatched. The following extracts give a flavour of the observed exchanges in Jake's home.

In *J1/1*, Jake was looking through an illustrated children's book on farm machinery. His mother was baking and did not always respond immediately to his questions (*J1/1* L4-10), so Jake sometimes supplied his own answers, which he spoke out loud (L9, 11-12), thus maintaining the conversation by filling in the gaps the mother left in her conversational turns. Sometimes, his mother did not understand what he said, and asked for clarification (eg L27). Her attention was never far away, often following up

remarks she had not answered earlier by prompting his talk (L14), here through a seemingly routinised question that reflected shared experiences. The mother used specialized vocabulary which she seemed confident Jake was familiar with. Jake consulted his mother about images in the book using words and fixed gaze direction (L23), and she responded by using action and words to bring the book illustrations closer to a reality that she knew he had the experience to understand (L29-31).

J1/1 (Videocode 00:04 – 01:16) **Video clip**

3[2]   Rosie: *(to Mum)* [if you could just turn off the background music

4   Jake: *(sitting on sofa, next to open book, pointing at illustration in book)*

5   ['sdat pos# one mum *(studies picture)*

6   Mum: *(to Rosie)* oh yes of course *(turns off radio)*

7   Jake: *(gaze to book)* is #dat a pos# one mum? *(studies picture)* dat not pos#

8   one *(gaze to different picture, points)* digger *(moves finger towards*

9   *picture, gaze to book)* look digger #dere

10   Mum: *(no response, busy at other end of kitchen)*

11   Jake: *(looks through pages in book, gaze to book)* I #couldn't see digger

12   on dis tactor an look is it *(turning page)* here? *(opens page)* ye#s

13   *(opens book out and studies page)*

14   Mum: *(out of view, baking)* was #that is that a John Deere tractor?

15   Jake: yeh *(intake of breath, points to picture, gaze from book to Mum,*

16   *pointing at picture)* I can see a gri#d here

17   Mum: it is yep

18   Jake: *(turning page, lilt/sing-song as speaks, gaze to book)* #john de-er

19   Mum: *(out of view)* an where's the um post banger? … that?

20   Jake: *(glances up at Mum, gaze to book, turning pages)* it han't go# pos#

21   banger *(opening page. pointing to picture)* #look *(pushing page open)*

22   Mum: *(out of view)* careful of the pages

23   Jake: see *(glances up, points to picture)* look it han# go# pos# one on *(gaze*

24   *to Mum who walks towards him)*

---

[2] L numbers refer to L numbers in transcripts

25	Mum:	*(out of view)* it has hasn' it?

26   Jake: *(studies picture closely)*

27   Mum: *(out of view)* what? it hasn' got a post you mean? it has I can see a post

28   Jake: *(studies picture closely)* can' (?)

29   Mum: *(approaches Jake, points to book)* this post *(points to other picture*

30   *higher on page)* and that *(moves hand from top to bottom, replicating*

31   *dropping action, moves away)* it drops down doesn't it? *(pointing)* like

32   daddy's

33   Jake: *(gaze to pictures)* yeh tis like daddy's *(sighs, studies another picture)*

                                                                (16.05.01, p1)

This relatively long and successfully concluded exchange involved Jake interpreting a book with his mother's help. On other topics, exchanges were sometimes shorter, but also successfully concluded. For example, in *J1/2* Jake enquired about his father's worker, Don (L1). His speech was indistinct, and still unclear when he repeated his question (L3). Hearing the name 'Don', his mother offered a response (L4), which Jake considered before disagreeing (L5), asserting his disagreement by stressing the word 'no', walking towards his mother and explaining why he disagreed (L6). This reminded the mother of where Don was, and she was then able to give Jake the information he was seeking (L7), and Jake returned to swinging on the door (L8). The exchange was successfully completed as both Jake and his mother pursued Jake's initially unintelligible enquiry, combining their separate knowledges of Don's whereabouts to jointly construct where he was.

J1/2 (Videocode 17:06-17:42)

1   Jake: *(swinging on kitchen door while mother washing up)* (??) Don?

2   Mum: *(facing sink)* what's that Jake? *(facing Jake)* what d'you say?

3   Jake: *(swinging on kitchen door)* (?) Don as (gone?) back

4   Mum: Don? *(washing up, gaze out of window)* Don's at work isn 'e?

5   Jake: is *(swings on door)* is 'e *(swings on then lets go of door)* <u>no</u> *(walking*

6   *purposefully towards Mum at sink)* Don is at holiday

7   Mum: yeh that's right *(washing up)* I think he comes back tomorrow

8   Jake: *(walks back towards door)*   (16.05.01, p10)

Overall, Jake used mostly talk to communicate with his mother, combined with fixed gaze or body movement for emphasis rather than for initiating or maintaining talk. There were often lengthy periods of silence between utterances that appeared to give Jake the space he needed to formulate and express new thoughts in words.

Later, when playing alone in the living room, Jake scripted his play with odd words and sounds, occasionally explaining to me how his train set worked:

J1/3 (Videocode 23:05 – 24:34)

43   Jake: *(sitting on ball, looking at train set, balances his weight on ball, rolls*

44   *off backwards, turns and notices me, smiles)*

45   Rosie: is that your train set?

46   Jake: *(nods, gaze to train set)*

47   Rosie: it's lovely

48   Jake: *(picks up train pieces, fits them together, switches on battery power)*

49   Mum did it #dis way *(puts train on track, gaze to train)*

50   an watch see

51   Rosie: oh yeh

52   Jake: *(pulling train back)* an I'm pullin it #dat way an *(puts train on track*

53   *gaze to me then to train)* so #dis dat way #dey go #dat way

54   and dis *(holds up engine)* #dey go backwards an forwards *(glance to*

55   *Rosie as fits engine on, moves to train track)* oh dis one can't work

56   *(picks up train, which starts to whir)* oh yes it can *(puts train on track,*

57   *train moves along track, turns and smiles at Rosie)*

58   Rosie: oh that's lovely

59   Jake: *(watches train as moves round track)*   (16.05.01, p15)

In *J1/3* Jake was confident how the train system worked, and using talk supplemented by actions conveyed effectively: who had shown him how to make it work (L49), that I had to watch if I wanted to see it work (L50); the different directions the engines could travel in (L52-54) and he verbalized his thoughts when a train appeared not to work (L55-56).

6.2.5.2 Home visit 11.07.01

Mother and father were in the kitchen discussing business while Jake played a game on the table, occasionally talking to himself as he played. Although in interview, Jake's mother felt he rarely became engaged in indoor activities, on both home visits he spent periods of time looking at books, drawing and playing games that he was clearly familiar with.

In the living room, Jake showed me his brother's new Scalectric set, and he and his mother started to play. *J1/4* shows how Jake took control of the game, deciding who had which car and when to start (L60-62). He knew how to play and used language specific to a racing context, such as 'here we go' (L61) and 'I got on your one' (L67). His mother used talk and movement to give instructions (L63,65), talked aloud to fix the track (L68-69), and commented on the game (L71-72). Jake ignored his mother's instructions to move (L63,65), so she moved the wire to help him rather than insist he did as asked. This extract was characterized by mutual attention and silences, with Jake secure in his knowledge of the procedures and racing-context specific vocabulary:

J1/4 (Videocode 09:58 – 10:50)

60	Jake:	*(sitting in centre of track, passes control to Mum)* I #dot #dat one you
61		ave #de geen one *(using own control)* here we go *(presses button*
62		*to make car move)*
63	Mum:	right come over here Jake *(pointing to spot next to her)*
64	Jake:	*(doesn't react, is 'driving' car around track)*
65	Mum:	Jake *(lifting Jake's wire trailing across track)* come over here cos

66		this is (?)
67	Jake:	*(still sitting in centre, driving car)* I got on your one I got on yours
68	Mum:	*(fiddles with own car)* ooh can't get this to work *(sets it in*
69		*track)* there *(both 'drive' cars round track)* that's alright isn't it *(both*
70		*'drive' cars round track until Mum's car comes off track)*
71		ooh mummy crashed *(retrieves car)* Mummy's not very good at
72		this
73	Jake:	*(car comes off other end of track, looks up)* my one's crashied *(moves*
74		*to collect car)*
75	Mum:	*(stands up and moves away)* (11.07.01, p6)

During this visit, Jake's friend Nick arrived, and the two played with the Scalectric. Nick appeared to acknowledge Jake's authority by asking him to help set the game up (**J1/5** L84). The two boys negotiated untangling the wires using a combination of action, hand gesture and talk (L82-86). Jake appeared confident of home vocabulary (L79), and of the game (L83,85).

J1/5 *(Videocode 15:55 –16:47)*

74	Nick:	*(to Rosie)* it's not working
75	Rosie:	well it … you have to um … *(pointing)* untangle the things Nick
76	Nick:	*(moves cars and wires, starts to untangle them)*
77	Jake:	*(crawls over)*
78	Rosie:	and then Jake you'll have to move the cushion won't you?
79	Jake:	*(gaze to bag)* no it not #de cushion *(gaze to Rosie)* it #de bean bag
80	Rosie:	well you'll have to move it won't you?
81	Jake:	[*(moves bean bag, jumps on it, sits and watches Nick)*
82	Nick:	[*(untangling wires, to self)* ahaa … I done #nat … an #nis one …
83	Jake:	*(walking to Nick)* it will #till work
84	Nick:	*(untangling wires, gaze to wires)* please come an help me Jake
85	Jake:	*(starts to help)* come on #nen *(takes a control and pulls wire straight)*
86	Nick:	I'll do *(taking other control)* I'll do #dis one (11.07.01, p10)

6.2.6 Observations of Jake at Milk Time in playgroup

6.2.6.1 Milk Time 05.03.01

Jake remained very quiet at milk time during his first few weeks, watching other children and making only two adult-directed utterances that mimicked what other children had been saying:

J2/1   I wan more (5.3.1 p6L27)[3]

a#ll gone (5.3.1 p6L29)

At the end of milk time, Holly dismissed the children in groups according to the shape on their table. Jake had observed other children's routinised response of calling out (**J2/2** L47), jumping up and going to Room 2 when asked 'Who's sitting at the table with a (shape)?', but he was not yet sure of the procedure (L48).

J2/2 *(Videocode J2/2+ J2/3 36:00-36:33)*

44   Holly: *(to Jake's table)* what shape have you got on your table?

45   Faith: square

46   Holly: *(loud, to whole room)* if you're sitting at the table with the square on

47   Other ch. at table:*(in chorus)* we are! *(rush to Room 2)*

48   Jake: we are! *(stands, hesitates next to table, gaze to Holly)*

49   Holly: well done Jake

49   Jake: *(gaze to Holly, takes step to Holly)*

50   Holly: you've got a square haven't you? yes well done *(holds out arm to*

indicate he can leave table)   (05.03.01 p6)

Jake began to follow children to Room 2, then noticed, and helpfully pulled out, the Showbox:

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[3] references in brackets are to transcripts

J2/3

51	Jake:	*(sees Showbox under entry table)* oh *(pulls it out)*
52	Holly:	is it Showbox time? *(crouches down)* I don't think it's Showbox time
53		yet
54	Jake:	*(gaze to Holly, nods)*
55	Holly:	not quite yet shall we leave it under there while we // do you want to
56		do some gluing or some sticking?
57	Jake:	yeh (05.03.01 p6)

Jake was a novice learning the routines and procedures of the new environment. He was often unsure and made 'mistakes' but he was receptive to clues from his peers' actions and talk that modeled playgroup practices, and, as in the above examples, received sensitively-worded guidance and reassurance from sympathetic adults (*J2/2* L50, *J2/3*L52-53,55-56).

6.2.6.2 Milk Time 04.04.01

By April, Jake had begun to master some milk time procedures, such as learning to look for, but not yet finding, his name card. He talked more in this session, totalling 45 utterances, many 1 or 2-word responses to routine questions (eg whether he wanted a biscuit) and saying 'please' and 'thank you', but with some longer exchanges. On this day, children were stirring powdered chocolate into their milk, to give them experience of stirring and watching a powder dissolve in a liquid (June 'chat', 4.4.1). June helped each child in turn as she handed out chocolate, insisting on politeness (*J2/4* L37), and encouraging children to wait their turn (L43, 45). Jake observed the powder sitting on the surface of his milk, and made a shape with his hand to convey the mass to June (L50). However, June was focused on time constraints, encouraging him to complete the task rather than discuss the processes of dissolving (L51). In contrast to his home practice of licking out bowls, (Section 6.2.5.1), an older boy pointed out he was in breach of playgroup 'rules' (L3), and the adult reassured Aaron whilst reminding Jake to complete the task (L4,6).

J2/4 *(Videocode 22:40-24:15)*

35   June: Jake would you like some?

36   Jake: yeh

37   June: ye#s <u>please</u>

38   Jake: yes please

39   June: good boy

40   Jake: I need it [a#ll

41   June: [have you finished Tobias?

42   Tobias:no not ye#t #there's #some in #there

43   June: … hang on Aaron *(A's talk/action not recorded)*

44   Arnold: I want #thome

45   June: you can have some Arnie *(to Tobias)*

46   can I just borrow your spoon a minute? // it'll soon dissolve Tobias

47   Tobias:orright

48   June: *(takes spoon)* thank you *(passes spoon to Aaron)* Aaron's next

49   Aaron: *(stirs for a while*) I not finished it's not all in

50   Jake: *(looking in cup)* I got big fing in *(holds up hand like claw, lump*

         chocolate powder is on his milk) #look

51   June: Jake would you like to stir it sweetie? *(handing Jake another spoon)*

52   Jake: can I stir mine?*(takes spoon)*

53   June: *(to Aaron)* bit more *(waiting)* have you finished Aaron?

54   Aaron: #fini#shed

1   June: yeh? *(takes spoon)* thank you *(gives J spoon, who stirs but takes out*

2   *spoon to lick it)* stir it round Jake

3   Aaron: he's lickin #de spoon

4   June: I know I'll go and wash that spoon up now

5   Jake: *(stirring and watching drink)* 'sgoing

6   June: it's going *(watching Jake)* have you finished Jake?

7   Jake: #finished *(gives spoon to June)*   (04.04.01 pp7-8)

Jake often engaged in Fantasy Play with other children, using body movement instead of or alongside words. In ***J2/5,*** the children projected imaginary meanings onto the objects on the table, and these newly attributed meanings led to joint fantasy play (L6-23). Here, the symbolism of the objects could be transformed in an instant through movement and words, with the boys appearing motivated by competitiveness to have the biggest or fastest boat (L12, L17, L20-22). The children's actions of eating and moving the biscuits around the table not only sustained the interaction between the children, but also appeared to create new contexts for the children's continuing talk (L12, 15, L20).

J2/5 (Videocode 32:32 – 33:25) **Video clip**

6   Tobias:*(banging biscuit on tablet)* this is a bo' *(moves biscuit around table)*

7   this is a boat this is a boat this is a boat

8   Jake: *(returns to table, sits, gaze to Tobias)* ba ba ba *('walks' his biscuit*

9   *across to T)*

10   Tobias:*(lifts his biscuit high in air)* this is a boat

11   Jake: *(lifts his biscuit up to T's)*

12   Tobias:*(moves his biscuit towards J's biscuit in mid-air)* this is a big boat

13   Jake: *(imitates T's action, banging his biscuit against T's)* an #dis is a big

14   bo' too boo boo boo *(holding biscuit up to T's)*

15   Tobias:*(takes bite from biscuit, looks at shape made)* #dis is wheels

16   Jake: *(takes a bite from biscuit, makes noises while eating, stands biscuit on*

17   *table)* this is a bo too

18   Aaron :*(holding biscuit out on table, points to J's biscuit)* that's #the wheel

19   Jake: *(looks at biscuit, eats it)*

20   Aaron*: .(drives biscuit around table in front of him)* my a mo'or boat

21   Jake: my a mo'or boat too

22   Tobias: mine's a motor boat

23   Jake, Aaron and Tobias:*(make engine noises and drive 'boats' around table)*

(04.04.01 p9)

Such moments of joint fantasy play illustrate how children brought their own meanings to playgroup, here transforming milk time into a competitive race by exploiting the characteristics (roundness of biscuit, shapes made when biting into biscuit) and meaning potentials (wheel, boat) of the objects to hand, constructing and transforming the 'doing' of playgroup (Bourdieu, 1977), converting milk time from a polite occasion for refreshments to an animated, competitive boat show.

6.2.6.3 Milk Time 09.05.01

Now in his second term at playgroup and more familiar with routines, adults monitored Jake less closely: when Jake looked for his name card but sat in the 'wrong' place, June reminded him of the initial letter in his name by writing the shape in the air, and by turning her gaze to his vacant seat, providing alternative scaffolding that allowed Jake to find his name. Although more familiar with routines, Jake talked very little this milk time (approximately 45 words in 13 utterances) watching others and repeating their utterances:

J2/6 (Videocode 47:10 –47:20)

53	Faith:	you can't get my fingers!
54		you can't get my fingers!
55		can't get my fingers!
56	Jake:	ca:n' ge' my finger
1		*(both giggle)*
2	Faith:	you can't get my fingers!
3		you can't get my fingers!
4	Jake:	ge' my finger
5		ge' my finger
6	*(continue playing)*	(09.05.01. pp9-10)

The actions of this child-initiated and frequent chasing game had created a context for talk, and the talk had developed over many sessions into the repetition of set phrases, which Jake was now confident to participate in.

6.2.6.4 Milk Time 06.06.01

Jake made a real effort to find his name card on his own, and left for longer by adults, eventually settled for the name 'Arnie'. June congratulated him on finding a final 'e', pointed out the different shapes of the letters, and through fixed gaze on his name card, Jake appeared to be trying to memorize the shapes of 'his' letters. On this day, the tables were set out to form one long rectangle, with Jake and Aaron at the head of the table. Faith was sitting on Jake's right and Elisabeth, a young recent arrival, on Aaron's left.

Jake joined in hand chasing games and group chants of 'we've got the same' when the cups were handed out and compared. He also watched and listened to adult-child talk about how 'good behaviour' was expected at 'big school'. Now more confident in his speech, Jake initiated a conversation with Faith about his home life, and Don the tractor driver. Although Faith did not appear to understand Jake's words (*J2/7* L28, 30), he succeeded in making her laugh through facial expression (L31-33):

J2/7 (Videocode 11:05 - 11:22)

27	Jake:	*(leans over to Faith, gaze to Faith)* you know Faith
28	Faith:	*(gaze to cup)* wha?
29	Jake:	I been (wobbie?) before
30	Faith:	*(gaze to Jake)* pardon?
31	Jake:	I bin (wobbie?) before #I has ... I bin in to see Don and Don was all
32		muddy *(pulls face)* face *(smiles, pulls comical face)*
33	Faith:	*(laughs)* (06.06.01 p12)

Later, while Aaron handed round biscuits, Jake slid over into his seat. When Aaron returned, he sat on Jake's knee, the two began to laugh, but the joke ended for Aaron when Jake refused to move:

J2/8 (Videocode 13:28-14:25)

25		*(Aaron returns to table and sits on Jake's knee, Jake starts to laugh)*

26   Jake: I sittin' on dere

27   *(Aaron and Jake both start to laugh a lot)*

28   Aaron: *(gets up, fixed gaze to Jake)* Jake dat <u>my</u> chair

29   Jake: *(to adults)* Aaron was #dittin on me and I *(laughing)* I'm #sittin on #de

30   #chair! *(laughing)*

31   Aaron: *(points to Jake's seat)* you sit #dere

32   Jake: *(laughs, doesn't move)*

33   Aaron: *(goes to back of chair Jake sitting on, rocks it)*

34   Jake: *(moves over to own chair, to adults)* Aaron was sittin on me an I was

35   sittin #dere   (06.06.01 p13)

Here, Jake asserted his presence through the action of occupying and remaining in
Aaron's seat, then tested his authority against an older boy through words (L26). At
first, Aaron used comical action (L25), then serious talk (L28) to reclaim his 'space',
but Jake, now more familiar with the ways of playgroup, referred to an adult to
legitimize his action (L29-30). This provoked Aaron into directive talk and action
(L31), followed by more aggressive action (L33) to which Jake finally conceded
(L34), but still enjoying the joke.

6.2.7 Summary of Profile of Jake

This snapshot profile of Jake's communicative strategies at home and at playgroup
milk time, together with others' perceptions of Jake as a communicator has brought
into focus many issues.

There was **similarity between the staff and mother's perceptions of Jake** as a
happy, independent and 'fairly confident' (staff) or 'confident' (mother) boy,
although staff noted he often communicated through gaze and facial expression rather
than words. These perceptions corresponded with the video observations. **At home**,
his exchanges tended to be significantly longer than those in playgroup, and to form
part of **long conversations** and **shared understandings between himself and others**

at home. Jake **initiated most of the exchanges** in the home, and his mother's abilities to **fine tune her utterances** to Jake's understandings, coupled with the **unhurried settings** in which the interactions took place, resulted in **many successfully concluded and sometimes lengthy exchanges**. Their shared knowledge and mutual understandings fed into the talk as they **jointly pursued answers** to Jake's enquiries, sometimes with the mother providing answers, or sometimes with answers jointly negotiated.

At home, although the mother sometimes appeared to be the more authoritative participant in their exchanges, imparting knowledge to Jake, or giving instruction, **Jake was treated as an authoritative 'knower'** by his mother and by his friend, Nick. Jake displayed a **confidence in his speech** and used a range of sometimes **specialised vocabulary** appropriately in different activities. His **familiarity with the sign systems** appeared to give him the confidence to be **precise and emphatic about the correct usage of words** and to explain meanings and impart information to others. He tended to use **gaze to check the attention** of the person he was addressing, and to **acknowledge** that he had heard others' utterances. He occasionally used **body movement to emphasise or supplement his talk**, particularly when being assertive.

Although insufficient home visits were made to get a clear picture of his changing uses of communicative strategies over time, the mother reported that she had noticed an increase in his social confidence and vocabulary since starting playgroup.

In contrast to home, during **Milk Time in playgroup** Jake's **exchanges were relatively short**, mostly question and answer and/or about the practicalities of milk time. As a newcomer entering an established group, Jake was confronted by a variety of playgroup rituals and procedures that most other children knew well. **Watching and imitating other children's actions and repeating their words** appeared to help him become a member of the group, masking his lack of familiarity with the many new symbols and symbolic actions specific to playgroup. He often received help from

adults who were sympathetic towards his misinterpretations and **used talk and action to scaffold his induction into these procedures**.

During his first sessions, Jake remained very quiet at milk times. **Over time**, he displayed a **growing confidence** within the group, not only **joining in group chants and games** but also **initiating talk**, **relying heavily on hand gestures and facial expression to convey meanings**. He **occasionally initiated talk about something that had occurred at home**, but **spoke most frequently to other children during joint fantasy play**. These findings are consistent with other studies identifying fantasy play as a rich context for talk (eg Crystal, 1998), but the video observations of Jake illustrate how **meanings were fluid and negotiated multi-modally**, often through the **manipulation of objects**. Jake's solitary and joint fantasy play appeared to be shaped by the **meaning potentials of the artefacts to hand**, and although their symbolism changed to suit each fantasy game as it evolved, their meanings still appeared to be grounded in the physicality of the objects to hand.

With other children, Jake **sometimes used body movement in place of or to supplement talk when talk alone failed to produce the desired effect**, although with increased confidence over time, he negotiated his way through short but successfully concluded exchanges with other children. His **exchanges were sometimes longer with adults, who, if not too busy, probed for meanings**, but who tended to be pressured by time constraints and practicalities at milk time. Sarah, who he sometimes saw outside playgroup and was familiar with his home, showed shared understandings that narrowed the gap between his home 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) and the new 'field' of playgroup.

This chapter now gives profiles of Michael, Zara and Tallulah in their separate homes and at milk time, selecting features of their interactions at milk time that either reveal similar traits to Jake's or bring different issues to light.

6.3 Michael Case Study Profile

6.3.1 Michael Personal and Home Background

Date of Birth:	October 1997
Family:	Youngest of 5 children: sister (7 years), brother (9 years), sister (14 years), sister (18 years)
	Parents divorced. Mother's partner, Peter, lived with family
Started playgroup:	3rd week September 2000
Playgroup key worker:	June
Playgroup attendance:	Monday and Friday mornings

Michael lived with his mother, her partner, and siblings in a cul-de-sac estate, next to open countryside, where he played with many children, including his youngest sister, brother and their friends. Michael's mother worked school hours. Her partner worked in the building trade, and Michael had 'helped' him build a wall in the back garden. Apart from his playgroup sessions, Michael had been cared for by a childminder on the same estate since the age of four weeks.

Interviews were held early evening, as this most suited Michael's mother, usually in the kitchen, which was both a thoroughfare and focal point of activity as it housed the telephone, computer and two hyperactive chinchillas suspended in a large cage from one wall. The resultant combinations of activity made the interviews very informal and lively, with several family members chipping in, and a great deal of laughter.

6.3.2 Mother's perceptions of Michael

Michael's mother described him as 'a very strong willed little boy' who was 'quite outgoing' (Interview 27.3.01, p1). He had been prone to tantrums, but these had become less frequent, which she felt was partly due to maturity, partly due to his

186

admiration of Peter with whom he had developed a strong relationship and partly as she had reduced her working hours to spend more time with Michael. She considered him socially confident and considerate of others' feelings (Interview 26.6.01, p9).

Regarding his home pastimes, Michael's mother related that during the winter months, he sometimes played with his toys indoors, or they read together. He enjoyed listening to stories and always went with his siblings to choose books from the library van. When it was light in the evenings he preferred to be outdoors playing around the estate with other children.

Although Michael had settled well initially at playgroup, he had gone through a period of being 'clingy' when she left him. This improved after he made a friend, David, who attended on Fridays. In general, Michael enjoyed and looked forward to playgroup, preferring it to his childminder, but he rarely 'had anything to show' for his time in playgroup (Interview 27.3.01).

By the Summer term, he had begun to take items in for Showbox, but did not choose items according to their initial letter sound. He had talked excitedly about the building topic at playgroup, comparing this with building the wall at home. Michael's mother was surprised that Michael had not learnt to write his name, the alphabet or counting at playgroup, as she felt these were important as preparation for school.

Regarding Michael's talk, his mother felt that due to his social life on the estate, outgoing nature and experiences at the childminders, he was confident and able to talk to different people. Once he started talking 'then there's no stopping him and his mouth just doesn't shut up'(Interview 27.3.01, p2).

In March, she noted he was good at answering the telephone, spoke clearly and passed on messages. She speculated his past tantrums may have been caused by his lack of speech as 'he used to get frustrated cos he couldn't make himself understood but that's cos he didn't have the vocabulary anyway' (Interview 27.3.01, p10). By

June, she noted his vocabulary had increased, with many expressions she thought came from playgroup but he used appropriately at home.

6.3.3 Childminder perceptions of Michael

Michael's childminder described him as 'a lively three year old … very lively … he's not shy at all' (Interview 26.6.01, p1), who was 'streetwise' because he played around the estate so much. She had a long-standing and close relationship with Michael and his family, had occasionally helped his mother manage his tantrums, but now felt he understood the 'boundaries' of behaviour. He preferred outdoor activities, playing for hours in her garden with sand, water, and outdoor toys. She did a weekly 'craft morning' which he took part in, but usually couldn't wait to get outside again. He had never shown an inclination towards puzzles or any 'seated' activities.

She reported Michael chatted a lot and spoke clearly. He often told her what his sisters and brother had been doing, and was never shy to ask if he wanted something. He talked 'all the time' at the lunch table, often amusing them with his tales.

6.3.4 Staff perceptions of Michael

Playgroup staff described Michael as 'a very solid all round character … he knows what he wants to do… and he does it' (Holly, Staff Interview 5.12.00, p4):

> Sarah: I just think he's just lovely
> Holly: yeh a nice cuddly little boy cos you just wanna cuddle him …
>   he's got an inner confidence hasn't he?
> Janet: yeh he's quietly confident   (Staff Interview 5.12.00, p5)

When discussing his talk in December, staff felt he was 'very quiet' (Janet, p5, L29) and had wondered if he had speech delay as they all found his speech indistinct. By May, Holly had noticed he approached other children to talk to them, whereas earlier

she felt he had not done this. However, she still could not always understand what he was saying because he was softly spoken. Janet and June felt he had begun to speak more clearly. Overall, staff were not concerned about his speech as he had another full year at playgroup, considering his first year to be 'the underpinning before we take them on' (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p30, L43). By July, Michael had begun to talk 'a lot more', initiating and maintaining conversations with adults and children.

Regarding playgroup activities, staff noted Michael moved around freely, but was not a 'flitter' (Sarah, Staff Interview 5.12.00, p5, L4), spending 'a while' at each activity, but preferring the sand tray and cube car. By May, Janet commented that he had started to paint, but did not like getting dirty, or glue, and this deterred his interest in crafts. Staff noted he sometimes became engaged in role play, particularly on his own in the Small World mat area. He rarely used pens or pencils, and only infrequently completed puzzles, but again, both Holly and Sarah agreed that he had plenty of time for those activities:

> Holly: I wouldn't put pressure on because he's got a whole year …if he was going to school in September the pressure would be there … he can go through numbers colours letters he'll do the whole lot next year
>
> (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p30-31)

Holly re-iterated this in the July staff interview, when she explained Michael had not often been directed towards puzzles, drawing and writing because 'if you push them too hard before they're ready they'll shut down' (Staff Interview 24.7.01, p21). Sarah felt that once the older children had left playgroup, Michael would emerge as one of the new leaders. All staff agreed he seemed aware of a 'pecking order' amongst the boys, and that he was 'keeping his head down' until the big ones left (Holly, Staff Interview, 24.7.01, pp21 L2). They noted he frequently joined in older boys' activities by 'fitting in' (Staff Interview 5.12.00), and by 'sidling up and then joining in' (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p27). Holly felt that having Bertie in playgroup, an older

boy who went to the same childminder, had helped Michael settle initially, but noted they never played together.

6.3.5 Summary of others' perceptions of Michael

Michael's mother and childminder both considered him strong willed, outgoing, active, socially able, good at expressing himself and an accomplished and entertaining conversationalist who preferred outdoor to indoor activities. His mother, but not his childminder, thought he also enjoyed drawing and loved books.

His mother reported he loved playgroup, but had gone through an unsettled period when he did not want her to leave. This had passed after he made a new friend, a boy of the same age who lived near his home and he had met outside playgroup. She felt his speech had developed since starting playgroup, in terms of vocabulary, accuracy and appropriacy.

Playgroup staff initially perceived Michael as a quietly confident, 'all round' character who enjoyed a range of activities, particularly those in Open Spaces. He played on the edge of other boys' games, aware of their dominance. They were pleased about his growing friendship with another boy of a similar age, and expected him to flourish in his second playgroup year. In contrast to his mother and childminder, staff reported he talked rarely and indistinctly. Initially they thought he might need speech therapy but noted an improvement with time and felt his speech would develop without intervention in his second playgroup year.

6.3.6 Observations of Michael at home

During home visits, the amount of time Michael spent indoors varied with the seasons and hours of daylight. During the first visit in mid-winter, he remained indoors, but for the two subsequent visits, he spent most of the time playing outside with children of varying ages.

Michael's talk outdoors was not recorded as the recording mike and wire represented a potential distraction and danger as he ran around or rode his bike. Where possible, Field Notes were made of his interactions with others outside. Overall, he spent most of his time playing with other children, often with his 7-year-old sister and her friends, interspersed with quieter moments with his mother and/or her partner, Peter.

6.3.6.1 Home visit 30.01.01

During this visit, the children ate their evening meal, chatting with their mother about their day. There were silences while they ate, during which Michael frequently initiated talk, sometimes on new topics and sometimes on topics related to the preceding talk. In *M1/1*, the mother had mentioned her daughter would soon be 18, and Michael added detail, referring to the future as 'tomorrow' (L13). He appeared to assume that I would understand his familiar name for Charlotte (L13,15), and that my question in L14 required repetition rather than explanation. His mother quickly intervened, using her knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of his language and of the details of their family lives to clarify his message, allowing the talk to continue (L16) and correcting his facts (L 17):

M1/1 (Videocode 09:35 – 09:55)

12		*(Michael, his brother and sister all eating silently)*
13	Michael:	*(turns to Rosie)* it's babber's bir#fday morrow
14	Rosie:	*(to Michael)* whose birthday?
15	Michael:	*(to Rosie)* babber
16	Mum:	*(to Rosie)* (Charlotte) that's what he calls her
17		*(to Michael)* it's not tomorrow it's Monday
18	Michael:	*(gaze to Mum)* yeh *(returns to eating, gaze to plate)*

(30.01.01, p1)

During dinner, Michael initiated talk on a range of new and related topics: how the cat had been in his bedroom; naming the colours on his shirt with some help from his mother; pointing out that the cat was licking my shoe; trying to persuade his sister to

taste his yoghurt; telling me where one of his books was; asking me to read the flavour from the label on the yoghurt pot; pointing out the chinchillas and telling me their names. He initiated these exchanges using words and gaze direction to attract attention, and combinations of words and gestures to convey more complex meanings. For example, in ***M1/2*** Michael used movement to supplement his verbal description of how he had hurt himself (L5, L7, L11-13), thus conveying instantly occurrences that would have needed complex verbal explanations.

M1/2 (*Videocode 20:05 – 20:44*)

1		*(Mother and older sister talking about clothes shops)*
2	Mother:	*(to sister)* it's next to Argos [isn't it?
3	Michael:	*(to Rosie)* [las#t nigh#t
4	Sister:	*(to mother)* [yeh *(returns to eating)*
5	Michael:	*(to Rosie)* [I hurt myself on my #fumb *(holds out thumb)*
6	Rosie:	*(to Michael)* did you?
7	Michael:	*(to Rosie)*here yeh look *(points at thumb with other hand)*
8	Rosie:	*(to Michael)* ooh er *(leaning forwards)* I can't see a mark
9	Mother:	*(gaze to Michael's hand)* yeh look *(holds Michael's thumb)*
10		there's a bit of a bubble there
11	Michael:	*(to Rosie)* I did it on my tractor *(holds out hands as though on*
12		*steering wheel)* I was #dus doing #dat *(leans forward, moves*
13		*as though turning steering wheel, holds out thumb for me to see*
14	Mother:	come on then finish your dinner (30.01.01, p2)

After dinner, Michael fetched a 'Bob the Builder' book and 'Bob the Builder' doll and asked his mother to help him 'read' the book. This involved finding number symbols in the book and corresponding numbers on the doll, then pressing audio chips on the doll, who 'spoke', whilst Michael looked for details in the book illustrations that corresponded to what Bob said. The extract of their interaction given in ***M1/3*** shows how the mother simplified the task by focussing on number recognition, and conveying the relationships between the different elements in the

task using a combination of words, gaze and pointing gestures, using words primarily to state the order the tasks should be completed in. For example, she first indicated a relationship between the components in the task by moving her gaze from one to the other (***M1/3*** L28), then used words to explain the task, and gaze again to indicate that Michael should find the number in the book and on Bob (L29). Michael's gaze followed his mother's from the book to Bob, and back again until he eventually reached out towards Bob (L30). His mother showed him how to press the button on 'Bob' by pressing it herself, repeating the number as she did so (L31), reconfirming the relationship between the book and Bob by gaze direction and pointing (L35). Michael acknowledged his recognition of the number by pointing (L1), and his mother congratulated him verbally (L2). Before he could press the button himself, she instructed him to turn the page (L2), then turned the page for him, giving a further instruction (L3).

At this point, Michael asserted he wanted to complete the task himself (L5), and his mother allowed him more time, supporting him with words and pointing (L7). She then pointed to aspects of the book illustration that Bob was talking about (L10), and turned the page to continue the 'reading'. In L12, Michael ceded control of the activity to his mother, momentarily adopting a more passive role (L12-16), but the mother drew him back into the activity with gaze and pointing (L14-19).

The complexity of identifying and manipulating the different components in the task meant that Michael needed varying degrees of support from his mother, sometimes to recognise numbers and relationships between components, sometimes to press the stiff buttons. The mother used gaze to gauge the help needed on a second-by-second basis, finetuning her responses to her interpretations of his needs. They continued the activity until they had finished, both evidently enjoying the 'reading'. Following his mother's talk, gaze direction and actions enabled Michael to complete some aspects of the task, but the complexity of the components and limited time for reflection appeared to reduce the potential for him to explore the meanings of the many symbols that confronted him.

M1/3 (*Videocode 32:20 –33:10)* **Video clip**

(Mum is sitting with Michael at the table, with 'Bob the Builder' book in front of them, Mum is holding the doll)

28   Mum: *(gaze to Michael, to book, to doll)* look first you gotta find number

29   one which is number one? *(gaze to Michael, to book, to Bob doll)*

30   Michael:*(gaze to book, to Bob doll, to book, to Bob, reaches to Bob doll)*

31   Mum: right number one this is number one *(presses button on Bob)*

32   Bob: [hello I'm Bob the builder I'm wearing my hardhat and tool belt

33   full of tools ready for work

34   Michael:[*(fixed gaze to Bob)*

35   Mum: [*(gaze to Bob, points to Bob in book, gaze to Michael)*

1   Michael:*(gaze to Bob, reaches to Bob, puts finger on number one)*

2   Mum: that's it *(gaze to Michael)* now turn the page *(turns page*

3   *immediately)* now you have to find that one *(points to number 2 in*

4   *book)*

5   Michael:*(gaze from Bob to book)* let me do it *(studies book for a few*

6   *seconds, gaze to Bob)*

7   Mum: *(points to number two with thumb as holds Bob)* this one

8   Michael:*(presses number two button on Bob)*

9   Bob: *(sound of telephone ringing)* hello Bob the builder's yard …

10   Michael: *(turns gaze to Rosie)*

11   Rosie: that's absolutely brilliant

12   Michael: *at book as Bob talks, Mum points to illustrated items)*

11   Mum: *(reaching to book to turn the page)* right now we find number three

12   Michael:*(sits back to let her turn page)*

13   Mum: turn the page look *(turns page)* where's number three? *(points to*

14   *number three in book)* like this one *(gaze to Michael, then to Bob)*

15   Michael:*(gaze to book then to Bob)* don't know

16   *(Michael and Mum both look at Bob, Michael glances to book)*

17   Mum: *(points briefly to number three on Bob)* look is that it?

18   Michael: *(gaze to book, then Bob)* yeh *(reaches over and presses button. Bob*

| 19 | | *begins to 'speak')* | (30.01.01, pp2-3) |

Later, Michael and his mother looked through a puzzle magazine together, seeming familiar with the exercise of naming pictures of different objects. To begin with, Michael pointed at the illustrations, and his mother named them, (**M1/4** L1-4), but she began to give the wrong names on purpose, which prompted him to speak (L5-16). Their completion of this activity appeared routinised, and the mother later confirmed that they often played such games before bedtime. The mother clearly had well-founded high expectations of Michael's specialised vocabulary, and knew that he was capable of distinguishing between and naming different tools (L15-19). This led into the mother reminding Michael of a recent trip to Peter's building site, which they then discussed.

M1/4 *(Videocode 38:18 – 38:56)*

(Michael and his mother are sitting at the table looking at a children's magazine)

1	Mum:	what are these then?
2	Michael:	*(points to picture in magazine)*
3	Mum:	that's a pussy cat
4	Michael:	*(points to picture in magazine)*
5	Mum:	that's a dog
6	Michael:	*(gaze to picture in magazine, to Mum, smiles, points to*
7		*magazine)* no #that's a dog *(gaze to Mum, pointing at picture)*
8	Mum:	*(gaze to Michael)* that's a bird
9	Michael:	no *(laughs)* no #that's a pussy cat *(reaches to tickle Mum)*
10	Mum:	*(points)* that's a balloon
11	Michael:	*(laughs)* no #that's a cloud *(tickles Mum)*
12	Mum:	*(points)* that's a cat
13	Michael:	*(gaze to Mum, laughs)* no #that's a *(pushes Mum, gaze to*
14		*book)* that's a bloon
15	Mum:	*(points)* that's a hammer
16	Michael:	*(laughs)* no #that's a #thpanner too

17   Mum: a spannertoo? what's a spannertoo?

18   Michael: *(laughs)* a #spanner

19   Mum: spanner

20   Michael: *(turns page)*   (30.01.01, p4)

6.3.6.2 Home visit 27.03.01

During this visit, Michael played with his 7-year-old sister and 3 friends in his sisters'
bedroom, and they all accepted him as a participant in their play as they rehearsed a
dance routine to music. Initially, he sat quietly on a bed to watch the girls rehearse,
then turned to me, seated on the floor in a corner, and began to tell me whose
bedroom we were in:

M1/5 *(Videocode 02:10 – 02:42)*

 5   Michael: #this is (my sisters') bedroom

 6   Rosie: is it?

 7   Sister: *(stops dancing, to R)* it's my bedroom (my sister's) bedroom and (my

 8   eldest sister's) bedroom and Michaels' and (our brother's) bedroom

 9   which is the one down there

10   Rosie: aah

11   Michael: *(stands up, to Rosie)* an mine's an mine's in <u>my</u> bedroom *(points down*

12   *corridor)* and (my brother's) up #de top *(points to top bunk bed)* and

13   #the um in the er/

14   Sister: /(to Rosie) bunk bed cos they're bunk beds

15   Michael: *(to Rosie)* an I'm down #the top

16   Sister: *(to Michael)* down the <u>bottom</u>

17   Michael: *(to Rosie)* down #the bottom yeh *(peeks in sister's bag on bed)* bottom

18   *(watches girls dancing)*   (27.03.01, p1)

During this brief exchange, Michael's sister quietly added to the information Michael
gave me (**M1/5** L7-9), helped him when he could not find the right words (L13-14)
and corrected him when he chose the wrong words (L15-16). Michael did not appear

to object to her interruptions, but used the extra time they gave him to reflect and find different ways of expressing himself. For example, his sister's interruption in L14 gave him the chance to formulate his utterance in L15, and he repeated her correct utterances when appropriate (L17).

6.3.6.3 Home visit 26.06.01

Michael spent all this visit playing outside with neighbouring children, often coming into the kitchen to snack on fruit with a neighbour, Harry, aged 4, who treated Michael as a figure of authority on his home territory. Using words supplemented by gesture in place of more precise but elusive vocabulary, Harry asked Michael how to remove the stalk from an apple (*M1/6* L28-29). Michael used action rather than words to convey to Harry the movement needed to remove the stalk (L30), and Harry asked for an estimate of how long this method would take (L31). Young children's concepts, or verbal portrayal of their concepts of time, are in themselves worthy of study. Here, Harry used the term 'all day' to refer to an indefinite period of relatively long time, which Michael accepted as a fair guesstimate (L32), but as Harry attempted to remove the stalk, Michael added a more precise time frame (L35), and encouragement (L37,39). Harry displayed confidence in Michael's tutoring, but resorted to a faster solution (L40). Michael confirmed Harry's achievement (L41), and Harry appeared delighted that between them they had achieved their goal of removing the stalk (L42).

M1/6 (*Videocode 16:35 –17:14*)

> 27 *(Michael and Harry enter kitchen from garden and select fruit from bowl)*
>
> 28 Harry: *(holding up apple, pointing to stalk)* Michael how do you um
>
> 29   *(points to stalk)* take #dese off?
>
> 30 Michael: *(takes Harry's apple and twists stalk)*
>
> 31 Harry: d'you #just twist it round all day?
>
> 32 Michael: *(gaze to apple, still twisting)* yeh *(passes apple to Harry, steps*
>
> 33   *back)*
>
> 34 Harry: *(starts to twist stalk)*

35 Michael: *(watching Harry while peeling own tangerine)* till it comes off

36 Harry: *(twisting stalk, gaze to stalk)* like #dis?

37 Michael: yeh *(watches Harry while eating tangerine)* you can do it yeh

38 Harry: *(gaze from apple to Michael, still twisting stalk)* yeh?

39 Michael: it will come off

40 Harry: *(bites stalk off)*

41 Michael: that's it *(goes into garden)*

42 Harry: *(following Michael)* we really done it didn we?

43 *(Harry and Michael eat fruit outside)*   (26.06.01,p8)

This exchange again highlights how Michael, and his friend, used a combination of talk and gesture to communicate, supplementing talk with gesture in place of complicated instructions or specialised vocabulary in order to find the most efficient and effective ways of conveying meaning.

6.3.7 Observations of Michael at Milk Time in playgroup

6.3.7.1 Milk Time 17.11.00

Michael had been guided to a place at the table by an adult, and was seated with Susie, an older girl with indistinct speech who rarely spoke to other children, Zara and her close friend Helen1, both his own age, and older girls Harriet and Helen2. Having spent some time drinking and looking around, Michael made his first of many attempts to initiate interaction with the girls around him:

M2/1 *(Videocode 09:12 – 09:45)*

3   Michael: *(gaze to Harriet, then Helen1, stands to lean across table as speaks)* I

4   got a digger *(sits)* I ave

5   Others: *(no response)*

6   Michael: *(turns away from table to passing adult)* I got two tractors I ave

7   Sarah: *(passing behind M)* you've got two tractors have you?

8   Michael: *(turns back to table, shrugs, gaze to Susie)* I got two tractors

9   Susie: *(sucking her fingers, turns gaze towards table, away from M)*

10   Michael:*(gaze to Rosie, beyond table)* I ave

11   Rosie: you've got two tractors?

12   Michael:*(gaze fixed on Rosie)*

13   Rosie: have you?

14   Michael:*(averts gaze, turns away, gaze to Rosie, gaze under then around*

15   *table, around room, starts to hum tunes, rocks in chair, gaze to Susie,*

16   *who has fingers in her mouth, and looks away from him, watches table*

17   *behind him)*   (17.11.00 p3)

In **M2/1**, Michael first used gaze to check he had an audience (L3), then by leaning forward, he used his body to draw attention to his talk about a home toy. When none of the children responded, Michael addressed a passing adult (L6). The adult responded by rephrasing his utterance in question form, then moved on (L7). Michael repeated his utterance to Susie, but she averted her gaze (L9). Again, Michael appealed to an adult for a response, which he received in closed questions (L10 -11), and rather than pursuing the topic, he used averted gaze and body movement (L14) to close the interaction. He then adopted a silent but watchful attitude, directing his attention to a lively table of older boys behind him.

Several minutes later, when all the children were busy drinking, he again attempted to initiate talk, first by checking with gaze the addressed child's attention, then moving his body to maintain or augment the child's attention (**M2/2** L36). This time, Michael used single words (L36, L38), making the meaning of his utterances unclear. Again, the only response he received was silence and averted gaze (L37,39):

M2/2 *(Videocode 11:19 – 12:50)*

33   Michael: *(takes biscuit, shows it to H2, holds it in hand, looks around*

34   *at noisy table, glances at P/H who is behind H3, drinks milk,*

35   *sometimes looks around room, sometimes at girls around the table, all*

36   *drinking, gaze to and reaches across table to H1)* shake

| 37 | H1: | *(continues eating biscuit)* |

| 38 | Michael: | *(to H1)* milk shake |

| 39 | H1: | *(looks away)* |

| 40 | Michael: | *(drinks, watches Holly talking to neighbouring table, drops cup,* |
| 41 | | *picks it up)* (17.11.00 p3) |

Momentarily deterred, Michael amused himself by looking around as he drank, but soon sought the girls' attention again by trying to initiate a game often played by children at milk time of piling up their hands. This time, he used predominantly gaze and movement (L43, 45, 2, 4 and 5) and only one word (L43), to check and attract the others' attention, but again was ignored (L44,1,3):

M2/3 *(Videocode 12:55 –13:55)*

43	Michael:	*(sits, seeks eye contact with Zara and H1, reaches arm across*
		table to Helen1) snap!
44	H1:	*(does not respond, gazes past him)*
45	Michael:	*(turns gaze to Zara, puts head on his side, gaze fixed on Zara)*
1	Zara:	*(gaze to Michael, but continues drinking)*
2	Michael:	*(moves around a bit more boisterously, gaze to Zara)*
3	Zara:	*(turns away and looks behind at other table)*
4	Michael:	*(starts to rock backwards and forwards, gaze to girls*
5		*to see if they are watching him. They don't seem to be, turns*
6		*around to watch table behind, hums a little as finishes biscuit,*
		looking around room) (17.11.00 pp3-4)

Despite varying his strategies and topics to initiate interaction with his peers, he gained no positive response and resorted to more dramatic means that finally received a positive, if minimal, response:

M2/4

| 26 | Michael: | *(drinks, then starts to roar at Harriet)* |
| 27 | Harriet: | *(smiles at M as he leans towards her, roaring)* (17.11.01 p4) |

The above extracts illustrate how Michael repeatedly attempted to initiate interaction with his peers, using combinations of gaze, body movement and sometimes talk, but his attempts were repeatedly rebuffed or ignored. The communicative intention of his utterances in *M2/2* may have been unclear, but his choice of topic and clear wording in *M2/1,* and his choice of a frequently played game in *M2/3* both constituted competent attempts at social interaction in the still new environment of playgroup. After each failed attempt at initiating interaction, Michael either returned to his drink or quietly watched a lively table of older boys, looking under the table, tapping his feet, humming and rocking in his chair.

Michael's interactions with adults were also minimal during this session, concerning milk time practicalities and being congratulated for his politeness.

6.3.7.2 Milk Time 26.02.01

Occasionally, Michael's observation of the activities at other tables led him to mimic others' actions, and to attempt to introduce other tables' games to his own table. The following extract from Field Notes illustrates how his efforts had some limited success, but did not lead to any extended play or talk:

M2/5

> *Michael watches as older boys play piling hands game on neighbouring table,*
> *calling out 'mine' as though playing snap. Turns back to own table, gaze to Tomas,*
> *tries to start hand game, putting his hand in centre of table, Tomas does not*
> *respond, Michael sits back. Tomas reaches to centre of table with one hand,*
> *retracts hand. Doesn't respond when Michael tries to start game again.*

(Field Notes 26.02.01)

At the end of milk time, June dismissed each table by calling out different shapes. Although Michael may have learnt something of the mechanics of this procedure, instead of looking at the shape on his own table, he watched and imitated children at a

neighbouring table, standing to leave when they did (*M2/6* L31). June noticed his error, and whispered to him the name of the shape he should be listening out for, indicating with her gaze the shape on the table (L32), but by the time she called out the shape on his table, Michael was lost in thought (L38-39), where he remained until he noticed all the other children had left (L43), quickly uttered the phrase he associated with leaving the table (L43-44), checked by glancing at June, and left:

M2/6 (Videocode 27:24 – 28:34) **Video clip**

28	June:	*(calls out)* if you're sitting at the table with the rectangle
29	Ch:	we are!
30	June:	with the rectangle
31	Michael:	*(stands, moves towards June)* we are!
32	June:	*(quietly to M, glancing to table sticker)* it's a triangle
33	Michael:	*(goes to sit down, reaches across table and runs his hand over*
34		*stuck-on triangle in centre of table, sits)*
35	June:	and the next quietist table I think is … the table with the circle on!
36		*(girls + Stuart call out 'we are' get up and leave room)*
37	June:	if you're sat at the table with the triangle [on
38	Ian, Faith, Jack, Tomas:	[we are!
39	Michael:	*(gaze to far wall, may be looking through the window, remains*
40		*seated as other children)*
41	June:	if you're sat on the table with the square/
42:	Children:	/we are! *(stand and leave)*
43	Michael:	*(looks around, sees other children leave, glance to June)* we
44		are!
45	June:	well done Michael *(holds arm out to guide him through to*
46		*Room 2)* (26.02.01 p5)

As these extracts illustrate, Michael made several attempts to initiate interaction at his own table, but as each attempt dwindled into nothing, he resorted to watching more active tables or amusing himself by tapping his feet, rocking his head or exploring his

202

pockets. Although he usually responded to adults when they addressed him, his own attempts to initiate talk with adults were unsuccessful, as the adults were preoccupied with the practicalities of milk time. Most adult talk addressed to him complemented him on his politeness.

6.3.7.3 Milk Time 30.03.01

Like Jake, over time Michael increasingly joined in group chants and games at table, and sometimes became involved in competitive exchanges with other boys. For example, in *M2/7* all the children had been playing a piling hands game, but this turned into a territorial battle between the boys when Martin 'claimed' the sticker in the centre of the table (L44-L6), ignoring Zara's attempts to discipline them (L3):

M2/7 (Videocode 31:35 – 32:05)

(children playing piling hands)

44	Martin:	*(puts hand over 'shape' on table)* mine!
45	Michael:	*(pushes Martin's hand)* mine!
46	Martin:	*(puts other hand over hand on sticker)* mine!
1	Michael:	*(pushes Martin's hand)* mine!
2	Martin:	*(gaze to Michael, hands over shape)* mine!
3	Zara:	*(to boys)* don't do it!
4	Martin:	mine!
5	Michael:	mine! *(pushes Martin's hand hard)* no! … no! … no!
6	Martin:	*(keeps hands on sticker)* yes! (30.03.01 pp21-22)

They eventually stopped when an adult intervened, but returned 'to battle' several more times over possession of the sticker. June (Field Notes 30.3.1) had observed older boys sometimes dominated Michael, and at milk time staff had begun to use name cards to place him near less competitive children of his own year group. However, this resulted in him being placed with girls who often shunned him. Thus, his milk time experiences were partly shaped by adult decisions, illustrating how, even with the best intentions, the 'power processes' of surveillance (Foucault, 1982,

p218) controlled his communicative experiences at milk times, resulting in stone-walling by girls rather than potential disputes with boys.

Over time, younger girls became more responsive to Michael. For example, the novelty of a cut-up orange helped Michael gain a response. Although clear that he did not like oranges, he valiantly tried a little, but found it bitter. He then watched closely as Zara took and ate hers:

M2/8 (Audio and Field Notes only)

26	Michael:	*(pulls a face, gaze to Zara)* don' you like it?
27	Zara:	yes *(eats orange)*
28	Michael:	wha? *(watches Zara, to Helen1)* do you like it?
29	Helen:	yes *(putting her cup inside M's cup)* can I put #that in #nere?
30	Mich:	pu' i' i' #dere I don' mi'
31	Helen:	*(puts her cup in his and laughs)*
32	Michael:	*(smiles at Helen)* (30.03.01, p8)

Although territory had been an issue with Martin, Michael felt no threat from Helen's request to play with his cup (L29), responding affirmatively and reassuringly as he smiled and voiced his approval of her action (L30). This difference in his responses to Martin and Helen may not be solely attributable to gendered behaviours: at this point, Michael had finished his milk and therefore no longer needed his cup. Furthermore, Helen asked his permission rather than just taking his cup. However, on no observed occasion did Michael have a territorial dispute with a girl.

6.3.7.4 Milk Time 23.04.01

Michael was very quiet during this milk time, sitting with Susie, who rarely spoke, Harriet, who occasionally whispered to Helen2, and Jack, who spent most of the period watching a group of older boys at another table. *M2/9* gives an indication of his movements during this relatively silent time:

M2/9

> *Michael raises arm in air, pats hand on table, jiggles feet, drinks, takes biscuit from Tomas when offered round, eats and drinks, turns to look at older boys behind him. Stands up and watches them messing around, sits down, continues to watch table of boys behind him, imitates some of their movements, drinks.*

(Field Notes 23.04.01)

6.3.7.5 Milk Time 21.05.01

Michael chose to sit with Bertie, Stuart, Jack and Terry. Terry and Bertie had several short conversations about: how strong they were; death; a recent sailing adventure and a shared experience at home. Michael, Stuart and Jack were mostly silent observers of these conversations, occasionally imitating Bertie or Terry's movements and repeating their utterances. The following extract illustrates how the children's talk and action flowed from one topic to another, always interspersed by the practicalities of milk time:

M2/10 (Videocode 35:24 –37-20)

7		*(Sarah gives out drinks. Boys sitting quietly drinking, Michael turned to watch*
8		*children at other, lively, table, turns back to own table, drinks. Looks*
9		*around table at other boys. Stretches arms up in air, gaze ahead, with Bertie*
10		*in line of view.)*
11	Terry:	*(to Bertie)* hey I'm bigger #an you
12	Bertie:	*(gaze to Terry)* I am
13	Terry:	you *(gaze to Bertie)* have grown
14	Bertie:	*(mumbles)* I ave
15	Terry:	I have grown too
16	Bertie:	I'm stronger than you *(flexes arm muscles to show his strength)*
17	Michael:	*(quite quietly)* I'm about this #strong *(imitates B's movements, stretches arms in air)*
18	Bertie:	*(gaze away from Michael to Terry)* see I'm st#ronger

19	Terry:	*(gaze away from Bertie and Terry, looking around room)*
20		*(background noises in playgroup, some children ask for chocolate milk)*
21	Bertie:	*(to Rosie)* I want some more chocolate milk please!
22	Rosie:	*(quietly)* wait till they're ready dear *(nods towards busy adults)*
23	Stuart:	*(holding up cup to adults across room)* more mi-ilk
24	Holly:	*(walks past table, asking other table who wants more milk)*
25	Michael:	*(looks around, stretches)* I wan more choclate milk please
26		choclate milk
27	Bertie:	*(to Michael)* you can't always ave choclate
28	Michael:	wha?
29	Bertie:	*(to Michael)* you can have plain milk
30	Michael:	*(continues stretching arms, drinks)*
31	Bertie:	you got *(glance to M's cup)* you got to d#rink all #dat first
32	Michael:	wha?
33	Bertie:	you've got to drink all that first
34	Michael:	*(finishes drink)*
35		*(Other children call out/chant for more chocolate milk)*
36	Michael:	*(chants)* more choclate milk
37	Bertie:	*(holds out cup, calls out)* I want some more
38		*(Other children call out for more chocolate milk)*
39	Bertie:	more choclate milk more choclate milk Mr Wolf *(giggles, flexes muscles)* this is bigger
40	Michael:	*(imitates Bertie then makes a wide mouthed frog face at him)*
41	Bertie:	*(makes same face to Michael)*
		(Emily brings round biscuits) (25.06.01, p1)

Although Michael did not talk much during this episode, the presence and chat of the older boys gave him the opportunity to listen and attempt to contribute to their talk (**M2/10** L17). Bertie did not respond to Michael's contribution to the boys' talk, but replied to Michael's next, adult-directed utterance (L25-26), assuming the role of 'knower' of rules to explain the etiquette of asking for more (L27, 29, 31). Michael

followed Bertie's advice to finish his drink, but remained hopeful about getting more chocolate (L36). He then imitated Bertie's 'strong man' movements (L39-40) and changed the topic of their interaction by pulling faces at Bertie, which Bertie acknowledged by returning (L41).

In the above extract, Michael's imitation of Bertie's movements in L17 and L40, and his utterances and uses of new actions, appeared to create a platform for him to be included in the older boys' interactions: by using a range of multimodal signs, Michael made it difficult for Bertie to continue to ignore him.

6.3.8 Summary of Profile of Michael

There were **similarities between the mother and childminder's perceptions of Michael, but striking differences between these and the playgroup staff's perceptions**. Michael's mother felt he was a very sociable and able communicator, who was quiet and observant initially but talked well and enthusiastically once he started. Over time, she noticed developments in the accuracy and appropriacy of his talk as he began to use new words and phrases. The childminder also viewed Michael as a very talkative child who expressed himself well, often relating events in his life to entertain others at meal times.

These perceptions were supported by the video observations **at home** where he participated in **many short and extended, successfully completed interactions** with his mother, Peter, siblings and friends in small and larger groups. At meal times, Michael **frequently initiated talk** on a range of new topics and **added relevant comments to others' talk**. He appeared to be an **alert, competent and entertaining conversationalist, using combinations of words, gaze, facial expression and body movements to express himself**, **sometimes in place of complicated explanations or elusive vocabulary**. During the joint 'reading' of visual texts with his mother, following his mother's gaze direction and actions appeared to help him identify and complete a number of complex tasks.

There was consistency in the presence of **support for his talk**, as **family members understood and interpreted the idiosyncrasies of his speech** and had **shared knowledge** of past events. Family members clarified Michael's meanings mostly by asking him questions to encourage him to reflect and by supplying words to fill in gaps in his talk.

At home, Michael appeared **confident of the sign systems** used, in his **ability to make himself understood and in his rights to be heard**. His mother appeared to have well-founded **high expectations of his ability to express himself**, particularly with regard to **his vocabulary range on specialist subjects**. Over time, he used an **increasing range of vocabulary**, with clearer pronunciation, and continued to use a **range of multimodal strategies to convey meanings**. During many of the home exchanges, Michael selected the topic, set the pace of the interaction and was confident and engaged. Neighbouring friends also treated him as a figure of authority when they were on Michael's home ground.

By **contrast**, the **playgroup staff** were initially **concerned about Michael's lack of talk**, suspecting he might have speech delay and describing him as **'quiet'** and '**on the edge of others' play**'. However, they anticipated his 2 years in playgroup would allow him to develop when he was 'ready' (Holly 'chat', 26.02.03) rather than being pushed. Their approach implied Piagetian perspectives embedded in the staff's views on child development, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The video observations combined with Bourdieu's theories (1977) offer a different interpretation of Michael's behaviours in the two different settings. Following Bourdieu's theory of practice, where human action is constituted through a dialectical relationship between an individual's thought/activity and the objective world, it is possible to see how the habitus Michael had acquired at home, and at his second home the childminder's, was evident in his playgroup practice. For example, he was familiar with a pecking order amongst boys, yet without the customary support systems of familiar others to interpret his speech, **over time in playgroup he**

developed and perfected new ways of gaining entry to older boys' play through imitative actions, uses of fixed and averted gaze and **ultimately**, by the end of the year, **increasingly through talk**.

In early observations of Michael at milk time, he **attempted to initiate interaction with girls** of a similar age, as he would at home meal times, **using an increasingly inventive variety of multi-modal strategies** when his attempts to talk met with no response, but was fairly **consistently ignored**. However, as time passed, he seemed to become aware of differences between playgroup practices and his home experiences and began to behave like a fish *out of* water, spending much time in silent observation of the new field, until after months, the girls became more responsive. This could be attributed to their familiarity with each other, and the importance of interpersonal relations in young children's interactions, but as Bourdieu proposes '"interpersonal" relations are never, except in appearance, *individual-to-individual* relationships and … the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction' (Bourdieu, 1977, p81). As time passed, all newcomers were becoming more familiar with and adopting the historically established practices of playgroup, leading to a blending of their initially separate habitus, and allowing them to move more confidently into the realm of talk through their shared understandings of the setting and their roles within that setting.

6.4 Tallulah Case Study Profile

6.4.1 Tallulah Personal and Home Background

Date of Birth: July 1997

Family: Eldest of 2 children: brother aged 2, Mum expecting

          baby August 2001, mother and father

Started playgroup: end May 2000

Playgroup key worker: Sarah (previously Janet)

Attendance: Wednesday and Friday mornings initially; also Monday

afternoons from January 2001; 'Rising Fives' sessions

from June 2001 Thursday afternoons

Tallulah's family lived in a town several miles from playgroup and were planning to

move nearer. They had established social links around playgroup rather than near

home and most time at home was spent in a mother/Tallulah/brother triad, with the

children tending to play together rather than with other children (Interview 5.12.00).

They had many cousins near playgroup who they saw regularly.

Tallulah's mother worked most afternoons, so the children attended a childminder,

who also looked after her own older child but no other children. On some playgroup

days, Tallulah was dropped off by her mother and collected by her auntie, who had

two children at the same playgroup. The children changed childminder during the

course of the study partly to enable Tallulah to attend playgroup more frequently.

The mother enjoyed having both children 'to herself' on Monday, Tuesday and

Thursday mornings, as this was their main 'quality' time together (Interview 5.12.00)

when they did puzzles, drawing/colouring in, read books, went for walks, went

shopping or played in the garden. The father sometimes found and tended to injured

wild birds, kept in a cage in the garden until ready for release, which the children took

a keen interest in. Interviews were held in the kitchen, around the table where the

children were drawing/painting or in the back garden while they played outside.

There were no interruptions during the visits. The mother spent some time playing

and talking with the children and some doing housework in the same room/area.

6.4.2 Mother's perceptions of Tallulah

Tallulah's mother described her as a 'delightful', 'easy', 'very bright' and 'quite

outgoing' child who loved looking at books and being read to, could be 'quite

stubborn' but was 'not argumentative' (Interview 5.12.00). She reported that at home

Tallulah chatted a lot, and she had been surprised when playgroup staff reported Tallulah did not talk in playgroup. On reflection, the mother commented that Tallulah was not always sociable with other children in group situations, or unless the mother was present, and that she hadn't yet 'made that leap with words' in some social situations (Interview 5.12.00, p11).

By March, the mother had noted that at home Tallulah was 'becoming more articulate in her conversation', that 'her vocabulary's becoming more extensive' and she had started to use expressions she had heard elsewhere (Interview 22.03.01, p1). The mother speculated Tallulah talked less at playgroup because she was 'engrossed' in the activities, which she enjoyed and talked about at home. In general, the mother thought 'she just gets on with what she's doing and some days she wants to talk and sometimes she doesn't' (Interview 22.03.01, p3). Occasionally at home, Tallulah spoke in a 'funny voice' in private speech, but not in conversation with others. Tallulah talked to herself a lot, making up complicated stories that scripted her play.

In December, the mother reported that Tallulah had not developed 'a bond with any other child' outside the family, and there was rarely enough time to invite other children home, but Tallulah and her brother played 'beautifully' together. By March, the mother noted Tallulah did not cling to her all the time when she was helping, but she still had not made any friends as 'she's more interested in doing the tasks than in mixing with the other children' (Interview 22.03.01, p1).

Initially, the mother felt that the inconsistency of who was at each session made Tallulah retreat into herself, because she was 'seeing different children on the different days that she goes and you know just to build up some continuity would be better' (Interview 5.12.00, p7). However, she 'loved' playgroup, really looked forward to going and often talked about her sessions there. She got 'really excited' about taking items in for Showbox but found the initial letter rule for choosing objects difficult and less enjoyable (Interview 22.03.01).

During her first few weeks in playgroup, Tallulah had begun to form a bond with her key worker, Janet, but had to change key workers in the Autumn term due to changes in staff timetabling, and the mother felt this had unsettled her. Having been 'dry', Tallulah had begun to wet herself again at home and playgroup. By March, Tallulah no longer had 'accidents' at home, but continued to wet herself in playgroup, which the mother felt might be because she concentrated on activities and forgot about her more basic needs.

In the December interview the mother was already concerned about how Tallulah was going to cope at school the following year, partly because 'she won't have a close friendship with somebody and she'll feel … a bit left out' (Interview 5.12.00, p12), and partly because going from two playgroup mornings to five school days would be 'a hell of a shock for her'. Mounting concern was expressed during the March and May interviews.

In May, Tallulah began to attend a playgroup 'Rising Fives' session in preparation for school, ideally in January 2002, but the school was putting pressure on single entry in September, because a double intake was 'too disruptive for the teacher' (mother paraphrasing the headmaster's words, Interview 22.05.01, p3), and because the school was over-subscribed and could not guarantee a place later in the year. Feeling they had no real choice, and against their own views and playgroup recommendations, the parents eventually but reluctantly agreed to send Tallulah to school in September.

6.4.3 Staff perceptions of Tallulah

In December, staff described Tallulah as a 'shy', 'quiet', 'reserved' and 'lovely' girl who was 'very bright' and had a 'wicked sense of humour', expressed mostly through her eyes and sometimes actions (Staff Interview 5.12.00, p1). When she began playgroup late in the summer term she had seemed to settle, but had then become withdrawn. This coincided with her mother putting an apron on Tallulah to avoid her clothes getting soiled. Although Tallulah had not seemed to object, staff felt that after

this she began to 'shut herself down' (Holly, 5.12.00, pp1-2). Staff regretted the unavoidable need to change key worker, particularly as Tallulah had initially talked with Janet as a 'quiet one-to-one thing' (Janet, 5.12.00, p3), but not with other adults or children. Once the apron had appeared, they felt her talk stopped 'virtually completely' (Sarah, 5.12.00, p1). Without the apron, and with a new key worker, Sarah, she was beginning to talk again, but her talk was 'very simple', not 'comprehensive' or 'complex' (Holly, 5.12.00, p2). Sarah reported Tallulah used a 'funny voice' to talk to her. Holly felt this was because Tallulah needed 'the confidence of knowing you' before she would speak normally.

By March, Sarah reported Tallulah spoke more to her, depending on her mood and on what she was doing. If initially interested in a task she spoke more, but once she became engrossed in a task, she tended not to speak. Sarah sometimes could not understand her because she spoke softly, and often declined to repeat anything (Sarah 'chat', Field Notes 30.03.01). By May, staff reported she usually responded to most adults, but did not initiate talk (Staff Interview 1.05.01). They felt Tallulah spoke 'on her own terms' and they were concerned this would be a problem for her at school, both during class and play time:

37   Holly: she's gonna have to come to terms with the fact that she can no
38   longer choose to be silent … she has to talk to people and it's
39   not gonna be done in her own time in her own way it's going
40   to be done under their agenda

(Holly, Staff Interview 1.05.01, p26)

By July, Holly felt that Tallulah's decision not to talk was a game or habit, and that she manipulated adults to speak to her instead. Sarah disagreed, attributing her reluctance to talk to shyness in group situations (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p1). Tallulah had rarely spoken to other children, although Sarah noted she sometimes talked 'through an adult', by directing a comment intended for a child at an adult, so the child could hear (1.05.01, p23).

Other children, including her cousins with whom she played outside playgroup, had responded to Tallulah's playgroup silence by no longer paying her attention. Staff had tried to place older girls with Tallulah to encourage her, but they had all become 'bored' and given up (Field Notes 30.03.01). Over time, there was very little change, but staff felt that if given a second year as an older child in playgroup, her confidence and talk 'would just flow' (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p20).

Staff described her concentration span and listening skills as 'brilliant' and felt that her ability to work with shapes, numbers and colours was 'all there … but it doesn't come out because she hasn't got the confidence' (Holly, 1.05.01, p24). Tallulah had always preferred tabletop activities, rarely venturing into the more 'social' areas, such as the Home Corner, Mat or Creative Space, and then only when no one else was there (Sarah 'chat', Field Notes 30.03.01). Once at an activity she tended to stay there, rarely conveying to others what she wanted to do. Staff had tried directing her to a wider range of activities, but had decided this was counter-productive:

15	Holly:	free play is noisy and you have to be confident enough to stand
16		your ground and make your opinions known
17	Nina:	and that's not [her is it?
18	Sarah:	[no she's safer to stay in an activity …isn't she?
19	Holly:	yeh she'll do table-top … she'll do safe things

<div align="right">(Staff Interview 1.05.01, p23)</div>

By the end of her time in playgroup, staff were very concerned about how Tallulah would adjust to school. She still did not request toilet trips and had 'accidents', which would be embarrassing for her in school. They encouraged Tallulah to attend a 4th session during the Summer Term, as they felt she needed this consistency to feel more at ease within the group. The school, having put pressure on the mother to start Tallulah in September, had suggested she start by attending just two afternoons per week until half-term. Playgroup staff felt this would have very negative

consequences, because it would 'take her so long to get back into it and to start talking again … to anyone' (Staff Interview 24.07.01, p19).

6.4.4 Summary of others' perceptions of Tallulah

The interview data paints a picture of a child behaving and communicating in distinctly different ways in the different settings of home and playgroup. At the beginning of data collection, the mother's perception was of an outgoing, chatty child, whereas the staff's was of a withdrawn, self-contained almost silent child. This was fed back to the mother, who then noted the differences in Tallulah's behaviours.

Neither the parents nor the staff could fully explain or agree upon the reasons for these differences. Over the course of the study, different possible causes were mooted: the apron; change of key worker; shyness; lack of confidence in group situations; inconsistency in the adults and children during the sessions she attended; a focus on activities rather than people and 'a game' used to manipulate others and to control the situation on her own terms. Although many solutions were tried, such as encouraging her to explore more activities, placing older girls with her, Sarah focussing attention on her etc, these appeared to make little difference and staff and the mother concluded she simply needed more time and consistency to build up her confidence. She had become slightly more articulate with adults in playgroup, particularly since attending more sessions, but had only rarely spoken to other children, and then mostly through an adult. All were very concerned about Tallulah starting school in September 2001.

6.4.5 Observations of Tallulah at home

6.4.5.1 Home visit 05.12.00
During this observation, Diary Notes show that I was 'stunned' by how clearly, confidently and effusively Tallulah talked to her mother, brother and myself. It was

not possible for me to be an unobtrusive observer, partly because my presence was not camouflaged by others' comings and goings as had been the case in both boys' homes, and partly (after barely acknowledging my presence in playgroup) because Tallulah constantly involved me in her activities. **T1/1** is one of many instances where Tallulah addressed me with confidence and considerateness, initiating the exchange (L6), responding to my questions with words, gaze and actions, supplying me with the items I needed to join in (L8,10,14) and giving me helpful and appropriate advice (L16, 20-21, 23-25):

T1/1 *(Videocode 06:06-07:15)*
Tallulah and Rosie are sitting at the table while Mum is arranging flowers at the sink,
Tallulah is cutting out shapes from old birthday cards

6   Tallulah: do you want to do #dis?

7   Rosie: have you got a pair of scissors for me to use I love cutting out

8   Tallulah: *(gaze to cutting out)* yeh *(gaze to Rosie)*

9   Rosie: can I borrow Gary's while he's out of the room?

10   Tallulah: yeh *(gaze to Rosie, passes scissors + card, card falls on floor)*

11   Rosie: thank you

12   Mother: *(picks up and passes card to Rosie, laughing)* you can have

13   a card as well

14   Tallulah: *(gaze to Rosie, passes another card to Rosie)*

15   Rosie: that's a pretty one is that yours?

16   Tallulah: no it's Gary's *(gaze from Rosie to card)*

17   Rosie: *(starting to cut out)* it's hard to cut with these

18   Mother: *(out of view)* I think that's why Gary's given up

19   Rosie: they're not sharp are they?

20   Tallulah: *(holding scissors, gaze to Rosie, opening and closing scissors*

21   *in right hand)* but these are #tharp #thissors

22   Rosie: are they? how do they cut?

23   Tallulah: *(gaze from Rosie to paper)* I will show you how to cut *(picks*

24   *up card and starts to cut out)* you cut like #dat with #those

216

25		#*tharp* #thissors *(continues cutting out)*	
26	Rosie:	oh right *(starts cutting out)*	(05.12.00, p1)

This exchange displayed not only Tallulah's considerateness, but also her confidence in her own ability to convey meanings through words. As shown in *T1/2*, Tallulah exhibited a similar authority with her brother (L19-21), and was both assertive and particular about her own preferences (L7, 9, 12-13). There were shared understandings between Tallulah and her mother when she referred to the specific colouring book she wanted (L12-13), and a close relationship between the words that Tallulah and her mother use. For example, Tallulah rephrased her mother's utterance in L16 as she carried out her suggestion (L19-21):

T1/2 (Videocode11:25-12:05) **Video clip**

(Tallulah, Gary and mother sitting at table. Tallulah is cutting out cards, Gary is colouring in, mother is folding laundry)

7	Tallulah:	*(gaze to card, quietly)* I don#t want to do any colouring
8	Mother:	you don't want to do colouring?
9	Tallulah:	I didn'#t want to but I do now
10	Mother:	ok why don't you get a colouring book from the front room
11		then you can do some colouring as well
12	Tallulah:	*(standing up in high chair)* my rabbit colouring book *(stumbles*
13		*as tries to climb out)* my rabbit colouring book
14	Mother:	shall I go and get it for you?
15	Tallulah:	I wan#t #de crayons *(tries again to climb out)*
16	Mother:	you have the crayons and Gary can have the pens
17	Tallulah:	*(tries again to climb out)*
18	Mother:	shall I see if I can find it for you you stay there *(leaves)*
19	Tallulah:	*(to Gary, placing her hand on the pens)* now those are yours
20		*(reaches for crayons and puts them next to herself)* and these
21		are mine *(continue colouring in silence)* (05.12.00, p2)

During this visit, Tallulah talked confidently about a range of subjects: colours; crayons; going to the toilet; her dolls, their names and what they could do; birthdays; writing and naming letters of the alphabet; how she kept an eye on her brother for Mummy; names and features of the animals she was colouring in and a family trip to a safari park. She often initiated talk during silences, sometimes interrupted others' talk to add relevant or linked information and/or responded verbally to all the questions she was asked. The talk flowed from one subject to another, interspersed with silences while the children drew, creating both lengthy exchanges and lengthy and relatively complicated utterances from Tallulah - all successfully concluded with shared understandings.

6.4.5.2 Home visit 22.03.01

Tallulah was again very talkative and welcoming. She had set out her 'favourite' books to show me, and, with her mother's occasional help with more obscure words, told me the titles of fifteen Beatrix Potter books. She showed an interest in the video camera, and filmed her bedroom, talking about the items she was filming, including her bed, Gary's cot, the space between her bed and Gary's cot, Gary jumping on her bed, a painting on the wall, her curtains, the blackness of the image of the cot bars on the video screen compared with their actual colour (white), a pile of jigsaw puzzles and some new sparkly slippers. Fascinated by the zoom, she spent many minutes silently zooming in and out of many different objects and her mother's face.

Later, the children completed jigsaw puzzles at the kitchen table, with Tallulah occasionally helping Gary, making suggestions such as 'look #dat's #de colour' and 'try #dat one'. The mother mentioned Gary had recently been to hospital to correct a 'tied tongue', and related that Tallulah had also once been to hospital (*T1/3*). Throughout this exchange, the mother used questions to prompt Tallulah to talk about her hospital experiences (L18, 21, 23, 33-34), and intervened to add to Tallulah's utterances (L28-29, 31-32, 45). She also prompted Tallulah to continue the story on her own (L36). This was a shared experience that they were jointly re-constructing

218

through talk, and gave the impression of having re-constructed it many times before. There was an intimacy in this exchange, first implied in Tallulah's smile in L19, and maintained by the joint re-construction of their shared experience. Within this security, Tallulah began to add her own descriptions of her hospitalisation (L41, L43):

T1/3 (Videocode 08:34 – 09:59)
(Tallulah was filming this, so image of her talking not on video, only voice)

18	Mum:	you went to hospital didn't you Tallulah when you were little?
19	Tallulah:	*(gaze to Mum, smiles at her)*
20	Rosie:	did you?
21	Mum:	can you tell Rosie what happened to you?
22	Tallulah:	I had a I had a sticker an #ney an #de doctors tried to get it out
23	Mum:	where did you put the sticker?
24	Tallulah:	up my nose
25	Mum:	*(laughs, nodding)*
26	Rosie:	oh no you put a sticker up your nose?
27	Tallulah:	a Noddy one but but #dere's a dog one called Bumpy
28	Mum:	*(to Tallulah)* a Bumpy sticker? *(to Rosie)* that's the dog was
29		called Bumpy
30	Rosie:	*(to Tallulah)* but it was a Noddy sticker was it?
31	Mum:	*(gaze to Tallulah)* yeh we've still got it haven't we *(laughs)* as
32		a souvenir *(slight interruption as Glen drops his pens, then to*
33		*Tallulah)* and what happened? did they give you a needle in
34		your hand?
35	Tallulah:	*(nodding)* yeh
36	Mum:	tell Rosie … she doesn't know
37	Tallulah:	I had a needle on my hand
38	Rosie:	oh dear did that hurt?
39	Tallulah:	no I didn't mind
40	Rosie:	didn't you? that's very good

41   Tallulah: well it had some milk in it

42   Rosie: some milk in it right yeh and what did they do with the milk?

43   Tallulah: they put it inside it

44   Rosie: did they?

45   Mum: well the anaesthetic looks like milk *(talks about anaesthetic*

46   *then Gary's operation)*   (22.03.01, p1)

6.4.5.3 Home visit 22.05.01

The children played outside, helping their mother hang out washing and listening to
her reading stories. Gary had recovered from his operation and talked a lot, whereas
Tallulah talked less than on previous visits. She rarely interrupted Gary when he
spoke, but amused herself in actions, speaking mostly during silences in the
conversations. The mother almost always responded to Tallulah's utterances, even
when Tallulah spoke quietly or seemingly to herself. The two extracts selected below
contain features that were characteristic of Tallulah's more extended interactions
during this visit. **T1/4** is a short extract from a 5½ minute shared story reading of one
of Tallulah's 'favourite' books (Transcript, 22.05.01 p1L45). During this reading, the
mother replaced the names of the book characters with the names of family members
(eg L20), and each time Tallulah laughed and corrected her (eg L22- 23). Tallulah
displayed sharp listening skills and good recall of the book characters' names. This
was a familiar way of reading, used by the mother to 'liven up old stories' (Field
Notes 22.05.01). The mother also used pauses and gaze direction to encourage
Tallulah to finish rhyming sentences (eg L25-27, L29-31):

T1/4 (Videocode 18:54-19:23)

20   Mum: *(reading from book)* 'and when daddy [kicks the dustbin it

21   really makes a din

22   Tallulah: [*(laughs)*

23   no *(gaze to Mum)* <u>Bernard</u>

24   Mum: *(laughs)* oh it's Bernard 'when Bernard kicks the dustbin it

25   really makes a din but the best of all is when they all' *(gaze to*

26		*Tallulah)*
27	Tallulah:	#<u>they</u> *(gaze to book)* <u>all join in</u>
28	Mum:	*(reading)* 'when daddy's in his study and his thoughts are very
29		deep we come in and help him concentrate we go' *(gaze to*
30		*Tallulah)*
31	Tallulah:	beep beep beep beep
32	Mum:	that's right *(continues reading)* (22.05.01, p2)

T1/5 illustrates Tallulah's confident talk when left alone with me in the garden whilst also concentrating on holding and using the video camera and manipulating the zoom. Although I initiated most of the talk by asking questions, many of which could have been answered with one word (L3,7,9,11,13,16,19-20,23,25,27,31 and 33-35), Tallulah responded verbally, often volunteering detailed information (L4-5,10,12,21-22, 28-29, 35-36). Tallulah also extended the talk (L28), mentioning future plans, re-phrased my questions and added information to describe precise plans. She used gaze and pointing gestures to supplement her talk (L21-22):

T1/5 *(Videocode 29:28 – 31:32)*
(Tallulah is using the video camera while Gary and mother are indoors. Tallulah is filming the closed shed doors, experimenting with the zoom on the camera)

3	Rosie:	do you play in that shed sometimes?
4	Tallulah:	*(continues filming, then gaze to Rosie)* but I can't play play in
5		#nat #shed *(gaze through video lens, stays there throughout*
6		*dialogue except where mentioned)*
7	Rosie:	why not?
8	Tallulah:	because #there's lots of dirty *(adjusts video)* dirty #fings #dere
9	Rosie:	and what about the other shed do you play in the other shed?
10	Tallulah:	but #dere's lots of #fings in #nat one too
11	Rosie:	is there? have you got any toys in any of them?
12	Tallulah:	no #de toys don't live in #those #sheds
13	Rosie:	don't they? where do the toys live?

221

14	Tallulah:	*(gaze briefly to Rosie, returns to video lens)* in some in er in
15		#some big boxes
16	Rosie:	in some big boxes? what toys do you play with in the garden?
17	Tallulah:	well #sometimes we get #thome water toys here our purple
18		paddling pool
19	Rosie:	do you? where d'you put the paddling pool? here? *(gaze to*
20		*patio, then Tallulah)* or up on the grass?
21	Tallulah:	#thometimes but we only put it #there *(gaze to Rosie, points to*
22		*paved area in front of bird cage)* by Mi#thty
23	Rosie:	d'you think Misty would like to play in the paddling pool?
24	Tallulah:	he can't *(gaze through video lens, points video to film Misty)*
25	Rosie:	no he can't swim can he?
26	Tallulah:	no
27	Rosie:	can he fly yet?
28	Tallulah:	no (?) can't fly // but we can look after him and when he's and
29		when he's old enough to go on his own *(filming Misty)*
30	Rosie:	and what will you do with him then?
31	Tallulah:	*(filming Misty, laughs)* he's looking at us
32	Rosie:	he is isn't he? *(both watch Misty)* so what d'you want to do
33		with him? keep him forever or let him go to his mummy and
34		daddy?
35	Tallulah:	when he's old enough to go on his own we will let him go to
36		his mummy when he can fly *(continues filming)*
37	*(Mum and Gary return with refreshments)*	(22.05.01, p3)

6.4.6 Observations of Tallulah at Milk Time in playgroup

6.4.6.1 Milk Time 15.11.00

Tallulah chose to sit at a table with an older girl, Joanna, and a young visitor. They were joined by older boys Shane, John and Tomas. Sarah later sat between Tallulah

222

and Joanna, and began to chat with all the children, attempting to include Tallulah in the talk by occasionally directing questions at her. Although Tallulah appeared to be listening to the general talk and directed her gaze to children as they spoke, she made no verbal responses to Sarah's questions. However, as can be seen in ***T2/1*** there was a pattern in her uses of body movement and gaze direction that Sarah interpreted as conveying meaning. For example, in response to Sarah's questions (***T2/1*** L13-14,17-18,24,33), Tallulah averted her gaze and shrugged her shoulder (L15-16,20,22-23,26,35), which Sarah accepted as a response and began to prompt Tallulah (L17-18,21,24). Eventually, other children tired of waiting for Tallulah to respond (L25), and Sarah turned her attention to their responses:

T2/1 *(Videocode 33:40 -34:35)* **Video clip**

3	Sarah:	what did you all have for your breakfast this morning? *(gaze*
4		*around table, then fix gaze on John)*
5	John:	*(leaning over table towards Sarah)* um scrumbled eggs
6	Sarah:	*(gaze to John)* scrambled eggs?
7	John:	*(gaze to Sarah, nods)* yeh
8	Sarah:	*(gaze to Joanna)* what did you have Joanna?
9	Joanna:	*(gaze to John)* errr[m
10	Tomas:	*(gaze to Sarah)* [and I had scrambled eggs too
11	Sarah:	*(glance to Tomas)* did you?
12	Joanna:	*(gaze to Sarah)* and I had toast on onnnn// on lemon curd
13	Sarah:	*(gaze to Joanna)* lemon curd on toast *(gaze to Tallulah)* what
14		did you have for breakfast Tallulah?
15	Tallulah:	*(gaze from Joanna to Sarah, shrugs right shoulder and averts*
16		*gaze, pulls sad face)*
17	Sarah:	*(gaze from Tallulah to John, back to Tallulah)* let me see if I
18		can guess *(turns head to one side to try and make eye contact*
19		*with Tallulah)*
20	Tallulah:	*(averts gaze and fixes on space at far end of table)*
21	Sarah:	*(head tilted, gaze fixed on Tallulah)* did you have weetabix?

22   Tallulah: *(shrugs right shoulder, gaze fixed on space at far end of table,*

23   *but removes sad look from face)*

24   Sarah: *(gaze to Tallulah)* did you have …[toast?

25   John: *(pointing and gaze to Sarah)*   [I ad weetabix

26   Tallulah: *(shrugs right shoulder, gaze to John)*

27   Sarah: *(gaze to John)* you just said you had scrambled egg

28   John: *(gaze to Sarah. leaning over table slighlty)* no I ad weetabix

29   <u>then</u> scrambled eggs

30   Sarah: did you?

31   John: yeh

32   Sarah: I had cornflakes today *(gaze from John to Tallulah as speaks)*

33   [what did you have Tallulah?

34   John: [did you? *(to Sarah)*

35   Tallulah: [*(shrugs right shoulder, drinks from cup)*

36   Sarah: *(gaze to John)* yeh I like cornflakes

37   John: and guess what I ad cornflakes

38   Sarah: *(gaze to John, disbelieving expression)* did you?

39   Tomas: *(leaning across table, gaze to Sarah)* and I ad cornflakes

40   Sarah: *(gaze away from table to give child instructions on passing*

41   *biscuits around)*   (15.11.00 p10)

One feature of the interaction in **T2/1** was the speed and overlap of the talk, with very few pauses: when one child failed to reply to the adult's questions, another child soon stepped in (L10, 12, 25, 39). The boys also emphasised their willingness to speak by leaning forwards into the central space on the table (L5, L39). Other children's interjections therefore distracted the attention of the adult, and facilitated Tallulah's silences.

When questioned, staff could not recall any particular actions used by Tallulah that carried particular meanings apart from averted gaze, which they felt Tallulah sometimes used as a closure to interaction. However, during consultation (Chapter 4,

Section 4.4.3.1) when viewing Tallulah shrugging one shoulder and averting gaze, they collectively realised that they had come to interpret those particular movements as meaning 'maybe' or 'I'm listening, please carry on talking', subconsciously learning her 'code', that conveyed meaning perhaps less precisely than words but still functioned effectively to maintain interaction. This echoes Bourdieu's proposal that 'body hexis' speaks to the motor function rather than the conscious mind (Bourdieu, 1977, p87).

Like other newcomers, Tallulah was watchful of other children during playgroup routines, but rather than imitating their movements, she remained seated when they left, waiting for an adult cue before responding (**T2/2** L19) and leaving (L22):

T2/2 (Audio and Field Notes)

      9   Sarah: if you're on the table with the yellow triangle

    10 Children: *(standing)* we are we are! *(children leave, Tallulah and*

    11   *Shane remain at table)*

    12 Sarah: *(gaze to child standing at other table)* ahha you're not

    13   *(gaze to Shane)* is this a yellow triangle Shane?

    14 Shane: *(gaze to triangle then to Sarah)* yellow

    15 Sarah: you can go and find something to do *(to Tallulah)* what

    16   colour's this triangle Tallulah?

    17 Tallulah: *(gaze to triangle)*

    18 Sarah: what colour is it?

    19 Tallulah: *(gaze from triangle to Sarah)* #lellow

    20 Sarah: yellow *(smiles, reaches out to Tallulah, moves arm towards*

    21   *Room 2)* you can go and choose something to do then Tallulah

    22 Tallulah: *(stands, leaves room)*   (15.11.00 p12)

In extracts **T2/1** and **T2/2** Sarah used gaze direction to signal who her comments were directed at (**T2/1** L6,8,11,13,17,21,27; **T2/2** L12,15,20), and body movement to signal to Tallulah what she should do (eg **T2/2** L20-21).

6.4.6.2 Milk Time 14.02.01

At this session, Tallulah chose to sit with an older girl, Rosa, and Zac and Susie joined them. All the children sat quietly drinking and watching more lively tables. Staff emphasised politeness when serving drinks and all except Tallulah responded verbally. Staff did not press her to talk and accepted eye contact as a sign that she wanted what was offered, and her hand over her cup as a sign that she did not. The Field Note in **T2/3** summarises 1½ minutes of playful interaction between Tallulah and Rosa over their biscuits. Although brief, this exchange represents a slight change in Tallulah's responses to other children:

T2/3

> *Tallulah's table is quiet. Susie mostly turned away from table, nursing her 'babies'*. Zac watching table of boys nearby. Rosa takes a bite from her biscuit and shows the shape she has made to Tallulah, Tallulah mimics her, showing Rosa the shape her bite has made in her own biscuit. They repeat this several times, no words, but lots of smiles and eye contact, then return to drinking milk silently, looking around room.* (Field Notes 14.02.01)

6.4.6.3 Milk Time 21.0301

Tallulah's mother was helping in playgroup during this observation, and Gary was also present. Unlike with other peers and adults in playgroup, with her mother and brother, Tallulah did not hesitate to use gaze direction, actions and words (**T2/4** L3-4, 8,14,16,20,25). She was assertive (L20-27), using words, gaze direction and movement as she attempted to persuade her mother to pour her drink while she was holding the cup up rather than putting it on the table:

T2/4 *(Videocode 27:38 – 28:30)*

3   Tallulah: *(finishes drink, draining contents, gaze above rim of cup to*

4   *mother, holds out cup)* fini#thed

5   Mother: *(approaching, to Tallulah)* yeh *(passes T to wipe table in*
6   *front of Gary where he had spilt some milk, gaze to T)*
7   d'you want some more?
8   Tallulah: yeh *(drops cup on floor)*
9   Mother: *(picks up cup and puts it on table)*[there you are
10   Tallulah: [(?) *(rubs hands on the*
11   *wet table, Gary joins in, Tallulah knocks her cup over, picks*
12   *it up)*
13   Mother: *(as passes table)* Tallulah would you like another drink?
14   Tallulah: *(gaze to mother)* yeh
15   Mother: *(out of view)* yes please?
16   Tallulah: *(gaze to mother)* ye#th plea#se
17   Mother: *(approaches table and pours milk)*
18   Tallulah: *(holds up cup for milk)*
19   Mother: *(pointing to table)* put it down
20   Tallulah: *(gaze to mother, holding cup up)* no do it here
21   Mother: *(gaze to Tallulah, impatience in tone)* well put it down
22   *(points to table)* on the table please
23   Tallulah: *(holding cup up, gaze to mother)*
24   Mother: *(starting to turn away)* right well you're not having any then
25   Tallulah: *(gaze to cup)* but I want #thome more
26   Mother: *(pointing to table)* well put it down then
27   Tallulah: *(puts cup on table)*
28   Mother: *(pours drink and moves off to other table)*
29   Tallulah: *(drinks)*   (21.03.01 p12)

Tallulah also interpreted what Gary wanted when their mother did not understand
him, and joined in a 'hide and seek' game ducking under the table and popping up
again, that her brother had initiated with Zac. Thus, with her close family present,
although physically in the 'field' (Bourdieu, 1977) of playgroup, whilst with her

227

mother and brother, Tallulah appeared to operate communicatively in the 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) of home.

6.4.6.4 Milk Time 27.04.01

Tallulah sat with all girls, who were silent except for Zara and Helen who sometimes spoke in a private dyad. Tallulah spent most of milk time watching and occasionally smiling at other children around the table and looking around the room. Sometimes, she spoke to herself in indistinct private speech, including reciting a rhyme, only parts of which were audible, and counting the children at the table. Now more accustomed to playgroup, she sometimes responded verbally, though minimally, to adults, as illustrated in *T2/5*, answering Sarah's question (L8-9) with actions and words (L10-12) Although her utterance (L12) may appear insignificant, it is indicative of a slow change from her earlier, consistently silent responses to staff at milk time:

T2/5 (Videocode 41:20 – 41:28)

8	Sarah:	*(holding up bottle of chocolate milk)* Tallulah would you like
9		chocolate milk?
10	Tallulah:	*(glance to Sarah, removes cup from her mouth where*
11		*she had been playing with it, puts it on table, gaze to cup)*
12		chocolate milk I like chocolate milk
13	Sarah:	*(fills up cup and moves on)*
14	Tallulah:	*(drinks milk)* (27.04.01, p10)

6.4.6.5 Milk Time 15.06.01

Tallulah was again very quiet, occasionally smiling at other children and following their talk with her gaze. Children did not address any comments to her directly, and she did not attempt to join in. Once, she imitated Joanna and Stan's actions of clicking their tongues to make a noise. A work experience assistant crouched between Hannah and Tallulah, and started to chat about the next activity, but did not address

Tallulah. At the end of milk time, Holly called out the names of children to try a new activity and selected Tallulah (**T2/6** L30-32), to which Tallulah responded immediately and positively (L33) using a combination of gaze direction, facial expression and body movement which Holly interpreted as carrying specific meanings (L34):

T2/6 (Videocode 35:42 – 36:05)

    30 Holly: I'm gonna choose one more girl for the new experience

    31   *(looking around room, fixes gaze on Tallulah)* Tallulah would

    32   you like to go and try the new experience?

    33 Tallulah: *(gaze to Holly, nods and gives Holly a big smile)*

    34 Holly: *(gaze to Tallulah, smiles)* yes it's so exciting *(glance to Sarah)*

    35   I think you might need a pinny on too

    36 Tallulah: *(stands and goes through to Room 2)*   (15.06.01, p9)

6.4.7 Summary of Profile of Tallulah

The observations of Tallulah at home and in playgroup combined with the mother's and staff's perceptions of her suggest **profound differences in Tallulah's communicative behaviours and strategies in the two different settings**.

At home, although softly spoken, Tallulah was **socially and communicatively confident and considerate**. She **frequently initiated talk and interrupted** others' conversations to **make relevant points and add information**, listening closely to others' conversations, and displaying confidence not only in her ability to contribute to those conversations but also in her ability to make herself understood in the home environment. Tallulah **used words to convey precise meanings** and was **confident in her understandings of how domestic life was organised**. She **occasionally used gaze and body movement instead of and in addition to talk**, but **primarily used her command of language to convey meanings**.

The **mother's style of talking** to Tallulah included **strategies for prompting her to continue talking**, for example, by referring to **past, shared experiences** and resuming **long conversations** that had developed over time. She **propped up her talk** by understanding **the idiosyncrasies of her speech** and clearly repeated Tallulah's unclear words. These strategies resulted in **many lengthy and successfully concluded exchanges, with lengthy and precise utterances** from Tallulah, where she expressed her understandings, and any confusions were exposed and talked about. While at home, Tallulah and her brother spent considerable lengths of time with or near their mother engaged in activities that were conducive to talk. The mother **interpreted Tallulah's gaze, facial expression and movement as meaningful signs**, and also listened to and sometimes **treated Tallulah's private speech as communicative speech**.

With her brother, Tallulah exhibited a certain sympathetic **authority**, giving him orders, keeping an eye on him or stating ground rules. Tallulah tended to dominate the talk during the first two visits when Gary's speech was less clear, but as his speech developed over time, Tallulah was quieter, listening to him or amusing herself quietly while he spoke with their mother.

These home observations are in line with the mother's perception of Tallulah as quite outgoing and talkative, but contrast sharply with the observations of her behaviour in playgroup and with the staff's perceptions. From the **milk time** observations, Tallulah appeared to be a **silent and solitary child** who watched and listened to other children but rarely interacted with them. However, although very quiet, the way her gaze followed speakers indicated she was listening to surrounding talk. She also **used gaze direction to indicate a willingness or reluctance to respond** to others' when they addressed her and **consistently used gaze, facial expression and body movement rather than words to communicate.**

Over time, the staff appeared to **associate specific meanings with her patterned uses of gaze direction and body movement**, which they felt they had done

subconsciously. Again over time, **parent helpers and work experience students** who knew her less well, **appeared less inclined to address her**. As she became more familiar with playgroup, **Tallulah began to participate** in some games, to **exchange smiles and glances** with other children and to talk, but giving mostly **monosyllabic responses to adult questions** and **did not initiate talk or any interaction with other children** other than smiles. If others addressed Tallulah, she tended to respond through actions and gaze direction, but not everyone was able or prepared to interpret these signs, and **increasingly fewer children attempted to engage her in interaction**, which the staff felt was because they had learnt not to expect any kind of response. By contrast, **with her mother and brother in playgroup, her communicative behaviour resembled her observed home practices**.

Although Tallulah's almost exclusive use of gaze and body movement was viewed to be exceptional, it must be stressed that non-verbal interactions between children were very common at milk times. Within the context-specific practices of playgroup, the staff also tended to use exaggerated body movements to emphasise or replace their speech, for example they used gaze direction to indicate who an utterance was addressed to, fixed gaze to exercise control and gaze aversion to imply closure of exchanges. Within the institutional context of playgroup there therefore appeared to be accepted uses of multimodal strategies, and Tallulah's playgroup communicative strategies could be seen merely to reflect the less verbal range of this multimodal spectrum.

As discussed, staff were puzzled and concerned about Tallulah's reluctance to talk in playgroup, particularly as she was due to start school aged barely 4 years. They had transmitted these concerns to the mother, and had tried to encourage Tallulah to talk, by introducing her to other children, devoting one-to-one key worker time, ignoring her silence, treating her gaze, facial expression and movements as carrying particular meanings and increasing the number of sessions she attended to give her more continuity. They had constructed an image of a bright but socially immature and

silent child whose initial time at primary school might consequently be a potentially negative experience.

This profile indicates that Tallulah moved subtly, over a very long period of time, from talking a little as a novice in playgroup (reported in interviews and not observed), to electing to remain silent, which over time impacted on others' responses to her, further sanctioning her silences. Eventually, she showed some small signs of conforming to playgroup practices, by imitating adult, and occasionally child, behaviours. The rules of the institution as transmitted through practice appeared only minimally to impact on the way Tallulah 'did' playgroup. Bourdieu proposes that:

> It is … not sufficient to say that the rule determines practice when there is more to be gained by obeying it rather than disobeying it. The rule's last trick is to cause it to be forgotten that agents have an interest in obeying the rule, or more precisely, *in being in a regular situation.*   (Bourdieu, 1977, p22)

For Tallulah, there did not appear to be sufficient motivation to conform to the rules of the setting, perhaps partly because it was not a 'regular enough situation'. Bourdieu offers a perspective on Tallulah's playgroup behaviour where the pros and cons of attempting to unravel, imitate and generally conform to the institutional practices were weighed up against the pros and cons of resisting them. As infrequent, sessional provision, playgroup did not constitute an unrelenting challenge to Tallulah, and, without a strong interpersonal relationship to entice her into conforming, she was able to enjoy her preferred activities without risking social exchanges, and the kinds of challenges and potential rejections that formed part of that process. Tallulah did begin to conform more to playgroup practices towards the end of her last term when she was more used to the setting and attended more frequently, but this fell far short of allowing her the time she needed to master those practices.

6.5 Zara Case Study Profile

6.5.1 Zara Personal and Home Background

Date of Birth: December 1997

Family: Only child, mother and father. Mum expecting second child.

Started playgroup: end September 2000

Playgroup key worker: Sarah

Attendance: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday mornings

Zara lived with her mother and father on a quiet estate in a village near playgroup, where she had made friends, and was particularly close to a neighbouring girl of the same age, Helen. Zara's mother worked 2 full days per week, so from the age of 9 months, Zara had been cared for by a childminder on those days, with other pre-school age children. During the study, the mother increased her working hours, and changed Zara's child minder so she could be taken to playgroup. Although happy at both childminders, the mother reported Zara preferred playgroup. Their days together were considered 'special days', spent at home playing with games, puzzles and toys, with friends or on outings (Interview 12.02.01 p6).

Home observations were conducted at times suitable to the mother and Zara's busy lives, the first in the morning, and subsequent visits in the early afternoon. Home was quiet during these visits, with occasional interruptions from telephone calls and her best friend calling to play.

6.5.2 Mother's perceptions of Zara

Zara's mother described her as a 'lively, fun, quite good-natured', 'boisterous', 'very independent' and 'lovely' girl with 'a good sense of humour' (Interview 12.02.01). She felt she was 'quite self-confident', but could be shy with people she did not know

well. By April, the mother felt Zara had become more confident and boisterous both at home and in playgroup.

In February, the mother felt Zara had settled extremely well in playgroup, adding 'she's adored it right from day one', getting so excited on playgroup mornings she could 'barely wait to go' (12.02.01). Zara's friend Helen went to the same playgroup, and she felt this, coupled with her being used to being left with other children at the child minder, had helped her settle.

By April, Zara had begun to play with and talk about children other than Helen, and fledging friendships developed with other children as the year progressed. The mother mentioned Zara had become 'much more used to what goes on in preschool … and um what's gonna happen next' (Interview 02.04.01). Zara sometimes brought home ideas for games from playgroup and many artifacts from craft and painting activities. At home, she loved doing jigsaw puzzles, playing number and colour recognition games, acting out solitary or joint fantasy games, particularly 'dressing up' and 'going on journeys'. Over time, she noticed Zara's games sometimes began in playgroup and carried on at home and vice versa (Interview 11.06.01). Although the mother stressed she did not explicitly teach Zara numbers or letters, she had learnt to count a little through playing 'shops' with toy money.

With regard to her talk, her mother found her 'very chatty' at home, 'quite chatty' with other people she knew, but quiet with people she did not know (Interview 12.02.01). By April, she felt Zara's generally increased confidence had led to an increase in confidence when speaking to others, and her pronunciation of words had become clearer (02.04.01). Whereas in earlier months, Zara had not spoken much about what she did in playgroup, she now went 'into raptures and describes in vivid detail' playgroup events and activities and had begun to use phrases she had heard elsewhere, such as 'come on guys'(02.04.01). By June, the mother noted Zara's pronunciation was very clear, and she had started to use correct past tense verbs.

6.5.3 Staff perceptions of Zara

In December, staff described Zara as 'happy' and 'confident', and felt the presence of her friend and friend's mother Paula, who sometimes worked in playgroup, had helped her settle very well. Initially, Zara had been shy but her confidence had increased. Sarah, her key worker, saw her on all 3 mornings she attended. Other staff members only saw her once a week. Sarah reported that Zara spoke confidently to her, but the other members of staff had found her 'quite quiet', for instance she would 'wave' rather than call out at Register time (Staff Interview 05.12.00). However, she would ask if she wanted something, and spoke willingly to other children. By May, the staff reported Zara was 'a hundred times more confident' (Sarah, 01.05.01), tending to play with her 'special friend' Helen when she was present, but also with other children. She now spoke confidently to adults and children, and was developing new friendships. In general they felt that she was 'developing beautifully', and laughed at their memory of 'the quiet little girl' who had started playgroup in October (Staff Interview 24.07.01).

With regard to activities, staff reported Zara had initially preferred 'creative role play', such as the Cube Car, Dressing Up and Home Corner. She also liked the Creative Space shop but a group of dominant boys had 'taken it over'. Despite the staff's efforts to allow all children equal access to activities, the older boys in this particular cohort sometimes dominated 'Open Space' areas (Staff Interview 05.12.00). By May, staff reported Zara still preferred fantasy and role play, but also 'loves to be involved' with other children (Staff Interview 01.05.01). They felt she had 'no interest' in colour and shape games, but were not concerned as she still had another year at playgroup before starting school. Zara knew exactly what she wanted to do, and staff felt she needed to learn 'to be quiet when you ask', 'to sit down' and 'to learn to follow the rules basically', even though 'we have no strict rules as such' (Staff Interview 01.05.01). Although they found her a delightful child, by July the staff referred to her as 'a bit stubborn', but felt that being an only child she might not have got used to 'going with the flow' as other children have to do.

6.5.4 Summary of others' perceptions of Zara

Both mother and staff considered Zara a lively, quite confident, sociable child who had settled well in playgroup and enjoyed the stimulation of some activities, particularly crafts, painting, role and fantasy play. They all thought that joining playgroup with a friend had helped her settle and that this positive beginning had led to new friendships with other children. Different staff perceptions of Zara varied only slightly, depending on how often they saw her. After a few months staff perceptions of Zara were broadly in line with the mother's. They all agreed her clarity of speech, vocabulary range and uses of tenses improved over time and by the end of her first year, Zara spoke more to adults and peers in playgroup, and at home spoke at great length, in detail, using accurate vocabulary.

Staff were delighted with the progress she had made over her first year, but felt that in her second year she needed to 'learn the rules', and to spend more time on activities to promote number, colour, shape and letter recognition skills, which, because she had not become involved in, they thought she did not know. This contrasted with the mother's view and home observations.

6.5.5 Observations of Zara at home

6.5.5.1 Home visit 12.02.01

A striking feature of Zara's activity at home was her solitary and joint fantasy play with dolls, her mother or friend, and these fantasy games became entwined in day-to-day activities. *Z1/1* is one of many examples of Zara initiating fantasy play whilst playing a game with her mother. Here, Zara began to weave a story around a Fuzzy Felt figure (L6-8). Her mother went along with and extended the fantasy by asking questions (L9,11,15,17, 19), prompting Zara to add detail (L12–13,16), whilst Zara reminded her mother this was fiction (L20), directing her mother's attention back to the reality of dressing the boy (L14, 22). This continued, with Zara making up stories

around the felt shapes, her mother extending the fantasy and Zara returning them to the task in hand. The exchanges were unhurried, leaving Zara as much time as she wanted to compose her thoughts and her utterances (Zara took 26 seconds to say L12-14), while the mother waited, taking a focussed interest in the activity and occasionally asking questions, but not attempting to guide the task or to complete Zara's utterances:

Z1/1 *(Videocode 07:45 – 08:35)*

5		*(Mum and Zara sitting on floor playing with Fuzzy Felt)*
6	Zara:	*(gaze to felt board with figures on)* she's not *(sits back on her*
7		*legs, looks carefully at figures)* #dat boy's not going any
8		football now
9	Mother:	*(gaze to Zara)* isn't he?
10	Zara:	*(gaze to board)* no
11	Mother:	*(gaze to Zara)* oh why's that?
12	Zara:	why *(gaze to board)* cos he *(gaze to Mum)* cos she cos he fell
13		over he did in his garden and #de football was #wolling over an
14		*(reaches to board)* shall we dress him up now?
15	Mother:	did he hurt himself when he fell over?
16	Zara:	here *(points to felt boy)*
17	Mother:	*(gaze to figure)* oh did he hurt his head?
18	Zara:	*(gaze to figure)* yeh
19	Mother:	oh poor little boy shall we give it a rub better? *(rubs figure)*
20	Zara:	*(gaze to Mum)* it's only pretend
21	Mother:	*(smiles to Zara)* it's only pretend ah right
22	Zara:	*(gaze to figure)* shall we get him dressed?
23		*(Mother and Zara continue to chat as Zara dresses the boy, making up*
		stories about what he will do) (12.02.01, p2)

Zara and her mother played many games together, particularly involving naming, counting, and/or number, colour and shape recognition. The short extract in ***Z1/2*** is an

illustration of the mother's many attempts to draw Zara's attention to 'educational' aspects of games. In this instance, the mother used a fishing game to encourage Zara to recognise and name colours, naming the colour herself if Zara was unsure (***Z1/2*** L6). The game was played in an unhurried manner, allowing Zara time to reflect and experiment with using colour words (L7–8):

Z1/2 *(Videocode 26:23 – 26:50)*

 3   *(Zara and mother have just completed a fishing game, and the mother has been prompting Zara to say the colours of the fish)*

 4   Mother: *(pointing to fish)* what colour's that one?

 5   Zara: *(gaze to fish)* I don't know

 6   Mother: *(gaze to fish then to Zara)* orange

 7   Zara: *(glance to Mum)* orange *(gaze to fish, studies fish in bowl)* ah

 8   *(pointing to fish in bowl)* #dere's orange as well

 9   Mother: that's right

 10 Zara: *(starts to put game away and leaves to choose another game)*

(12.02.01 p4)

Throughout the home observations, Zara tended to assume control of the activities, by selecting activities, setting their pace and deciding how to play. The mother encouraged this independence by assuming a fairly passive yet advisory and consultative role, sometimes suggesting what they might do next, but leaving Zara to choose any activity from her toy cupboard. The exchange in ***Z1/3*** illustrates one such occasion, where Zara had selected a floor puzzle and then set clear conditions for the mother to obey when she offered to help (***Z1/3*** L7-8). The mother encouraged Zara to name and/or find the items illustrated (L10,13-14,25-26). She was supportive and encouraging when Zara found the right solution (L22,34) and when she made mistakes (L16,20,32). Another feature of this and many other exchanges was the mother's intimate knowledge of Zara's life, enabling her to gently correct Zara's understandings, such as when Zara had received the puzzle (L11-12,19-20):

Z1/3 *(Videocode 26:23 – 26:37)* **Video clip**

6   *(Zara is setting out jigsaw pieces)*

7   Mother: can I help?

8   Zara: *(setting out pieces)* yes if you do it gently

9   Mother: *(smiles, sets out pieces)* ooh that's a good one

10   *(shows piece to Zara, gaze to Zara)* d'you know what that is?

11   Zara: *(gaze to puzzle piece)* I had #dat for my bir#fday

12   Mother: *(glance form Zara to puzzle piece)* no Christmas *(gaze to*

13   *puzzle piece)* d'you know what it is d'you know what the

14   picture is?

15   Zara: *(gaze to puzzle piece)* a dolphin *(selects pieces from box)*

16   Mother: *(glance to Zara)* no <u>close</u> *(gaze to puzzle piece)* it's a penguin

17   *(puts piece on floor)*

18   Zara: *(gaze to pieces mother setting out, picks up piece)* I know what

19   I had #dis for my bir#fday as well

20   Mother: *(laughs)* no it was all for Christmas Day *(setting out pieces)*

21   Zara: *(gaze to pieces mother setting out)* dat's dat's a igloo

22   Mother: *(setting out pieces)* it is well done *(setting out more pieces)* oh

23   there are some lovely pictures in this one aren't there?

24   Zara: *(setting out pieces)* I put my bits here

25   Mother: *(sits back)* right *(studies picture on puzzle box)* can you find a

26   picture of the ant?

27   Zara: where? *(gaze to pieces)*

28   Mother: *(gaze to puzzle box)* I don't know where it is can you find it?

29   Zara: what? *(gaze to pieces)*

30   Mother: an ant *(gaze towards ant piece)*

31   Zara: *(tries to follow mother's gaze)* here it is from a ant *(picks piece)*

32   Mother: that's right oh well it looks like an ant but it's actually an x-ray

33   Zara: *(connects x-ray piece with other piece)*

34   Mother: that's right   (12.02.01 p5)

6.5.5.2 Home visit 02.04.01

Zara spent most of this visit in fantasy and role play, preparing for a friend to arrive by seating dolls at a table and baking a pretend cake in her toy oven. Although playing alone, with myself in a far corner and her mother busy in the kitchen, Zara was accompanied by an array of imaginary characters that stimulated her play and talk. For example, she came across a toy mobile phone and began a one-sided 'dialogue', shown in *Z1/4*. Her excitement in L4 was so intense I briefly thought it must be a real phone (Field Notes 02.04.01). Zara conducted her side of the conversation with considerable skill, showing appropriate language and social skills, with a welcoming comment (L7-8), telling news (L8-9), saying what she was doing (L9-10) and then listening to her Granny for a short while (pauses L10 –L11). Her emphatic 'ok' (L10) implied impatience with Granny, and then she appeared to follow Granny's instructions (L11-12) and passed the 'call' to her mother, who joined in the fantasy (L13). Zara's developed fantasy worlds and the clarity of her seemingly private fantasy speech gave rich insights into a young girl interpreting and experimenting with the social world around her:

Z1/4 (Videocode 02:20 – 03:20)

3		*(Zara plays with a toy telephone, presses button and phone rings)*
4	Zara:	oh *(smiles excitedly to Rosie sitting nearby)* it's my granny
5	Rosie:	is it?
6	Zara:	yeh *(presses buttons, to self, gaze to phone)* she's really late for
7		on #de telephone *(puts phone to ear)* hello *(pause)* oh hello
8		Granny good to (see?) you *(pause, picks up ball from floor)* but
9		I have a new ball today *(pause, walks round room)* I'm #dust
10		doing (learning?) about somebody *(pause)* ok *(pause)* ok
11		*(pause)* right *(runs to kitchen and gives toy phone to Mum)* it's
12		Granny *(runs back to living room)*
13	Mum:	*(gaze following Zara as she runs away)* oh it's Granny is it?

(02.02.01, p2)

When her friend Helen arrived, they played in the cupboard under the stairs, and I withdrew, respecting their apparent wish for privacy. Later, they began joint role play in a cloth 'house' erected in the living room, and **Z1/5** illustrates how they negotiated their play chiefly through words. For example, Zara scripted her movements (L4-7), informing Helen why she was outside, simultaneously setting a scenario for the girls' play. Once safely locked inside (L8-9), they began to open the envelopes at Zara's suggestion (L10). However, when neither found anything (L11-13), Zara suggested moving the game on (L15-16). Absorbed in re-sticking the envelopes, Helen ignored Zara's invitation (L17), and Zara imitated Helen's actions (L18). Although the girls' body movements conveyed some meanings about their actions and intentions (eg L17, L18), it was chiefly words that directed the precision and changes in their shared imagined worlds:

Z1/5 *(Videocode 40:40 – 42:15)*

> *(Helen enters house, Zara 'posts' envelopes through letterbox from outside)*

3	Helen:	*(inside house, to Zara)* d'you want to come in with me?
4	Zara:	no cos #this I'm #de man who posts #de letters *(posting letters)*
5		now I can post #de letters *(calls to Helen)* dere's some letters
6		come *(posting envelopes)* letters come *(enters house)* I'm
7		coming in #there's some letters for to send to our house
8	Helen:	*(leans out of house to close door, sits, to Zara)* here we are
9		we're shut in
10	Zara:	*(passing envelopes to Helen)* shall we open #dese?
11	Helen:	*(opening envelopes)* #dere's no#fink in #dese letters
12	Zara:	*(opening paper from inside envelope and looking at it)* #dere's
13		only one
14	Helen:	*(glance to Zara)* yeh *(continues opening envelopes)*
15	Zara:	*(standing)* I going out to go shopping *(turns to Helen)* what
16		about you to go shopping as well?
17	Helen:	*(busy licking envelopes and sealing them again)*
18	Zara:	*(sits and licks/seals envelopes)* (02.02.01, p10)

The mother often acted as a communicative 'prop' upon which Zara could lean whenever she was unable to communicate meanings on her own. In ***Z1/6***, Zara attempted to tell me what an item was (L12-13, L15), but from her description, I could not guess the meaning (L14, L16). The mother quietly supplied the missing vocabulary (L19), enabling the exchange to be concluded successfully (L20-23). As in ***Z1/3***, the mother's intimate knowledge of Zara's world enabled her to support Zara's communicative attempts:

Z1/6 *(Videocode 05:30 – 05:55)*

> *(Zara is showing toys in bag to Rosie, saying what they are, mother at far end of room folding washing, takes item from bag)*

> 12 Zara: *(gaze to item in hand)* ah #dis is it *(tries to open it)* #dat's (?)
> 13   toenails I #fink
> 14 Rosie: it's toenails?
> 15 Zara: *(gaze to Rosie)* yeh *(gaze to item)* an for fingers as well
> 16 Rosie: is it? and fingers as well?
> 17 Zara: *(gaze to item)* mmm
> 18 Rosie: what you open it with them you mean?
> 19 Mother: *(out of view)* it's nail polish
> 20 Rosie: ooh it's nail polish
> 21 Zara: *(glance to Mum, then to Rosie, nods)*
> 22 Rosie: for making your nails pretty colours?
> 23 Zara: *(gaze to Rosie)* yes *(selects more items from box)*

> (02.02.01, p3)

6.5.5.3 Home visit 11.06.01

Although Zara had spoken relatively confidently and competently on the previous home visits, by June her speech was even clearer, particularly her pronunciation and uses of grammar, evident both in social and private speech. She used primarily words to communicate meanings, but sometimes resorted to body movements to convey

meanings when she could not find the right words. In ***Z1/7***, I asked Zara about the toy her mother was fetching (L4). Zara's response (L5-11) combined actions and words to convey the mechanics of the toy and what it did. Her use of actions overcame the need to use technical vocabulary and sequential expressions to explain how the machine worked. Furthermore, her movements conveyed excitement and movement in a way that even bubbles would struggle to do:

***Z1/7** (Videocode 36:50 –37:05)* **Video clip**

3		*(In garden, Mum goes inside to fetch a "bubble machine")*
4	Rosie:	*(to Zara)* what bubble machine?
5	Zara:	*(dances, raises arms in air)* just a *(right arm down, left arm*
6		*up)* bubble machine *(left arm drops towards right arm, fingers*
7		*of right hand Zara makes a circle/hole)* you put in #dere *(left*
8		*arm comes down and puts index finger of left hand into hole*
9		*made by right hand)* and bubbles come out *(raises left arm*
10		*high and waves it high in the air)* and you push a button
11		*(mimics pressing button with left hand)* (11.06.02, p5)

6.5.6 Observations of Zara at Milk Time in playgroup

6.5.6.1 Milk Time 01.12.00

Milk time was not recorded as Zara asked to take off the audio equipment. Field Notes show she was directed to a table with older girls who occasionally chatted amongst themselves, while Zara sat quietly watching them, giving only 1 or 2-word answers to adult closed, practical questions.

6.5.6.2 Milk Time 02.02.01

Zara sat quietly during most of this milk time, watching other tables, but joined in group chants and played brief, silent 'biscuit-chasing' games with Helen. Once, Zara used a doll she had brought to the table to voice a playgroup rule to an older girl (***Z2/1*** L2-4), who retorted with a further playgroup rule (L6), which put Zara in the

wrong. Zara deflected this reproach and attempted to regain authority by putting her doll in charge (L7-8). Their brief exchange came to an end when Jemima left the table, but the girls' talk displayed they had learnt specific rules about conduct within the context of milk time in playgroup, and sometimes used their knowledge of these rules to assert authority over each other. When floored by the older girl's knowledge of more rules, Zara gave her doll a 'teacherly' role, returning the talk to her imaginary world where she could invent whatever rules and assert whatever authority she wanted (L8), but Jemima showed no interest in these conditions (L9):

Z2/1 *(Videocode 33:20 – 33:45)*

2	Zara:	*(holding doll on table, gaze to Jemima, making doll shake her*
3		*head as she speaks)* don't move #de table you're not allowed to
4		move #de table
5	Sarah:	*(approaches, hands a cup to Jemima, leaves)*
6	Jemima:	*(gaze to Zara)* babies aren't allowed on #de table cos #dat's (?)
7	Zara:	*(moving doll's head as she talks, then lifting doll's hand to*
8		*doll's face)* when I put my finger up #dat means stop
9	Jemima:	*(stands to ask adult if she can go to the toilet)* (02.02.01, p4)

6.5.6.3 Milk Time 20.03.01

Children were seated using name cards, with two older girls who played mostly in a private dyad, Zara and Aaron. Aaron roared once at Zara, who responded with actions, showing him a half chewed biscuit in her mouth. Not to be outdone, Aaron enlisted adult help to condemn her action, reporting the incident to Holly, the highest playgroup authority, who reminded Zara of polite manners, extending her comments to the whole group. After this, Zara remained silent. Children in playgroup were often observed trying to assert control over their peers through words and/or actions, referring to rules if necessary to disarm the other, and finally enlisting adult back-up if their earlier strategies failed.

6.5.6.4 Milk Time 04.04.01

This milk time was dominated by Zara learning a playgroup rule and her attempts to understand and resist that rule, referred to in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3.5. She repeatedly requested the same colour cup as her friend Helen (*Z2/2* L24-25, 27-28, 31-35, 37, 39-41, 45-46). As she became distressed, staff finally acknowledged her request (L36), yet refused to comply with it (L38,44). Staff later explained that to avoid an increasing fuss made by children over cups, they had recently decided all children must accept whatever cup they were given (Field Notes 04.04.01). Although they tried to explain their actions to Zara (*Z2/2* L38,44) and to appease her (*Z2/3* L29-33), Zara refused to give in, putting her hand over her green cup to prevent the staff filling it. For Zara, this change in rules was incomprehensible, particularly as she could see a spare cup (*Z2/2* L45-46). After crying for 8 minutes, she finally conceded defeat and drank from the green cup:

Z2/2 *(Videocode 20:15 – 20:55)*

24	Zara:	*(gaze fixed on adult handing out cups, to Helen)* we want pink
25		*(watches as adult hands out cups)*
26	Nina:	*(approaches, hands pink cup to Helen, green to Zara)*
27	Zara:	*(gaze to Nina)* I wan# #de same as Helen pink I wan #de same
28		as colour pink
29	Helen:	I'm having pink
30	Terry:	I'm having pink
31	Zara:	*(gaze to Nina)* we want same of pink we wan same we want
32		saaaame <u>pink</u> *(gaze to Terry)* ooh #dey having pi-ink *(gaze to*
33		*Nina who is walking away)* #they oh oh *(calls out)* we want #de
34		same pink we want #de same pink we have we want same pink
35		we want #de same pink
36	Nina:	*(turns to Zara)* you want the same?
37	Zara:	*(gaze to Nina)* yeh *(gaze to cup)* same of Helen's pink
38	Nina:	well you have to have how it comes I'm afraid

39   Zara: *(getting upset, repeatedly directing gaze from Nina to cup)* but

40   I wan I want #de same of Helen I wan de same of Helen's

41   *(starts to cry)* #de same of Helen's/

42   Nina: /chocolate milk Zara?

43   Zara: *(breaking down in tears)*

44   Nina: well you have to have however it comes Zara I'm sorry

45   Zara: *(crying, pointing to unused pink cup on nearby table)* I wan

46   #dat one   (04.04.01, p8)

Z2/3 *(audio script only)*

29   Sarah: you try it in a beautiful green cup I bet it tastes better in a green

30   cup … you try … it tastes the same doesn't it Helen? whatever

31   colour cup you have it tastes <u>all</u> the same Zara … you try Zara

32   … it tastes fine in there … Emily! … you try and drink it out

33   the green one Zara

34   Zara: *(stops sobbing, starts to drink)*   (04.04.01, p9)

Watching this incident, with Zara upset for almost 10 minutes, was disturbing for my 'Mother I' and 'Playgroup worker I', so the 'Researcher I' withdrew, but the audio recorder on Zara continued. As discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4.2, I later returned to this data to explore its significance. Changing playgroup rules when children were struggling to identify them in their new setting was highly confusing for the children. Furthermore, different adults applied rules differently: parent helpers often allowed children to choose colours, and some staff deliberately 'bent the rules' by stacking the cups in the right order before handing them out. In all subsequent observations of Zara and Helen, they were given the same colour cups. Thus Zara's resistance appeared to impact on the practices of the institution, rather than vice versa.

6.5.6.5 Milk Time 18.05.01

Again, Zara's resistance to a rule and subsequent distress dominated this milk time. This time, she was in conflict with two rules: 'no toys at the milk table' and 'not making a fuss over where you sit'. Before and during Registration, Zara had been playing a fantasy game with her doll 'Helen', sometimes involving her real friend Helen in the game. When she came to the milk table, she attempted to seat the 'doll' next to her (**Z2/4** L17-18). Harriet used body movements to claim this seat (L19-20), and using a range of strategies Zara attempted to evict her, beginning with a verbal explanation (L21), followed by greater insistence (L23), assessing others' possible support (gaze direction L25), then more insistence and repeated explanation (L26). A parent helper suggested an alternative seating arrangement (L28-29), but Zara did not respond. Rubbing salt into the wound, Harriet commented that she was sitting next to Zara's best friend (L31-32). When further approached by the adult (L35-36), Zara again used words to explain her wish (L37), but by then she had become so upset she spent all milk time calming down with her mother in the book corner. Harriet had used action and gaze rather than words to get what she wanted, and all Zara's well expressed words were useless by comparison.

Z2/4 *(Videocode 36:30 – 37:24)*

17	Zara:	*(approaches table where Helen1 and Harriet are seated, seats*
18		*doll opposite Helen1)*
19	Helen2:	*(approaches table intending to sit where Zara is putting doll,*
20		*gaze to Zara, starts to sit, pushing doll aside with her body)*
21	Zara:	*(gaze to Helen2)* Helen's sitting here
22	Helen2:	[*(sits down)*
23	Zara:	[*(gaze fixed on Helen2)* <u>no</u> Helen's sitting here
24	Helen2:	*(makes herself comfortable in the seat)*
25	Zara:	*(holding doll in arms, gaze around other girls at table, who are*
26		*watching)* <u>no</u> *(gaze to Helen2)* Helen's sitting there
27	P/H:	*(approaching)* Zara *(stands behind her own child Harriet,*

28   *tucking her seat under the table)* Zara why don't you sit at the

29   end next to Helen?

30   Zara: *(gaze to P/H, to Harriet, to Helen1)*

31   Harriet: *(pulls her chair further towards table, leans to Helen1)* I'm

32   sitting next to you Helen

33   Zara: *(gaze to Harriet to Helen1)*

34   Helen1:   *(gaze to Harriet)*

35   P/H: *(moves to Zara and pulls out the seat for her to sit down)* you

36   just sit there there's a good girl

37   Zara: *(gaze to Harriet, sits, turns to P/H)* I want to be next to Helen

38   P/H: *(busy doing up Elisabeth's laces)*

39   Helen1, Harriet and Helen2: *(play piling hands on table)*

40   Zara: *(watches, starts to cry)*

41   P/H (Zara's mother):   *(approaches, gently)* what is it?

42   Zara: *(breaks and in tears and sobs)*

43   Zara's mother: *(takes Zara to the Book Corner to calm down)*

(18.05.01, p6)

This incident resembles Jake's experiences in *J2/8*. Although here the possession of a
seat was resolved less amicably, the similarity of these incidents shows that territorial
battles were not always gender-specific.

6.5.7 Summary of Profile of Zara

There was **great consistency between the mother and staff's perceptions of Zara**
as a socially confident and able communicator. Although quiet at the beginning of the
year in playgroup, all staff reported she was willing to respond to adults when
addressed, and as she grew in confidence in the setting, she spoke more with other
children. Although at home, Zara played many games with colours and numbers, she
tended not to participate in these activities in playgroup, preferring the crafts, painting
and more social Open Space areas, possibly because these were rich environments for
her Fantasy Play. Consequently, staff seemed unaware of her developing literacy and

numeracy skills. Mother and staff mentioned the benefits for Zara of having a close friend from home who also attended playgroup.

At home, Zara was observed to spend a great deal of time playing **number, colour and shape recognition games** with her mother, during which the mother frequently used the games to reinforce and enlarge Zara's vocabulary. She also **related their talk to past, shared experiences**, using her knowledge of Zara's life to **prompt Zara and to clarify her misunderstandings**. Zara selected and had **control** over the activities, with the **mother acting in a consultative and advisory capacity.** Zara also introduced **fantasy play into board games**, which her mother went along with. These exchanges were **unhurried, allowing Zara time to reflect, experiment, to make mistakes, and to seek and receive her mother's support**. The quietly vigilant mother acted as a communicative prompt, prop and advisory consultant.

A striking feature in Zara's home play was the **richness and diversity of her solitary and joint fantasy and role-play**. Sometimes, she played these with her mother or friend, creating rich opportunities for talk on a range of subjects. When playing alone, Zara frequently scripted her fantasy play with well-formed private speech, which although sometimes more quietly spoken, was almost as clear as her social speech. When with her **friend, their role-play was constructed and negotiated through a combination of action and talk, each using talk to convey the precise meanings of actions.** When playing with her mother, Zara assumed control of character and plot development, often reminding her mother their game was 'pretend'. Zara's **role and fantasy play provided a platform for her to interpret and experiment with the norms and practices of the social world** she was growing up in.

Zara **used mostly talk and gaze to communicate whilst at home, but occasionally used body movements to explain complex processes or concepts, and to negotiate joint fantasy and role play**. Over time, there was a noticeable increase in the clarity, range of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy of her speech.

The observations of Zara at home were consistent with the mother and staff's perceptions of her as a confident and able communicator. However, they contrasted with the observations of her communicative behaviour in playgroup at milk time, where regardless of who she sat with, **Zara was frequently silent**, spending most of her time **watching and often smiling at other children.** Apart from **chants and hand-chasing games with her friend Helen, she communicated largely through gaze, facial expressions and body movement**, only **occasionally supplementing these actions with words**. She was **assertive** about her wishes and gave **brief, clear and polite answers to adult questions** about the practicalities of milk-time.

There was great **continuity between home and playgroup in Zara's role and fantasy play**. During milk time Zara frequently **escaped the constraints of the playgroup 'field' by creating safe havens of imaginary worlds** which seemed to allow her to feel comfortable and more in control. Sometimes, she **fiercely resisted playgroup rules**. These critical moments arose primarily from milk time rules invading the privacy of her fantasy worlds, running counter to the imperative of her well developed fantasy narratives or separating her from her friend Helen. **Conflicts between Zara's plans and playgroup rules** were exacerbated when there was inconsistency in the way rules were applied. It is not possible to disentangle whether her inconsolable distress at these times was due to her own sense of losing control, her distress that someone was messing with her story-line, her incomprehension of the 'rules', her need to maintain a close identity with her friend or a combination of all these factors. Although in the **short term she lost such battles of will, in the long term she appeared to win**, as adults bent the rules to avoid the kinds of situations that led to her upsets.

The playgroup staff had observed a need for her to 'learn the rules', but felt that her further year in playgroup would resolve any such issues. However, their perception of her as being settled, chatty and outgoing was not fully evident during the milk time observations, other than her brief and clear responses to adults when addressed by them, and her generally smiley demeanour when not upset.

6.6 Issues arising from child profiles

6.6.1 Others' perceptions of the children

The detailed descriptions in this chapter have brought to light many issues that impact upon how some children are constructed as and come to construct themselves as socially confident or shy, and as able or less able communicators.

In general, playgroup staff viewed all the case study children as less confident and less able communicators than their mothers did. Mother and staff perceptions of Jake and Zara differed mainly in the degree of confidence or communicative ability they attributed to the children. By contrast, there were marked differences in mother and staff perceptions of Tallulah and Michael. These perceptions corresponded to the children's behaviours observed at home and playgroup milk time[4], where all the children, in varying degrees, used different combinations of communicative strategies: Tallulah was almost totally silent, using mostly gaze and body movements to convey meanings; over time, Michael developed largely silent multimodal strategies to gain entry to others' play as his attempts to talk to other children were rebuffed; Jake increasingly used imitative body movements and multimodal strategies to supplement his talk and Zara tended to be either very quiet or assertive.

Factors that appeared to influence the children's uses of different communicative strategies at home and in playgroup are now summarised.

6.6.2 Power and control at home and in playgroup

At home, the children all initiated a high proportion of the exchanges, thereby selecting topics of talk that had engaged their interest. The children's rights to express themselves were not questioned, and on most occasions they received patient,

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[4] The children's behaviours in other playgroup activities are discussed in Chapter 7.

although not always undivided, attention from their mothers. This created contexts where unhurried conversations could be sustained, often without disruptions from others, where the children set the pace of the interaction, allowing them time to reflect on meanings. The mothers treated their children as authoritative 'knowers' of facts, events and specialised vocabulary, had high expectations of their knowledge in certain fields, and encouraged them to question and reflect on their utterances by relating them to past, shared experiences.

By contrast, in playgroup the pace of exchanges was set predominantly by adults, in accordance with playgroup procedures and rituals. This faster pace sometimes curtailed and impeded children's opportunities to communicate with others. The adults were often too busy with the practicalities of milk time to maintain conversations, and although all the children were seated at tables, thereby providing a physically captive audience, other children's attention had to be earned and was in no way guaranteed. As has been illustrated by the data in this chapter, the case study children's attempts to initiate talk or multimodal interaction were frequently ignored or rebuffed by other children, both girls and boys. The longest and most successfully concluded exchanges between children usually included some element of dispute, exchange of views (eg on the merits of the taste of oranges, who was strongest), or talk about their lives outside playgroup. Most of the child/adult exchanges were question/answer about the practicalities of milk time, where the children gave brief 1 or 2 word, or gaze and body movement responses.

6.6.3 Rules

A related issue was the implicit and explicit teaching of playgroup milk time rules, where adults referred to correct, polite behaviour and children learnt to observe and follow set procedures. Given the many different adults in the setting, there was almost inevitable inconsistency in the ways rules were applied. Occasionally, these inconsistencies appeared confusing for children, with consequent forceful reactions from one in particular, who in the long run, seemed to win 'inconsistent rules' battles,

exercising her agency to change playgroup practice. Under fire from a barrage of new and sometimes shifting rules, the case study children's frequently silent, watchful and imitative behaviours appeared a logical and possibly well-advised stance.

6.6.4 Mother and staff styles of interaction

All the mothers supported their children's expression through talk by acting as communicative prompts and props, often acting in a consultative and advisory role. Their knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of their children's language, and their shared knowledge and experiences, built up over years of living together, further helped them to interpret and extend their children's expression and making of meaning. Mothers and children jointly pursued answers and jointly reconstructed past experiences, occasionally in seemingly routinised question and answer sequences.

Although at milk time there was little evidence of staff being able to replicate the supportive role played by the mothers at home, there were occasions when staff showed awareness of the children's home lives, and sustained exchanges on topics initiated by the children. The children spoke more with adults they were familiar with, whether they knew them from playgroup or from their home lives. However, the children's infrequent attendance at playgroup and inconsistency of contact with staff did not help create supportive frameworks for interaction. Playgroup staff were aware of this, and felt that having a close friend was an important factor not only in how well a child settled, but also in how and how much a child became involved in interactions with others.

Playgroup staff often used exaggerated gaze and body movement for specific purposes, such as directing children to move or act and as silent ways to impose discipline.

6.6.5 Children's familiarity with settings and people

All the case study children were clearly familiar with the sign systems and procedures in operation at home, and confident in their own ability to interpret and use the appropriate signs, including words, within the various communicative contexts of the home. They all had specialist areas of knowledge that reflected their home backgrounds, and particularly their father's pastimes. They were also assertive about the correct use of signs, for example, they all corrected the researcher on specific vocabulary for items found within their homes and about what different objects were used for.

This was not the case in playgroup. Although over time, all the children became more familiar with the procedures of playgroup, mostly by watching and copying the actions of other children, by replicating their words and/or by waiting for or accepting adult help, often given through gaze direction, encouraging smiles and body movement, by the end of their first year in playgroup, none of the case study children had yet mastered the meanings of the many signs in playgroup. For example, although they had all learnt the significance of using name cards to find their seat at milk time, none of them were able confidently and consistently to find their own name unaided.

Although all the children had key workers in playgroup, not all saw them regularly, and not all had yet formed a close bond with an adult in playgroup. Only Zara had a faithful friend of a similar age throughout her first year, although Michael formed a friendship at playgroup with a boy of his own age. Jake's older friend Nick often excluded Jake from his play and Tallulah ignored her cousins. As will be developed in Chapter 7, the existence of firm friendships in playgroup, particularly if they were continued in the home, appeared to offer children the kinds of shared understandings needed to negotiate and mediate meanings, and helped bridge the gap between playgroup and home.

6.6.6 Child age and gender

Some gender-specific tendencies appeared evident in the children's behaviours. For example, older, more dominant boys often excluded younger boys from their play or talk by ignoring them or attempting to put them in their inferior place by pointing out their infringements of playgroup rules. Over time, the younger case study boys both developed strategies of silently imitating older boys actions and/or repeating their talk as alternative, possibly less threatening and largely more successful ways to gain entry to older boys' play. Both case study boys spent a lot of time trying to gain entry to older boys' play, rather than playing with children of similar ages. However, this could be partly because one child, Jake, had a friend who was older, and Michael knew and played with one of the older boys at his childminder, although he was not a 'friend'.

Disputes were also observed with the girls, although these incidents were far fewer than with boys. Overall, both case study girls tended to be largely silent and watchful at playgroup milk time. For Zara, her friendship with Helen appeared of primordial importance, as did the supremacy of her imagined worlds. Tallulah, who appeared locked into silence in playgroup, had no particular friendships to defend. However, both girls took issue with playgroup rules, and both, in different ways, refused to comply with playgroup norms and practices: Zara by escaping into imaginary play and Tallulah into silence. They both complied with the kinds of polite behaviour staff expected, but boys also attempted to do this.

Gender issues sometimes overlapped with age. Younger members of the group were less sure of their rights to express themselves, and older girls and boys sometimes ignored or merely smiled at them. There did not appear to be an age-related pecking order amongst girls as there was amongst boys, but older girls often did not address younger girls, perhaps in the case of the particular girls studied because Zara was very focussed on real or imagined friends, and Tallulah was only minimally

responsive. It must also be remembered that staff commented this cohort had a particularly dominant group of older boys.

6.6.7 Communicative potentials of home and playgroup

At home, the mothers and other family members talked with the case study children, on a wide variety of subjects, often linking current activities to past and anticipated future events. The children also became involved in solitary and occasionally joint fantasy play, or in the play of other children. As mentioned in Section 6.6.2 above, all the case study children used predominantly talk to communicate in their homes, and, in varying degrees, used predominantly imitative actions and words in playgroup.

Consistency was observed in the topics of talk at playgroup milk time (Appendix 5.2). Games were played with the artifacts to hand, including hand-chasing games, comparing colours of cups and 'having the same' colour as a friend or others at the table. These activities were frequently accompanied either by the routinised chanting of set phrases or were negotiated through gaze, facial expression and body movements.

Milk time was also a site for private and joint fantasy, often enacted multimodally through combinations of talk, gaze and action. Children used the 'props' available on the tables, and the resultant fantasy play appeared to be limited by the meaning potentials of the physicality of the objects to hand. Yet fantasy meanings had some fluidity, and the children moved readily in and out of shifting landscapes of private and shared fantasy meanings. Thus fantasy play offered the children an extension to the limited recurring topics of talk at milk time, sometimes offering opportunities to introduce talk into their interactions.

6.6.8 Time as a factor in the children's communicative strategies

At home, the children's interactions tended to be dominated by talk and over time, there was a developing clarity in all the children's pronunciation, an evident increase in their uses of more extended vocabulary, and occasionally evidence to imply more 'conventional' uses of grammar, particularly past tense verbs.

In playgroup, although these changes in clarity of speech and developing vocabulary were also present over time, they were less evident as all the children spoke much less than at home. More evident was the way all children developed different combinations of communicative strategies that were particular to playgroup and distinct from the strategies they were observed to use at home.

For example, Tallulah was reported to have begun playgroup talking, then assumed silence, consistently using gaze, facial expression and body movement rather than words to communicate. Over time, staff attributed specific meanings to her actions, and Tallulah began to talk again, mostly to her key worker, to smile at other children and mimic their movements. Michael and Jake began playgroup by trying to initiate talk with other children, but without shared knowledge and familiarity with the idiosyncrasies of their talk, their attempts were often unsuccessful. Over time, they converted to more successful strategies of watching and mimicking others' movements and repeating others' utterances. Zara was generally quiet at milk time, sitting politely to eat and drink, but occasionally spoke to her particular friend, Helen. Over time, she became more assertive, using primarily words to express her wishes, joining in group chants and games and imitating others' actions.

Thus in differing degrees, all the case study children went through an extended period of increasingly substituting or supporting their talk with gaze, facial expression and body movement, before beginning again to use talk as a means of communication.

The staff also used a range of communicative strategies particular to playgroup. For example, they used gaze direction to indicate who an utterance was addressed to, and fixed gaze on children to exercise control. They also scaffolded children's induction into rituals (eg joining/leaving tables) through combinations of words and arm/hand gestures coupled with reassuring smiles.

6.6.9 Changing Habitus

By studying different children in their different homes and as they came to know one playgroup setting, it has been possible to track how 'each individual system of dispositions may be seen as a structural variant' (Bourdieu, 1977, p86) of the new institutional 'field'. This chapter has shown how each child stamped a personal style onto the way they 'did' playgroup, negotiating between their personal habitus, acquired mostly through their life at home, and schooled practices, sometimes resisting the latter, but over time and in varying degrees, learning and increasingly conforming to the communicative practices as they moved from being novices to at least partly qualified apprentices in the new setting (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This chapter has also illustrated how, as Bourdieu points out, the processes of how to 'do' playgroup were learnt chiefly through practice, negotiated in their 'practical state without attaining the level of discourse' (Bourdieu, 1977, p87).

By the end of their first year, although changes in their communicative practices were evident, none of the children had achieved mastery of the institutional setting, emphasising the importance of time as a factor in their learning, and the potential significance of season-of-birth related periods of time spent in pre-school due to the top-down pressures of single entry to primary school and assessment on entry to school. These factors in the dynamics of children's playgroup and home communicative experiences are developed and discussed across a range of playgroup activities in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

Unravelling the dynamics of playgroup

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, factors were identified that influenced the children's communicative strategies in the institutional contexts of the children's homes and playgroup, focussing for the latter on playgroup milk-time. To gain broader insights into how the children adapted their home communicative strategies to playgroup, Chapter 7 examines the playgroup setting in more detail, exploring how different playgroup activities displayed subtly yet distinctly different communicative practices, offering different communicative potentials to the case study children. This detailed analysis permits a refinement of the factors identified in Chapter 6, illustrating not only how children made and expressed meaning multimodally, but also how and why they used different communicative strategies in different 'immediate' contexts[1].

The chapter concludes with summary answers to research questions 2 and 3:

2. Are there significant patterns and/or developments in individual children's communicative strategies during their first year at playgroup? How do these compare with the children's communicative strategies at home?

3. What sequences of playgroup experiences and what other factors may have influenced these outcomes?

7.2 How the children spent their time in playgroup

In Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3, the timing of a 'typical' playgroup session was outlined, detailing how approximately half of each session was spent in Compulsory Whole Group activities, and approximately half in Free or Guided Choice activities. Analysis

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[1] See Chapter 3, Sections 3.3 and 3.4 for definition of 'immediate context' as used in this thesis

of the observed sessions [2]revealed that although the ranges and timing of activities offered during each playgroup session remained fairly constant, individual children elected to spend their Free and Guided Choice time differently.

7.2.1 Exploring a range of playgroup activities over time

The bar charts in Appendices 7.5 – 7.8 display the patterns of each child's movements from activity to activity within each session[3], revealing how they spent very different amounts of their Free and Guided Choice time at different combinations of activities. Colour coding is used to clarify how, for all four children, the Compulsory Whole Group activities consistently structured and punctuated each playgroup session.

During their first months in playgroup, the two case study boys both explored a wide range of activities, tending to spend relatively short periods of time at each (see Appendices 7.5 and 7.6: Michael 17.11.00, 19.01.01, 26.02.01; Jake 05.03.01, 04.04.01, 09.05.01). Over time, they each began to select and spend more time at different 'favourite' activities (eg Michael 23.04.01, 21.05.01; Jake 06.06.01, 11.07.01).

By contrast, the two girls initially remained for long periods at individual Free and Guided Choice activities (see Appendices 7.7 and 7.8, Zara 01.12.00; Tallulah 15.11.00, 24.11.00). Over time, Zara began to explore a wider range of activities, spending less time at each one (Zara 02.02.01, 20.03.01), but eventually began to spend more protracted periods at particular activities (Zara 04.04.01, 18.05.01, 12.06.01). Tallulah showed the least initial variation in the range of activities she took part in (Tallulah 15.11.00, 24.11.00, 14.02.01). Her initial tendency to spend extended periods of time on particular activities increased as time progressed, and she never explored the full range of activities (Tallulah 21.03.01, 27.04.01; 15.06.01).

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[2] See Appendices 7.1-7.4 for breakdown of how the children spent their time on different activities.
[3] See Appendix 4.1 for dates of child observations. See Appendices 7.1-7.4 for raw data.

7.2.2 How the children spent their total time in playgroup

The total times each child spent on different activities are displayed in *Figures 7.1 –*
7.4 below. These summary pie charts[4] show how the percentages of time each child
spent on Compulsory Whole Group activities was fairly consistent, whereas the time
they spent on Free and Guided Choice activities varied considerably. For example,
although all the children were guided towards at least one Craft Task in each
playgroup session, some of the children stayed for longer than others: Michael only
spent 4% of his overall time on Crafts, whereas Jake spent 9% and Zara and Tallulah
14% of their overall time. Zara spent only 1% of her overall time at the Games Table,
Michael 2%, Tallulah 3% and Jake 5%. Jake spent 4% of his time on non-adult led
tabletop activities, whereas Zara spent 11%, Michael 15% and Tallulah 25%. Again,
there was disparity between the amounts of time each child spent in the more social
'Open Space' areas such as the Home Corner and Sand Tray, with Jake spending 24%
of his time in these areas, Michael 19%, Zara 18%, and Tallulah 6%.

Data Labels Figures 7.1 –7.4

CGW: Reg	Compulsory Whole Group: Registration and Group Activity
CGW: Milk	Compulsory Whole Group: Milk Time
CGW: Out	Compulsory Whole Group: Outside Play
CGW: Show	Compulsory Whole Group: Showbox
Guided Choice: Craft	Guided Choice: Craft and Paint adult-led
Free Choice: Games	Free Choice Tables: Games adult-led
Free Choice: Tables	Free Choice Tables: child-led
Free Choice: Open	Free Choice Open Spaces: child-led
Other	Other Activities eg settle, toilet trips, wash hands

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[4] Figures are based on total observed times as detailed in Appendices 7.1-7.44. Activity categories
detailed in Appendix 5.3.

Figure7.1 Jake Total Time on Activities

(Shown as percentage of overall observed time)
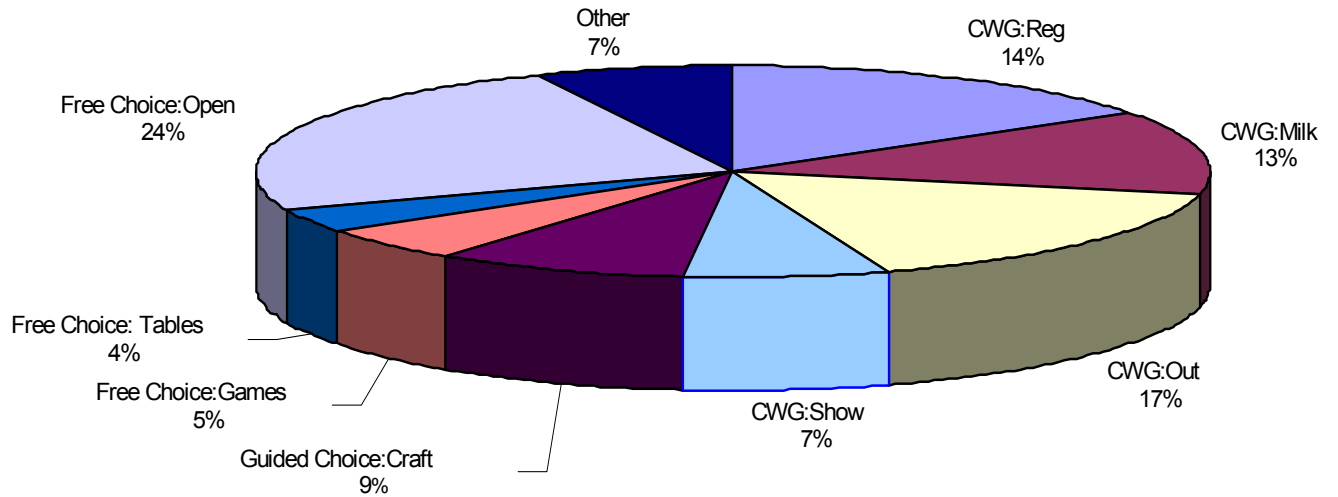
Figure 7.2 Michael Total Time on Activities
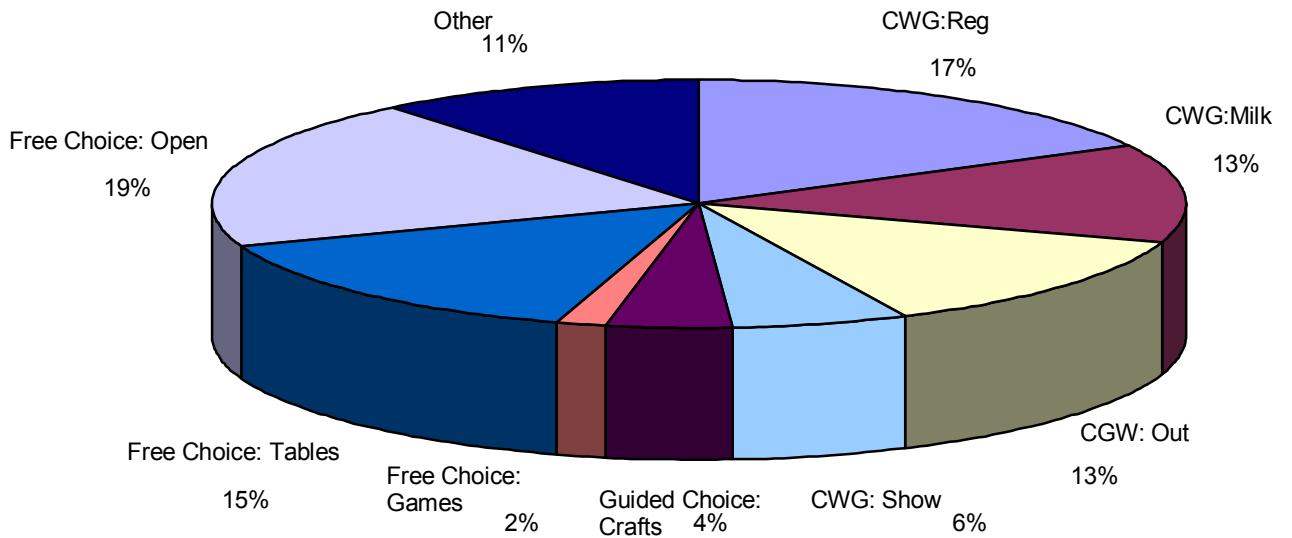
Figure 7.3 Zara Total Time on Activities
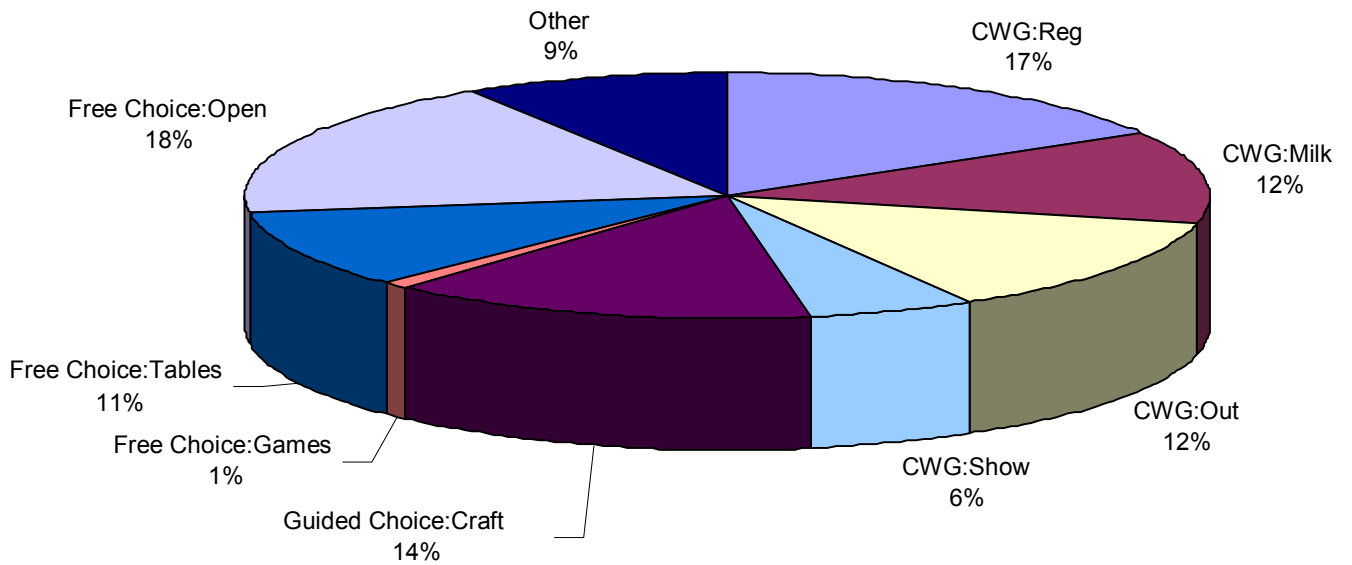
Figure 7.4 Tallulah Total Time on Activities
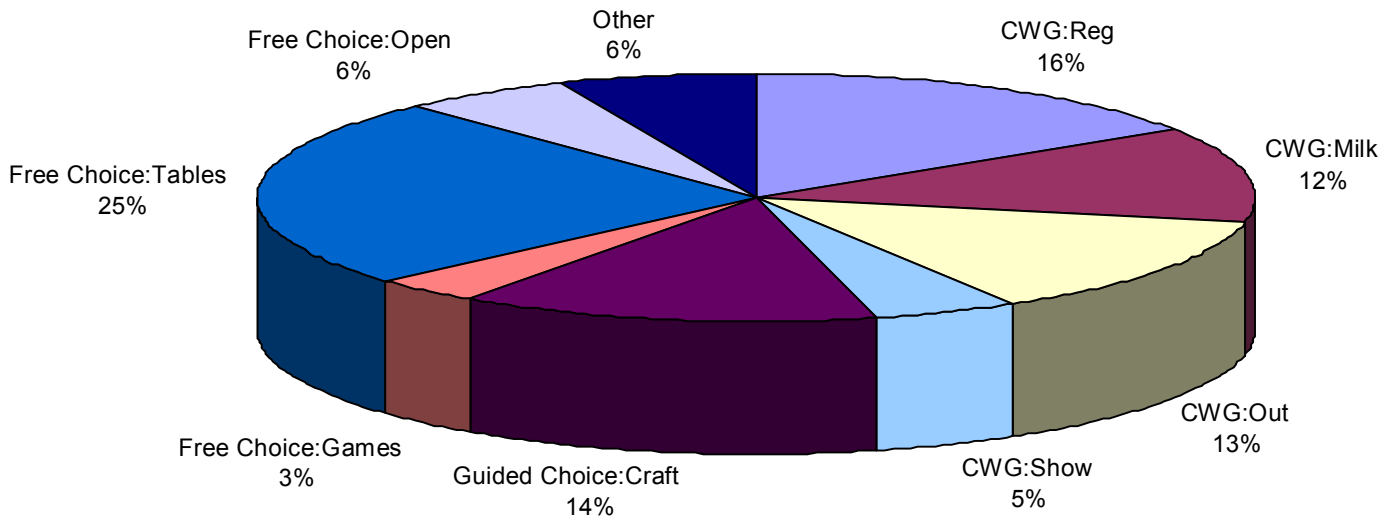
In summary, each child developed an individual pattern of involvement in the range of playgroup activities. As discussed in Chapter 6, staff had some awareness of how the children spent their time in playgroup and encouraged them to explore a wide range, but they avoided 'pushing' them before they were 'ready', fearing they might 'shut down' (Holly, Staff Interview 24.7.01, p21). Furthermore, their knowledge of the children's movements was necessarily partial, given the high demands on their time and attention in the 'busyness' of playgroup, and also, as identified through interview, given the pressures from inspection routines to keep the most detailed records of older rather than younger children's involvements.

These disparities in how different children spent their time had a significant impact on their different communicative behaviours in playgroup, as this study has identified that different activity types offered differing and largely predictable communicative potentials. Thus the children's selection of activities impacted upon their behaviours, which in turn impacted on staff perceptions of the children, contributing to making staff either more or less inclined to encourage each child to try different activities that would offer different communicative potentials.

7.3 Communicative practices of different activities

This section details the predictability of the communicative practices and potentials of different Free and Guided Choice activities, which, as seen in *Figures 7.1 –7.4*, consistently made up approximately half of the children's time in playgroup.

7.3.1 Guided Choice: Craft and Paint Tables

Adult led craft and paint activities were a feature of every playgroup session, set up in Room 2 and only available to the children after registration. Craft and paint tasks aimed to give children 3-dimensional experience of curriculum themes (Holly, Diary Note 06.12.00). For example, while studying the curriculum theme of plant growth, at the Craft Table the children made a model of a flower by assembling cut-out paper

petals, leaves and stalk and then 'planted' their flower in a small flowerpot. At the Paint Table, they made sponge prints in the shape of leaves and petals. Crafts and table-top painting were therefore always presented as set tasks, where children copied a model made previously by staff, or followed adult instructions for food preparation or conducting 'scientific experiments'. This controlled access and controlled craft outcome formed part of the structure that the staff had decided to give to playgroup. In principle, children were allowed freedom of interpretation, but the presence of a model, the fact that the children were shown how to copy the model by an adult and that other children were copying the model all contributed to pressures on the child to conform by copying the model rather than create their own interpretations.

7.3.1.1 Adult-child interaction at Craft Tables

Given the prescribed nature of the tasks, one or more adults were always present at Craft Tables to explain what the different component parts were for and help children sequence their actions. This level of adult control again meant that children had little freedom to explore meanings through their own interpretations. Overall at the Craft Tables, the majority of the adult-child interaction involved the adult giving instructions by talking and showing with the children responding by doing rather than talking, but occasionally using talk to express specific wants or needs, as illustrated by Jake's utterances in L2, 4 and 5 in Example *7.1*:

Example 7.1 *(Videocode 43:38 – 44:20)* **Video clip**

Jake approaches Craft Table, watches children at the table, walks to space next to Anna, who Parent Helper is helping. Rosa returns to table, glares at Jake because he is in 'her' space, Jake steps back then moves to a free space opposite Rosa

1   P/H: *(helping Faith)*

2   Jake: *(gaze to P/H)* I wanna do one

3   P/H: *(to Anna)* very good *(picking up model on table)* whose is this one?

4   Jake: *(moves to space opposite Rosa, to P/H, who follows him)* I wanna

5   do one *(picks up cereal packet and shows to P/H)* dat one (?)

6   P/H: *(taking packet and puts it on table in front of Jake, placing the*

7   *previously made 'model' next to Jake)* very good *(pointing to*

8   *model then to Jake's packet)* right so you need to do black and

9   white stripes // can you put the glue on? *(points to glue, moves away to*

10   *attend to another child)*   (Jake, 05.03.01, p8)

Children sometimes related craft activities to their home lives, and spoke to the attending adult, but these exchanges were almost always cut short by interruptions. For example, in *7.2* below, Jake was making an Easter flower as described in Section 7.3.1 above. Jake asked Sarah, the attending adult, what the green tissue paper was for, and was told that it was grass to put in the pot. Eyeing the tissue paper with scepticism, Jake began to talk about grass at home (L10). Sarah used her knowledge of his home life to prompt him to continue (L11-12), using similar supportive tactics to Jake's mother, discussed in Chapter 6. However, as frequently occurred in playgroup, this brief exchange was cut short by Sarah's need to attend to other children (L16-18), and their brief exchange was not resumed:

Example 7.2 (Videocode 28:00 – 28:25)

10   Jake: we've #got lots of grass we do

11   Sarah: *(while helping Stan with his model)* you have lots of grass do you?

12   does daddy have a big lawn mower that he sits on?

13   Jake: *(nods)* 'e got big one

14   Sarah: has he? d'you help him then?

15   Jake: *(nods, silently continues pushing clay in pot)*

16   Sarah: *(helps Stan with his model, calls out to Climbing Cubes area)* Nick!

17   *(shakes her head at Nick)* come an make a flower over here come

18   on   (Jake, 06.06.01, p5)

Similarly, Zara's interest in crafts sometimes led her to initiate talk with adults. In Example *7.3*, Zara was at the Paint Table, where the activity involved putting a scroll of paper into a canister, followed by pasta shapes soaked in different coloured paints, then sealing and shaking the canister. When the paper was taken out it revealed a

pattern made by the painted pasta shapes. In this extract, Zara, encouraged by the adult Nina (L2-6), had been shaking her canister. She was intrigued by the mystery of how her picture would emerge, and clearly wanted control of revealing the surprise (L7-9), but let Nina help her (L14). Zara's responses to Nina's closed questions were monosyllabic (L11, 13, 15-16, 20, 22) or silent (L27), yet her aroused interest led her to suggest developing the task (L18):

Example 7.3 *(Videocode 34:42 – 36:00)*

2   Nina: ok?

3   Zara: *(shakes canister)*

4   Nina: well done!

5   Zara: *(shakes canister)*

6   Nina: well done! that's it *(moves to help another child)*

7   Zara: see what's happens(?) inside *(looks inside canister)* hey *(glance to*

8   *Nina)* I wan to take dem out *(peers inside canister)* I wan to take #dem

9   out

10   Nina: *(returns to Zara)* d'you want to look at your lovely picture then?

11   Zara: *(whispered)* yeh

12   Nina: *(gently)* see what pattern it made

13   Zara: yeh *(intake of breath as Nina takes out paper)*

14   Nina: let's have a look *(pulling out paper)* oh wow look at that isn't that

15   Zara: *(excitedly)* let's *(looking at paper)* let's *(reaching out for paper)*

16   let's/

17   Nina: /looks like rain coming down [doesn't it?

18   Zara: [let's put it in half *(folds paper)*

19   Nina: you want to put it in half?

20   Zara: yeh

21   Nina: see it come out? *(helping Zara fold paper)*

22   Zara: yeh *(intake of breath)*

23   Nina: *(opens out paper, intake of breath)* that's lovely Zara! *(moves away)*

24   Zara: *(smiles and admires picture)* it's good!

25   Nina: *(returns with more paint)* there you go *(places paint on table)* d'you

26   want to do another one Zara?

27   Zara: *(nods)*

(Nina leaves table to fetch more paper, helps Zara put the paper in the canister then attends to other children when she returns)   (Zara, 04.04.01, p11)

Very few observations were made of the case study children talking at length with adults at the Craft Table whilst making models, partly because staff were busy directing several children at the same time as they worked individually. By contrast, when working in small groups such as during scientific experiments or cookery, more extended exchanges occurred. Whilst remaining quiet themselves, the younger children were therefore witness to older children taking part in small group talk with an adult. Examples *7.4* and *7.5* are extracts from a 14-minute salad-making episode, where the talk was constant, with Holly pointing out the roots, leaves and skins of the ingredients and asking questions. Bertie (4y8m), Martin (4y2m) and Jim (4y8m) answered Holly's questions, asked their own questions and occasionally introduced new ideas into the talk. Throughout the episode, Holly and the children identified and discussed different aspects of the ingredients for the salad they were making, including colours (L46-54) and plant growth (L55-59). Although Zara made little verbal contribution, her gaze followed from speaker to speaker, allowing her to observe Holly seeking particular kinds of answers to her questions. For example, when Holly showed a tomato (L46), she was seeking a label, provided by Bertie (L47), but not by Martin, who gave an attribute (L48), which Holly interpreted as a label (L49). As an experienced member of the group, Martin had the confidence to adapt his attribute to a label (L52), and Holly sensitively responded (L53-54). Here, Zara was witnessing that there were 'right' and 'wrong' answers, and she had to unravel the rules of what constituted appropriate answers in educational discourse. Only when the talk turned to the comparatively 'safe' topic of personal likes, did she begin to talk (L65):

***Example* 7.4** *(Videocode 56:20 – 57:09)*

46   Holly: what's this? *(holds up tomato)*

47   Bertie: tomato!

48   Martin:[oringe

49   Holly: [if you look //orange? is that an orange? *(holds it up)*

50   Jim: *(doesn't look up, continues chopping)* no! tomato!

51   Holly: tomato!

52   Martin: it #ooks #ike orange

53   Holly: actually it is a bit // it could be a bit redder couldn' it? *(shows*

54   *tomato)* tomatoes can be a bit redder *(shows tomato)* can you see

55   these? *(points to seeds)* these are seeds these are the things that new

56   tomatoes grow from and I'm goin to give you a bit of /

57   Bertie: /but you normally eat #those *(looking at seeds)*

58   Holly: ye-es you <u>can</u> eat those or you <u>can save</u> the seeds and plant them the

59   next year now I'm going to give you each a piece of tomato each to

60   chop up *(picking up pieces)* to put into your salad *(passing round)*

61   there *(passing round)* there we are *(passing round)* now

62   see if you can chop it up and I'll give you some of this pepper as

63   well *(cuts pepper into pieces)* d'you like pepper? *(gaze scans each*

64   *child)*

65   Zara/Martin/Bertie/Jim: yeh   (12.06.01, p12)

Holly made many attempts to include Zara in the group interaction by saying her name and giving her encouragement and directions, for example: 'that's lovely Zara now just pop it in your pot now' (Transcript p12, L42). When Holly addressed questions to Zara using gaze direction only, the boys interjected, but when she used Zara's name, the boys interrupted less and Zara began to respond verbally, if monosyllabically, to her questions, as in Example *7.5* (L34, 36) and ultimately began to contribute her own experiences (L40) from her home life. On this occasion, Holly did not build on Zara's contribution, but focused on helping her complete the task (L41):

Example 7.5 *(Videocode 57:38 – 58:22)*

20	Holly:	here we are Zara are you going to chop those up? *(passes pepper)*
21		some yellow pepper there *(passes pepper)* orange an yellow there
22		Jim *(passes pepper)* an now what else can we put in there? *(reaches*
23		*on side for more ingredients)* what else could you have in your um
24		salad? *(gaze passes around children)* what does mummy like to put
25		in her salad?
26	Bertie:	all sorts
27	Martin:	mummy has (*indicating size with fingers*) mummy has little ones
28	Holly:	does she have any o' this stuff? *(holds up cucumber)*
29	Martin:	oh yeh coocumba I hav #dat on my samwichesches
30	Jim:	*(gaze to pepper he's cutting)* so you do I have dat on my samwichies
31	Holly:	*(inclining head to gain eye contact with Zara)* do you have
32		cucumber Zara?
33	Bertie:	[I do!
34	Zara:	[(*gaze to Holly)* yeh
35	Holly:	would you like some? *(offers cucumber)*
36	Zara:	yeh
37	Holly:	shall I cut you a piece to chop up? *(starts cutting)*
38	Bertie:	I [eat dat
39	Jim:	[I have nuffin else to do any now
40	Zara:	I have #dem for *(glance to Holly)* <u>my</u> dinner
41	Holly:	d'you want to cut//d'you want to cut it into small pieces?
42	Zara:	yeh *(children chop ingredients)* (Zara, 12.06.01, p13)

In total, Zara made only 11 utterances throughout this 14-minute episode: 9 were monosyllabic 'yes/no/hmm' responses to Holly's instructions and prompts: 1 was L40 in Example 7.5; and once she appeared to say to herself 'I can #nuse my knife'. Thus, her quantity of talk was low compared to the other children present. However, her involvement in the salad preparation and her gaze direction following others' talk

implied that she was not only actively engaged in the task, but was also actively listening to the extended exchanges. Whilst dominating the talk, the older boys were also modelling the kinds of talk that staff encouraged and expected the children to take part in.

Many similar episodes were observed of all the case study children witnessing older children's interactions, remaining silent or producing monosyllabic or short utterances. These episodes constituted their induction into the communicative practices of this kind of playgroup activity, forming part of their 'legitimate peripheral participation' in the group's practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Here, Zara was peripherally involved in the kind of shared activity typical of an educational institution, observing how children and adults share their thoughts and co-construct meaning through talk in a small group – a very different procedure to the adult/child or child/child dyadic interactions observed at home, that had dominated her communicative experiences to date. Holly's repeated attempts to include Zara in the interaction not only provided Zara with opportunities to contribute to the talk, but also served to legitimize her presence, confirming her as a member of the group whilst she remained silent or monosyllabic.

These observations concur with the staff's views that over time, they would expect Zara, Michael and Jake to change their roles in the group and become more dominant and expressive members once the older cohort had left for Primary School at the end of the summer term (Staff Interview, 01.05.01, p27, L44-45). As a Summer-born child with only one year in playgroup, Tallulah would not have this opportunity. The 3-year old children's early peripheral participation in playgroup activities provided opportunities for observing the diverse discourse features required for membership of that community, and for slowly acquiring mastery of those discourses when supported by a sympathetic, responsive and quietly encouraging adult. This mastery in turn slowly changed the role and status of the younger children within the group, particularly as they became the more experienced members when the older children left and new fledglings arrived in the following September.

7.3.1.2 Peer interaction at Craft Tables

As discussed above, children at craft activities tended to respond to adult directions by 'doing' or giving monosyllabic replies to adults' closed questions and instructions. Similarly, the majority of peer interaction involved the silent negotiation of access to a space at the craft tables, or to paints/ glue/ brushes/ articles on the tables through the use of gaze and body movements.

For example, the description of Rosa and Jake's movements at the beginning of Example *7.1* illustrates how Rosa reclaimed her 'space' at the table from Jake, who had mistakenly thought the space was vacant. Out of the corner of her eye, Rosa fixed her gaze on Jake as she returned to 'her' space at the table, emphasizing her stake on the territory by turning her back further towards Jake as she slowly edged her way back into her space. Jake responded to these visual messages by watching her closely whilst slowly withdrawing from the table, eventually walking around the table to occupy a space opposite Rosa. This interaction, lasting only a few seconds, can be seen on the accompanying CD (**7/1: Jake at the Craft Table**). On this occasion Jake found an alternative space, yet many instances were observed of younger members of the group being excluded by older members, both girls and boys, through similar uses of gaze and body movement, particularly in areas where there was no clear definition of the parameters of a child's space, such as at the Craft Tables and in Open Spaces. Just as Bruner observed that children learn the 'formats' of conversational turn-taking through playing games such as Peek-a-boo (Chapter 3, Section 3.2), newcomers to playgroup appeared to learn to unravel the social dynamics and rights of access primarily through gaze, facial expression and body movement. Their entry to others' talk or activities was frequently barred until they had attained some mastery of these silent skills. Sometimes, adults noticed the children's unsuccessful silent negotiations for access to activities, and created a space for the children, but these silent peer space negotiations were subtle and short, mostly occurring unnoticed by adults. For a researcher with a 'rewind' facility on a video they were far more easily witnessed.

Once children had established a space at the Craft Table, they worked alongside their peers, often watching how they used the different materials and silently negotiating possession of shared items such as glue and brushes. Derived from Piagetian 'stages', the term 'parallel play' is often used to describe how children aged 2 ½ -3 years play alongside each other without engaging with each other, and 'associative play' to describe how children aged 3-4 years begin to interact and cooperate with others (Tassoni and Hucker, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 6, staff thought Tallulah did not yet engage in associative play. However, instances were observed of Tallulah playing silently with another child with increasingly synchronized and interdependent actions. Example **7.6** shows a sequence of video stills, where Jemima (4y7m) and Tallulah (3y10m) worked together for 16 minutes, rarely speaking as they stirred different coloured paints into their white glue, jointly exploring the properties of colour and colour mixing, and jointly discovering that the white glue, with pink and blue paint first made streaks and then the colour purple. The stills in **7.6**, multimodal representation in **7.7** and video extract on the accompanying CD illustrate how the girls largely silently and sensitively negotiated their 'glue mixing' and exchanges of materials.

Example 7.6

After 7 minutes of silent, increasingly synchronized activity, Jemima addressed Tallulah, who responded with actions rather than words, as illustrated below:

Example 7.7 **Video clip**

Video code	Participant	Language	Action	
50:25	Tallulah		watching Jemima and Rosa stirring glue	1
50:30	Jemima	would you like some more purple Tallulah?	turns to face Tallulah, picking up glue pot and offering to Tallulah	2
	Tallulah		averts gaze, shrugs one shoulder, smiles, reaches forward and takes glue stick from proffered glue pot	3
	Jemima		holds glue pot nearer to Tallulah as she takes purple stirrer from pot	4
	Tallulah		puts purple stirrer in her pink glue pot	5
50:40	Jemima	(*very quietly)* I'll have this	reaches in front of Tallulah to take T's pink glue pot, but adjusts purple pot instead	6
	Tallulah		stands back to let Jemima take the pink pot	7
	Jemima		takes pink pot	8
	Tallulah		puts pink and purple stirrers in pink pot for Jemima to use	9
	Jemima		passes purple stirrer back to purple pot for Tallulah to use	10
	Tallulah and Jemima		standing close to each other but facing pots, both stirring	11
51:00	Jemima	Tallulah put some purple in	starts to watch Tallulah, glance to June, stirs glue in pink pot, gaze to June, smiling	12

		here	taps pink pot	
	June	that's ok you can mix it together you could put some in	pointing to purple pot	13
51:10	Jemima	I'm gonna put some in	puts her stirrer in Tallulah's purple pot	14
	Tallulah		takes her stirrer out of pot, making more room for Jemima	15
	Jemima		continues to take small amounts of purple glue and stir it into her pink glue	16
	Tallulah		continues stirring glue, watching Jemima, stop stirring to allow Jemima to take glue	17
	Rosa		approaches, reaches in front of Jemima to take stickers	18
51:30	Jemima	we're mixing it all	to Rosa, stirring glue	19
	Rosa		glance to Jemima, takes sticker, returns to her work space	20
	Jemima and Tallulah		both stir glue, glancing at one another's glue pots	21
	Jemima		takes glue from Tallulah's pot	22
	Tallulah		takes glue from Jemima's pot	23
51:50	Jemima		reaching over, brings Tallulah's pot nearer	24
	Tallulah		reaching over, brings Jemima's pot so the two pots are closer	25
52:00	Jemima	would you like some of mine Tallulah?	stirring glue, gaze to glue	26
	Jemima and Tallulah		continue stirring own glue, taking glue from each others' pots, bringing pots closer together until they are almost touching	27

52:25	Jemima	this is fun isn't it Tallulah?	inclining head to get eye contact with Tallulah	28
	Tallulah		glances to Jemima, smiles, stirs glue	29
	Jemima and Tallulah		continue stirring glue, swap pots, working cooperatively, with synchronized actions, mostly silently (Jemima makes two utterances over the next 5 minutes)	30
56:40	Tallulah		reaches across to pot of girl (visiting younger sibling of another child) opposite her, takes some glue on her stirrer	31
	Girl		stops Tallulah taking glue, removes T's hand and stirrer from her pot	32
	Tallulah	but I want #some too	removing stirrer, starts placing glue on a model, gaze from child to model, returns to exchanging glue with Jemima for 4 minutes until Jemima leaves table to wash glue from hands . Tallulah remains at craft table for 19 minutes until activity brought to a close by outside playtime	33

(Tallulah, 15.06.01, p10)

These examples illustrate how the girls' interaction was negotiated chiefly through imitative movements, timely glances and gaze, with occasional talk, initially from Jemima, who attributed intention and meaning to Tallulah's silent multimodal expressions of meaning. Indeed, in every 'action' line of Example *7.7*, the meaning intentions appeared clear to the producer and observer of the signs. In contrast to pathologising the absence of talk (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989), studying the

277

multimodality of young children's communicative signs gives insights the diverse ways they make meanings and build cooperative relations.

7.3.1.3 Child participation at Craft Tables

Staff tried to ensure that all children took part in a craft activity each session, partly because the tasks were linked to the curriculum and partly because the activity resulted in work that could be taken home, and many parents liked to 'have something to show' for their child's time in playgroup (Holly Informal Interview, Diary Note 06.12.00). However, not all children chose to *stay* at craft activities, and the percentage of their overall observed time on crafts varied considerably: Michael 4%; Jake 9%; Zara 14% and Tallulah 14%. As illustrated above, interaction at the Craft Tables had distinctive 'communicative practices' (Street, 1998), where children followed adult instructions, mostly silently, with few occurrences of extended talk with adults or peers. However, in small groups, the children became peripheral members of topic-based small group talk between children and an adult. The two girls spent significantly longer periods than the boys at these activities. Staff and mothers had noted Michael and Jake took home few craft items, but beyond this material benefit, the case study boys had far fewer opportunities than the girls to experience following adult instructions and participating in adult-led small group talk, both typically 'school-like' forms of instruction.

7.3.2 Free Choice Tables: adult-led games

The activities in this category all took the form of games with set rules, intended to promote the development of: fine motor skills through the manipulation of materials; game-specific skills, such as learning and following rules; and developing Literacy or Numeracy skills through recognizing and naming colours, shapes, numbers and letters. The children's freedom of interpretation of the games was usually restricted by the rules of the games, which were 'policed' by an attendant adult and sometimes by older children. Children were free to wander up to and away from the games table at any time, but had to wait for a 'turn' if all the seats were taken. When games were

in progress, other children sometimes gathered at the table, either to show the adult something from another activity or just to watch the game. Children often became very excited at Games, attracting an 'audience' of children and/or other adults watching the game for a while, sometimes commenting on what was happening or leaning over to participate briefly in the action of the game.

7.3.2.1 Adult-child and peer interaction at Games Tables

Close examination of the data has revealed clear, predictable patterns in the adult-child interaction at Games Tables, with variations depending on how busy the Games Table was, on the adult style of interaction and on the nature of the game. Although different adults adopted different styles of interaction, there was a high incidence of all adults using the games as a chance to encourage children to name colours and to count. Consequently, many of the adult questions were closed, requiring one word responses to questions such as 'what colour is that?' or non-verbal responses to questions such as 'is it your go?' The rules of the games were taught mostly by adults through playing, showing and through talk. In all the observed sessions, most of the participating children's talk was directed at the adult, and the adult's talk was mostly directed at individual children rather than to the group as a whole, either in response to a child's question, or to comment on or direct the game. During almost all the observed games, the talk of both adults and children was directly related to the game, with the adult dominating the speaking turns. Example *7.8*, a lengthy extract where coincidentally Zara and Tallulah were both present, illustrates the kinds of exchanges frequently observed at the Games Table.

In Example *7.8*, Zara (3y4m) had been walking around playgroup looking for her 'special' friend Helen (3y5m), who she found at a busy game with Tallulah (3y8m), Jack (4y7m) and Shane (3y4m), along with Helen's mother Paula. Once Jack had left the game (L32), all the children were in their first playgroup year, and were unfamiliar with the game being played. Unsurprisingly therefore, the majority of the adult utterances referred to how to play the game (L30, 45-46, 48-49, 52-54), to

279

taking turns (L 27, 28, 38, 43, 9-10, 12,17, 19, 21, 23) and to organizing where the children sat (eg L35). The adult also encouraged the children to name shapes and colours, using both words and pointing gestures to compare colours, shapes and sizes (L40, 49, 52-53, 2-4, 6, 8-9, 15, 27) and congratulating the children (L43, 52, 25). Compared to the adult, the children said very little, but they all participated in the game, frequently responding to the adult's guidance with actions rather than words (L29, 39, 50, 1, 11, 14, 24, 28). Helen referred to turns and game rules several times (L16, 18, 20 and 22) and named one shape (L51); Zara's utterances mostly referred to game rules and turns (L23-24, L26, L44, L47, L1) and to attempting to name or repeating the names of shapes (L5, L7); Shane referred to turns (L36-7, L13) and named shapes (L41, L26) and colours (L42); Tallulah remained silent but participated actively in the game (L29, L14). Zara and Helen spoke more frequently and insistently than the other children during this game as they were with Paula, who they both knew well, whereas Tallulah and Shane only saw her for once per week:

Example 7.8 *(Audiocode 01:25 – 03:35) (Video soundtrack indistinct)*

(Zara approaches the Game Table, where Paula and the children are playing a game where a dice with differently coloured shapes is thrown, a corresponding piece is found from a box on the table and slotted into the player's board)

23 Zara: *(to Paula)* can I do one? *(watches game)* can I do one? I wan# to

24   do one

25 Paula: *(gaze to Zara)* do you?

26 Zara: yeh

27 Paula: let me give Tallulah one cos she hasn't done one yet *(interruption*

28   *as talks to passing adult, to Zara)* shall we let Tallulah go first?

29 Tallulah: *(takes dice from Paula, throws dice, finds shape)*

30 Paula: oooh right Tallulah can you find your// a square [good girl // can

31   you find one?

32 Jack: [I not (?) any more

33   I wan# go play some#fing else *(leaves)*

34   Paula: *(to Jack)* are you gonna do something else are you? alright *(to*

35   *Helen)* you can sit there now if you want Helen cos Jack's [(?)

36   Shane: [my

37   turn! my turn!

38   Paula: *(passes dice to Shane)* go on then Shane

39   Shane: *(throws dice)*

40   Paula: what shape is [that? circle good boy and what colour is this circle?

41   Shane: [circle

42   lellow

43   Paula: well done! that's nice isn't it? *(passing dice to Zara)* that's it you

44   go next

44   Zara: *(pointing to pieces in box)* I haven't got any [(?)

45   Paula: [no you don't need

46   the box you need the dice

47   Zara: *(holding up piece from box)* I have got one ready

48   Paula: pop it back in for a minute Zara cos you've got to throw the dice to

49   get //see [which one you're gonna get that's it well done what

         shape have you got Helen?

50   Helen: [*(takes dice and throws it)*

51   #thircle

52   Paula: good girl same as Shane look *(points to Shane and Helen's pieces)*

53   circles *(gives dice to Zara)* right throw it and see what you get

54   then Zara

1   Zara: *(throws dice hard, to Shane as he catches dice)* hey!

2   Paula:*(gaze to dice, then Zara)* d'you know what shape that is? *(points to*

3   *shape)* d'you know that shape? *(gaze to Zara)* d'you know what

4   that shape's called?

5   Zara: *(reaches across and finds correct piece, glance to Paula, gaze to*

         piece) I don't know

6   Paula: it's a <u>rectangle</u>

7   Zara: a wec[tangle

8   Paula: [that's a <u>small</u> rectangle and in here *(pointing to box)* we've

9   got some big rectangles as well but that's a small one right then it's

10   Tallulah's turn again *(passing dice to Tallulah)*

11   Shane: *(reaches for dice)*

12   Paula: *(to Shane)* wait a minute *(gives dice to Tallulah, to Shane)* you have

            to wait to throw the dice sweetie/

13   Shane: /my turn after!

14   Tallulah: *(throws dice, finds shape and places it in board)*

15   Paula: *(to Tallulah)* you've got the small rectangle as well [well done

16   Helen: [can I have

            that? *(reaching for dice)*

17   Paula: *(to Helen)* no it's Shane next

18   Helen: i#t's my turn

19   Paula: *(to Helen)* no it's Shane next sweetie

20   Helen: (?) next

21   Paula: *(to Helen)* it's Shane next then it's you *(passing dice to Shane)* when

            Shane's had his go/

22   Helen: /no mine

23   Paula: *(to Helen)* wait a minute

24   Shane: *(throws dice)*

25   Paula: *(to Shane)* well done!

26   Shane: #sthquare

27   Paula: a square good boy *(pointing)* a lovely <u>green</u> square is it green?

28   Helen: *(takes dice and throws it hard, dice lands on floor, game interrupted*

29   *briefly as they look for dice)*   (Zara 04.04.01, pp1-2)

The adult-directed activity in Example *7.8* contrasts distinctly with Example *7.9*, where two older boys in their second year at playgroup, Aaron (3y11m) and Patrick (4y1m), were just completing a game with different coloured snails when Jake (2y11m) joined them. In this game, two dice were thrown, one with colours, one with numbers, to determine which and how many spaces each snail moved. The adult,

Janet, had been playing with the older boys but had become absorbed in writing notes for a Child Study Assignment as part of her training (L19). The boys knew how to play the game and needed little guidance from the adult, who left them to debate which snail had won (L15-18, L21–29) and to invent a new, more 'racy' version of the game (L30-34). Jake watched the older boys' play, occasionally standing to see better what the boys were pointing at (L17, 20, 32, 35). His involvement in the activity was peripheral yet he was keenly observing the older boys' fun, mimicking their movements yet remaining on the sidelines. Here, in contrast to the peripheral engagement and gradual inclusion of Zara in Example 7.5, neither the adult nor the older boys acknowledged his presence:

Example 7.9 *(Videocode 15:34 –16:16)*

12   Jake: *(approaches table, sits down)*

13   Aaron: oran[ge

14   Janet: [orange!

15   Aaron: [*(moves his piece to end to win game, singing triumphantly dances*

16   *round in circles next to table)*

17   Jake: *(throws dice several times in front of himself, then watches Aaron)*

18   Patrick:[*(moving his piece to end)* and the pink

19   Janet: *(to Aaron)* you said it would be orange didn't you? *(starts to write)*

20   Jake: *(sits quietly watching Aaron and Patrick)*

21   Patrick:*(stands, pointing)* and the pink that's there too that one too

22   Aaron: *(stands, pointing)* an that one too *(moving another snail to end)*

23   Patrick: yep

24   Aaron: an at one *(moving another snail to end)*

25   Patrick: no *(shaking head)* #dat didn't dat one's a st // dat one didn win

26   *(pointing to snails Aaron has just moved to end, makes noises)*

27   Aaron: *(stepping back from table)* dey all won … *(rests hands on table in*

28   *front of him, looking at pieces)* dey all won *(gaze to Patrick)* dey

29   all won

30   Patrick: *(bending forwards to pick up piece from game)* #dall we do it

31		weally fast?
32	Jake:	*(moves head to see boys more clearly)*
33	Aaron:	yeh
34	Patrick:	come on!
35	Jake:	*(stands up and mimics boys' movements)* (05.03.01, p4)

(Aaron and Patrick put all pieces back to beginning of game and 'race' each one to the end, then leave table, Jake turns to Janet, who is still writing)

When quiet, with only one or two children to an adult, the Games Table offered fertile ground for adults to 'scaffold' the development of individual children's understandings. On these occasions, the children's responses to the adult appeared to depend partly upon the degree of control the child had over the activity. For instance, Examples *7.10* and *7.11* show different adults working in a dyad with Jake, both encouraging him to learn how to play a game and to name colours. Example *7.10* occurred after the older boys had left the table in Example *7.9*. Left alone with Janet, Jake responded to her directive prompts either with actions (L8, 10, 13, 19, 21) or single word utterances (L6, 15, 17):

Example 7.10 (Videocode17:16 – 17:40)
(Janet and Jake began to play a game after the older boys left the table. Janet explained Jake had to throw the dice, which he did):

6	Jake:	*(throws dice)* pink
7	Janet:	*(gaze to dice)* it's yellow
8	Jake:	*(moves snail along track towards end)*
9	Janet:	*(points to snail)* move that one one *(glance to J)* move it just one space
10	Jake:	*(moves snail back to first square)*
11	Janet:	and then you need to throw the other dice *(passing dice to Jake)*
12		and see what colour that one lands on
13	Jake:	*(throws dice holding arm very high)*
14	Janet:	*(picking up dice, shows to Jake)* that's a …
15	Jake:	lellow

16   Janet: that's red that one

17   Jake: wed

18   Janet: can you throw the re//move the red snail one

19   Jake: *(drags red snail several squares to end of board)*

20   Janet: *(as Jake moves snail)* just one space

21   Jake: *(starts to 'reverse' snail back)*   (05.03.01, p5)

On occasions when young children were allowed freer interpretation of a game they seemed more likely to verbalize their meaning making. In Example *7.11*, Jake had begun to play a game on his own that entailed throwing a large dice with different shapes in different sizes and different colours, finding the corresponding piece and fitting it in the player's puzzle board. The player therefore not only had to match up the shape, but also the size (big or small) and colour of the shape. By the time the adult, Sarah, joined him, Jake was experimenting with his own way of playing the game. He managed to get one piece to fit without paying attention to the colours of the shapes, seeming to use trial and error as a strategy as he looked for a second piece (L26-33). Sarah asked Jake if he wanted to start again and share turns (L23), but he declined (L24). By crossing her arms and keeping her hands away from the table (L25, 27), Sarah assumed a passive physical stance that conveyed respect for Jake's request for control. Once he had completed the game successfully in his own way, he was more open to Sarah's suggestion he use the dice to select pieces (L33-36). Sarah encouraged him to name shapes (L37-38), accepting his response of showing a shape (L39-40) and naming the shape without insisting he repeat the name. Jake proceeded to study the different comparative sizes (L43-44), possibly giving a glimpse of his understandings of size as related to growth and his own growth, rather than as a constant state (L46). Sarah then reintroduced naming shapes (L49), which in turn prompted Jake to name shapes (L50). Following this, Sarah began to draw his attention to the added complication of the colour of each piece (L51-52). By gradually introducing the elements of shape, size and colour, by letting Jake have control of the pace of the game and the way it was played, Sarah very successfully helped him to recognize what he needed to notice in order to complete the game

partly in his own way and partly according to the set rules. In this 'structured' or 'guided' freedom, Jake found the space both to show and talk about his understandings (L24, 28, 30, 32, 39, 43-44, 46, 48, 50, 53 and 55):

Example 7.11 *(Videocode 02:17 – 03:35)*

23 Sarah: shall we start again and we'll take it in turns?

24 Jake: *(glance to Sarah, then to puzzle)* no

25 Sarah: no? *(folds arms on edge of table)*

26 Jake: *(tries to fit a piece)*

27 Sarah: won't it fit in there? *(sitting with arms folded, gaze at J's board)*

28 Jake: look *(shakes head briefly as piece does not fit)*

29 Sarah: no it doesn't does it? *(shaking head, gaze at J's board)*

30 Jake: it fit here *(slotting piece in place)* #dat one

31 Sarah: it does!

32 Jake: *(starts to tip out completed game)*

33 Sarah: are you gonna do it again *(picks up dice and shows it to Jake)* are

34   you gonna use the dice this time to see if you can find the right

35   shape?

36 Jake: *(tips out completed game, throws dice)*

37 Sarah: what have you got Jake? *(pointing to colour on dice)* do you know

38   what that's called?

39 Jake: *(finds corresponding piece and holds it up to Sarah)* I got #dis one

40 Sarah: that's right it's a triangle *(pointing to puzzle)*

41 Jake: *(tries piece in wrong hole)*

42 Sarah: *(folding arms)* can't you put it in there?

43 Jake: *(moves piece to a bigger hole)* not in dis can't fit ere cos it not

44   bigger *(shaking head and holding piece up to Sarah)*

45 Sarah: that's right *(gaze to Jake)*

46 Jake: not bigger yet

47 Sarah: are you gonna pop it in the right hole? *(pointing to 'right' hole)*

48 Jake: dis can *(puts another piece in puzzle)*

49   Sarah: that one can that's a diamond [are you gonna put your triangle in?

50   Jake: [yeh *(showing triangle piece to*

       Sarah) dis not dimond

51   Sarah: no *(shaking head)* that's a triangle d'you know what colour that

52   triangle is? *(looking at and pointing to piece, then gaze to Jake)*

53   Jake: boo *(gaze to piece)*

54   Sarah: no it's a <u>green</u> one *(pointing to piece)* that one's blue isn't it?

       (pointing to other piece)

55   Jake: *(throws dice)* oh I got dis one! *(finds piece and holds it up to Sarah)*

56   Sarah: that's a <u>rect</u>angle *(glance to Jake)*   (04.04.01 p2)

Similarly, Tallulah began to engage with Sarah when playing an elephant-linking game in a small quiet group. Other children came up to the table during the game, and one boy, Anthony, was present throughout the extract given in Example *7.12*, presented in multi-modal format (pages 289-291 below). The game involved arranging and linking 'families' of differently coloured and differently sized elephants and joining all the families in a long chain. Sarah had already explained only certain combinations of elephants could be linked, and at this point in the game, she was no longer drawing attention to the 'rules'.

During this extract, Sarah attempted to gain Tallulah's confidence with a long-term aim of encouraging Tallulah to be more responsive to adults when in playgroup (Tallulah Field Notes, 15.11.00, p1). Throughout this episode, Tallulah said very little, quietly uttering just one word (L18). However, reading down the 'gaze' and 'action' columns, it becomes apparent that Tallulah was responding actively to Sarah and to other events at the table (L13-15, 18-19, 25, 45, 48, 54-57, 60) and became engaged in a confident and intimate exchange with Sarah using mostly gaze and facial expression to respond to Sarah's questions and then to initiate a game of pulling faces (L 62, 65, 67, 69-70, 73-74, 77, 80-81). After a further 8 minutes. Tallulah began to hum a tune that Sarah recognised as a popular children's TV programme watched by both Tallulah and Sarah's daughter, which led to 4 minutes' unhurried

talk between Tallulah and Sarah about their lives at home, favourite 'Tweenie' characters and favourite colours.

As Tallulah's key worker, Sarah had been trying for months to gain her confidence, spending time with her, accepting Tallulah's gaze, facial expression and body movement as responses to her oral prompts, and, as noted in several examples of Sarah interacting with children, by allowing Tallulah to interpret activities in her own way, shifting some control from the adult to the child. Consequently, this episode resembled the observations of Tallulah with her mother at home. Although Tallulah talked much less than at home and relied heavily on silent multi-modal strategies to communicate with Sarah, Sarah's developing knowledge of Tallulah's interests enabled her to act as a prompt and prop to her talk. As often happened in playgroup, Sarah and Tallulah's 'chat' was interrupted by the announcement of Register time.

These examples have been selected from a pool of many similar incidents portraying recurrent features of the case study children's interactions during games. When seated at busy games tables with peers of a similar age, talk and action mostly involved learning game rules and turn taking, with encouragement and modeling from the adult to name shapes, colours, numbers, letters and/or sizes. When with older children at games, younger children tended to be quiet and observant, watching their older peers' frequently animated play and following their conversations through gaze direction. When in quiet adult/child dyadic interaction at games with an adult with whom they had developed a relationship, and who was able to fine-tune their support to the child, children spoke more than if they were with an adult who they knew less well and was less able to fine-tune. The children's level of engagement in the task and subsequent talk depended upon the adult style of interaction and the child's degree of control. When the adult ceded some control to the child, acting as a supportive consultant rather giving firm directives or asking primarily closed questions, both the child and adult seemed more likely to co-construct meaning with both participants verbalizing their meaning making.

Example 7.12

Setting: Games Table, Tallulah seated on Sarah's right, with Anthony standing, sometimes to Sarah's left, but walking around the table to get elephants. Aaron and Freddy approach.

Video code	Participant	Language/Vocalisation	Gaze	Action	
04:21	Aaron	look	elephants in his hands	fixing two elephants together	1 2
	Freddy	Aaron come quick	Aaron	standing by table, pulling Aaron's sleeve, pointing to boys playing in Home Corner	3 4
	Aaron	look look	elephants glance to Sarah	attaching elephants to line of elephants on table, pulling the line as he does so	5 6 7
	Sarah	don't break it up will you Aaron cos Tallulah and Anthony have made this big look at this big shape we've made all the way round the table Tallulah	Aaron elephants then Tallulah	pointing to elephants indicating circle of elephants with hand and arm pulls circle of elephants away from very edge of table, takes hands off table and puts them on own lap	8 9 10 11 12
	Tallulah		Sarah's hands, then averted gaze to Sarah		13 14 15
04:26	Sarah	Do you know what shape it is?	Tallulah	bends head forwards seeking eye contact with Tallulah	16 17
	Tallulah	*(quietly)* #thircle	from Sarah to elephants	shrugs shoulder slightly	18 19
04:31 04:36	Sarah	a circle good girl yeh it is a circle shall we see if we can make one to go inside this big one? shall we make a smaller one to go inside of it shall we?	Tallulah elephants glance to Anthony	smiles pointing to circle of elephants with wide circling motion of arm pointing to space inside large circle and indicating smaller circle with hand and arm	20 21 22 23 24
	Tallulah		elephants	nods and begins to fix more elephants together	25

	Anthony		elephants	nods briefly and reaches for elephants	26
04:41	Sarah	come on then	Tallulah, elephants	begins to fix elephants together	27
04:46	Shane	is the big one very (?)	elephants	approaches table	28
	Sarah	do you want to help us Shane?		pointing to ring of elephants	29
	Shane			nods, walks around table to space, reaches for elephants	30
					31
04:51	Sarah	we're gonna make another circle to go	Shane		32
		inside this one		points to space opposite her	33
		come and sit here look Shane		indicates where he can make circle	34
		and you can make another circle		fixes own elephants together	35
		oop it popped out			36
		does that one need to go there?	Shane's elephants		37
04:56 – 05:44		(interruption: Rosa showing Sarah item from another table. Shane and Anthony fix elephants together, glance to Rosa and item Rosa showing. Tallulah removes hands from table, resumes activity when Rosa leaving table. Shane leaves.)			38
					39
					40
					41
					42
					43
05:44	Sarah	how you getting on Tallulah?	Tallulah's elephants	leans towards Tallulah	44
	Tallulah		elephants	starts to join elephants Sarah gazing at	45
	Sarah	do you want to join those ones on … join the big one onto the small one?	Tallulah's elephants	hands below table, leans towards Tallulah slightly	46
					47
	Tallulah		elephants	starts to join elephants as instructed	48
	Sarah	well done	own elephants	starts to join elephants	49
05:51	Anthony	look a# mine	elephants on table	reaches for elephants in front of Sarah	50
	Sarah	ooh look how many Anthony's done	glance to Anthony's elephants, then gaze to Tallulah	points to Anthony's line of elephants	51
					52
					53
	Tallulah		gaze to Anthony's line of elephants, glance to Sarah, then elephants	stops connecting elephants	54
					55
					56
				starts connecting elephants	57
05:56	Sarah	shall we try and help?	glance from own to		58

290

					59
		put these two on	Tallulah's elephants	reaches for more elephants	
	Tallulah		elephants	leans towards Sarah slightly	60
	Sarah	there's some you could join on Tallulah	elephants	passes elephants to Tallulah	61
	Tallulah		elephants	takes elephants from Sarah	62
06:04	Sarah	d'you think we need to find some more out of the box Tallulah?	fixed gaze to Tallulah	reaching below table, smiles at Tallulah	63 64
	Tallulah		Sarah	shrugs shoulders	65
06:09	Sarah	we've run out haven't we nearly	Tallulah	pointing to circles on table	66
	Tallulah		table	shrugs slightly	67
	Sarah	shall I see if there's any more in the box?	Tallulah	reaching for box under table, smiles at Tallulah	68
06:14	Tallulah		averted gaze towards Sarah	nods, pulls sad face, raises eyebrows	69 70
	Sarah	*(laughs)* that's a funny thing to do with your eyes	Tallulah	leaning towards Tallulah, smiling	71 72
	Tallulah		averted gaze towards Sarah	repeats eyebrow movement, tries not to smile	73 74
06:19	Sarah	*(laughs)* what are you doing with your eyebrows? *(laughs)*	Tallulah		75 76
	Tallulah		Sarah	raises and lowers eyebrows, smiling	77
	Sarah		Tallulah	imitates Tallulah by raising and lowering her own eyebrows	78 79
06:24	Tallulah		Sarah table	smiles and laughs smiling, sticks out tongue and licks lips	80 81
	Sarah	there we are there's some more	averts gaze from Tallulah, gaze to Anthony	reaches for box and places more elephants on table	82

(Tallulah, 15.11.00, pp2-3)

Pollard (1993) makes the point that amongst the routines and structures of primary school, there are only limited opportunities for 'teaching' and 'learning'. This thesis has illustrated the extent to which routines also structured the playgroup studied, and how, although the Foundation Stage Curriculum states a more holistic, multi-sensory view of learning than the National Curriculum, staff felt pressured to prepare children for school entry and subsequent assessment, frequently manifested in the low ambiguity teaching of colours, letters, numbers and shapes. Frequently, such teaching incidents appeared to follow a transmission model of learning, with a focus on the 'recipient' listening to, remembering and independently reproducing specific vocabulary, such as 'circle', rather than exploring the physicality of circularity.

As Wertsch (1991, p71) discusses, metaphors about communication in English are heavily weighted in favour of this 'conduit' notion, where the function of the receiver is to extract meaning, and it is largely the responsibility of the sender to transmit meaning. Also encoded in this model of teaching are the power structures of teacher as 'knower' and child as passively dependent learner, which in turn structure children's developing identities as learners. Although the preschool practice of prioritizing and reinforcing certain vocabularies may serve as an introduction to schooled ways of learning where certain patterns of speaking have come to be viewed as more appropriate than others, such practice does not correspond to a sociocultural view of learning, where meaning is first constructed on an intermental plane, and then internalized on an intramental plane (Vygotsky, 1978).

From a Bakhtinian perspective, a major part of finding a voice and concomitant identity in the institutional context of school means learning the appropriate discourse techniques and skills expected of each particular setting. Most incidents of shared construction of knowledge were observed in talk in the children's homes, as discussed in Chapter 6, and in playgroup in adult/child dyads when the adult was sufficiently familiar with the child to act as a finetuned prompt and prop. Co-constructions of meaning were characterized by adults or peers finetuning not only their talk, but also their and actions to the child, responding sensitively to the

children's multimodal meaning making and recognizing the diversity of their voices, expressed sometimes in words, sometimes in facial expression and body movement or manipulation of objects.

7.3.2.2 Child participation at Games Tables

As can be seen from *Figures 7.1 –7.4*, the case study children spent comparatively little overall time at games: Zara 1%; Michael 2%; Tallulah 3% and Jake 5%. These relatively low percentages can be partly explained by the fact that most children left games once a game was completed, usually within a few minutes. However, both Tallulah and Jake consistently played games in a dyad or small group with an adult who they knew and who adopted a permissive, patient approach to their adaptations of games, allowing them to explore multimodally the concepts and issues raised by the games. These more intimate and relaxed sessions resembled the dyadic and triadic interactions observed in the children's homes, with the adult displaying some knowledge of the children's home backgrounds but often placing a stronger emphasis on 'educational' values such as naming colours and shapes. During all the observed sessions, Zara only played one game, shown in Example *7.8*, and her chief motivation for involvement in this game seemed to be the presence of her 'best friend' Helen. Michael became involved and stayed at just two games, both busy with older children playing, where he watched older players whilst waiting for his turn. Hence throughout all the observations, Zara and Michael had few opportunities to experience at Games the types of exchanges that Jake and Tallulah took part in as described above.

7.3.3 Free Choice Tables: child-led activities (adult sometimes present)

Activities in this category aimed to promote the development of fine motor skills and some to develop spatial awareness, for example, in 2 dimensions: using scissors for cutting out, pencils/pens for drawing or 'writing' and in 2 or 3 dimensions: completing jigsaws, making playdoh shapes, constructing Lego models.

293

These activities were all child-led, that is, adults were only occasionally present, and tended to follow the children's play rather than give instruction. This also applied to pen and pencil activities, as although literacy tasks with specific teaching aims led by staff were set for older children in a weekly 'Rising Fives' session, at the Free Choice drawing/writing table children often played alone or with adults following children's requests for assistance. All the activities had quite clearly delineated spaces for each child: the tables all had chairs around them, and the easels had 3 sides, each with paint, chalk and paper. Children were free to join and leave child-led activities during pre- and post-registration periods. However, on arrival at playgroup in Room 1, parents, including the parents of all four case study children, frequently directed their child to one of these tables, or to a games table, to encourage their child to settle.

7.3.3.1 Adult-child interaction at Free Choice Tables: child-led

As stated, adults sometimes joined the children at these child-led activities, tending to sit and chat and/or participate in the activity alongside the children, rather than direct them. The tables were sometimes busy, with both peer and adult/child interactions, sometimes quiet with dyadic peer or child/adult interaction or a child playing alone. Frequently, the children's talk at these activities was indistinct and/or incomplete, supplemented or supplanted by body movement, facial expression and gaze.

Example *7.13* shows Sarah and Tallulah working together after Tallulah had been in playgroup several months. Unlike in Example *7.12* above, they were at a busy Playdoh table, where several children had been coming and going during the 24 minutes that Tallulah had already spent there. During this time, Tallulah had initially been quiet, watching others rather than playing with the doh herself. Encouraged by Sarah, who also attended to other children at this and neighbouring tables, she became involved in active play and responded mostly with nods and gaze to Sarah's questions and prompts. Zara and Helen were playing in a dyad and Zac was engrossed in his model making. The other children's absorption in their tasks permitted Sarah and Tallulah to interact in an uninterrupted dyad for several minutes.

More than half of Tallulah's responses to Sarah were expressed in body movement and gaze: agreeing by nodding (L19, 21); carrying out Sarah's suggestion (L25, 30, 33, 53, 59); checking information (L28). As in Example *7.12*, through their shared engagement in the task, Tallulah eventually began to talk to Sarah: making suggestions (L17, 64), introducing new elements to the conversation (L40, 42-43, 45-46) and responding verbally to questions (L38, 40, 42-3, 45-6, 48, 50, 64). Tallulah and Sarah's mutual trust and understanding had built up over months, and by now Sarah confidently interpreted the meanings of Tallulah's gaze and facial expression and was able to prompt Tallulah's talk through detailed knowledge of her immediate and extended family (L37, 39, 44, 47, 49), leading to dyadic exchanges that resembled Tallulah's interactions at home and provided a supportive platform for Tallulah to express herself through talk:

Example 7.13 *(Videocode = 22:58 – 24:46)*

(Sarah and Tallulah have been sorting through the shape box, selecting cut-out shapes, return to sit at table)

16   Sarah: right then let's see what we can make *(sharing out doh)*

17   Tallu: wa# bout #a t#wain? *(glance to Sarah)*

18   Sarah: d'you wanna make a train?

19   Tallu: *(nods)*

20   Sarah: does Gary like trains?

21   Tallu: *(nods)*

22   Sarah: I think we need to roll it a bit thinner first Tallulah with the rolling

23   pin *(passes rolling pin to Tallulah, then folds arms on edge of*

24   *table)*

25   Tallu: *(takes rolling pin and starts to roll doh)*

26   Sarah: ah there's the cat *(nods towards far end of table)* Hannah's got the

27   cat up there

28   Tallu: *(follows Sarah's gaze, rolling doh)*

29   Sarah: you've got to press down <u>really</u> hard Tallulah

30   Tallu: *(presses harder as rolls doh)*

31   Sarah: or shall we break it in half so it's a bit thinner//a bit smaller?

32   *(pointing to Tallulah's doh, gaze to doh)*

33   Tallu: *(stops rolling and starts to pull doh from edge of shape)*

34   Sarah: is it gonna be a train when you pull all that playdoh away?

35   Tallu: *(concentrating on pulling doh from shape)*

36   Sarah: ooh it's a bit like Thomas *(gaze from shape to Tallulah)* your

37   cousin Aaron likes trains doesn' he?

38   Tallu: *(still extracting train model from shape)* yeh he …

39   Sarah: *(glance to Tallulah)* he's got lots of trains

40   Tallu: yeh it *(pulling shape from playdoh)* (?) ikes t#wains

41   Sarah: pardon?

42   Tallu: *(glance to Sarah)* Gary likes t#wains *(gaze to Sarah)* Gary likes

43   lots of trains *(gaze to train shape, as finalises shape)* Thomases

44   Sarah: he does doesn' he?

45   Tallu: *(gaze to doh as shapes it)* yeh he likes t#wains as well Gary likes

46   t#wains an balls

47   Sarah: *(gaze to Tallulah's doh)* does he like <u>balls</u> as well?

48   Tallulah:*(emphatic, still shaping doh)* yep

49   Sarah: do you play ball with Gary?

50   Tallu: #sometimes

51   Sarah: sometimes *(points to model Tallulah trying to extract)* push it out

52   from this side Tallulah

53   Tallu: *(pushes doh as shown)*

54   Sarah: that's it *(watching Tallulah's hands struggling to get shape out of

55   mould)* d'you want me to get it out for you?

56   Tallu: *(pushes train from mould)*

57   Sarah: there it is there's your train *(takes small container from table and

58   offers to Tallulah)* shall we put it in here?

59   Tallu: *(Tallulah puts shape in container)*

60   Sarah: shall we put your train in there? shall I see if I can make a shape

61   for you?

62   Tallu: *(Tallulah arranging train in container)*

63   Sarah: what shall I make Tallulah? *(waits for Tallulah to respond)*

64   Tallu: *(reaches to shapes, selects shape, passes to Sarah)* a but a
          butterfly

65   Sarah: I'll need a bigger piece of playdoh won't I? *(takes more doh)*

66   Tallu: *(rolls up sleeves, watching Sarah, selects another shape and takes*

67   *more doh)*   (Tallulah, 27.04.01, p8)

Activities in this category permitted children more control over interpretation of tasks
than Crafts or Games. Example *7.14* shows Michael at the puzzle table, struggling to
piece together a complex jigsaw, which only a few older children were able to
complete unaided. When Sarah joined him, he declined her offer of help (L22).
However, as with Jake in Example *7.11*, when Sarah acknowledged his authority
through words and body movement (L23-24), his right to complete the puzzle on his
own was established. This changed the balance of power between the two, and, now
in control, Michael began to use Sarah's knowledge selectively to help him complete
the task (L25). Sarah continued to allow Michael time to make mistakes and to
explore different shapes before intervening with suggestions (L31), and pointing out
new factors that might help him identify where to place pieces, for example by
referring to colour (L32).

Example 7.14 *(Videocode 16:00 – 16:16)*

20   Sarah: alright Michael? *(approaching table)* would you like some help?

21   *(sits down opposite Mich, gaze to M)* would you like some help?

22   Mich: no *(doesn't look up, busy trying to put piece in)*

23   Sarah: *(folding arms, gaze to Michael)* right are you going to do it on

24   your own?

25   Mich: yeh *(gaze to puzzle, holds up piece)* where #dis go?

26   Sarah: *(turning puzzle board round so it is the right way up for Michael)*

27   put it round that way so it's the right *(pointing to piece in puzzle)*

28   that one's right in there

29   Mich: *(putting piece in puzzle, gaze to puzzle, selects another piece,*

30   *stares at puzzle)*

31   Sarah: *(watches, then points to puzzle)* now that piece might go round

32   here look Michael that red piece

33   Mich: *(putting piece in puzzle, gaze to puzzle)*   (Michael, 30.03.01, p10)

Not only Sarah, but all adults appeared to allow children at Free Choice tables more freedom than at other table-top activities. Overall, Michael spent 15% of his time[5] at activities in this category, reflecting both his frequent visits to these tables and, particularly when supported by a sensitive adult, extended, focused attention on tasks[6]. In *7.14* he spent 21 minutes completing a complicated puzzle, increasingly following Sarah's verbal prompts and pointing suggestions. This demanded high levels of concentration, patience, attentive listening and observation skills and no small amount of manual dexterity. Sarah skillfully used speculation and hypothesis to guide Michael's choices of puzzle pieces, leaving the final decisions to him. Michael's interest was so intense he and Sarah remained at the table whilst other children were called for registration. Sarah had intended to ask Michael to show the completed puzzle to the playgroup leader, as she felt this additional praise for his efforts was well deserved (Field Note 30.03.01). However, before she had the chance, Michael tipped the puzzle over, broke apart the pieces and tidied them away in the box, dismantling the product of his concentrated work.

A striking characteristic of the children's interaction with adults at child-led activities was how meanings were expressed and interpreted by children and adults through gaze, facial expression and body movement, supplemented by speech for specific purposes. Example *7.15* is a lengthy extract from the Lego table, where Michael played for 23 minutes with a work experience student, George, a sixteen year old with no early years training who had been asked by the playgroup leader to 'help and talk to the children about what they are doing' (Field Notes, 23.04.01), seemingly

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[5] See *Figure 7.2*, Chapter 7, Section 7.2.
[6] See Appendix 7.2 for details of how Michael spent time at these activities

portraying Vygotskian notions of learning through talk. George had joined Michael at the table and was playing alongside him, without talking to him, much as two children might do. Before this extract, Michael had made some small Lego models and placed them on the table, but after finding a Lego brochure in the box of bricks, he had begun to study and to follow an illustrated model of a house and garden. George had been engrossed in making models on his own. The extract begins when Michael first indirectly asked George for help (L18). Throughout this exchange, Michael identified the Lego pieces he needed by looking at the illustration, then asked George, who willingly complied, to find those specific pieces from a large box of assorted Lego bricks (p1: L24, 25, 27, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; p2: L9, 32). Michael also asked George to complete more delicate assembly operations (p1: L20; p2 L22, 23, 25), offered George verbal encouragement throughout these operations (p1: L22), and incorporated some of George's work in his model (p2: L13-19). These acts displayed, in few yet considerate words and through actions and facial expression, an emotional and social maturity, that was repeated in his confident manner towards Bertie, an older child who often asserted authority over Michael (p2: L1 – 8):

Example 7.15 (Videocode 00:36 – 06:05) **Video clip**

p1

18   Mich: *(glance to George)* it doesn't fit

19   George:*(gaze from bricks in box to Michael's model)* let's see

20   Mich: can you try (?)

21   George:*(helps to fit piece on, Michael watching closely)*

22   Mich: *(reaching for model)* #that's righ#t *(takes model, 10 seconds play*

23   *with model, making engine noise, gaze to George, who has*

24   *been watching Michael, smiling)* isere *(shows George model*

25   isere nov' one?

26   George: I'll see *(looks in box for piece)*

27   Mich: *(watching as George looks in box)* I need (?) *(leaning forwards to*

28   *look in box)* I nee' two *(glance to George)* two of #dem *(watches*

29   *George looking in box, plays with pieces in his hand, then both*

30   *look for piece, first in box, then on floor. After 30 seconds, Mich*

31   *reaches for brochure and shows it to George)* oh #dere *(points to*

32   *picture)* #dus' #dere (?) *(points)* #de doggy (?)

33 George: a dog? *(looks in box, finds dog, passes to Mich)*

34 Mich: *(fixes dog in 'kitchen')* dere's a pu#ssy an' a dog

35 George: *(starts to sort through pieces in box)*

36 Mich: *(closely watching pieces as George moves them around in box,*

37   *sees something and reaches into box)* #look! der'e a pu' cat dere's

38   a (?) look *(takes out piece and fits it to puzzle)*

39 Mich: an anover one

40 George: another one? *(looks in box)*

41 Mich: *(looks in box)* hey dere's a little dog *(takes piece, both G and M*

42   *continue looking for pieces)* a white one *(takes piece out and tries*

43   *to fix it to piece in his hand, George watches, Mich gives up)* now

44   *(George and Michael look in box, coughs)* #some more (?)

45 George: 'ang on *(looks in box)*

p2

1   Mich: *(watches George, then Bertie, who joins table and studies Lego*

2   *brochure)*

3   Bertie: *(glance to Michael)* (?)

4   Mich: *(glances at Bertie, stands to look at illustration with Bertie)*

5   Bertie: *(pointing to illustration)* that one

6   Mich: *(takes brochure from Bertie, looks at illustration he had pointed to,*

7   *sits down while looking at it, turns brochure to illo he had been*

8   *following. Bertie talks to Rosie about video, leaves. M shows illo to*

9   *George, pointing)* door

10 George: *(carefully studies where Mich pointing, looks for piece in box,*

11   *finds piece, shows Michael piece, holds it up to brochure, gives*

12   *piece to Michael, returns to sorting and joining pieces in box)*

13 Michael:*(studies brochure, then puts piece on his model, takes joined*

14   *pieces from box, gaze to George)* did you done #that?

15   George:*(stops sorting, glance to pieces, gaze to Michael)* I did

16   Mich: *(glance to George)* wha?

17   George: I did yeh

18   Mich: *(putting model on table)* oh #dis can go *(clears a space)* #dere

19   *(glance to George)* won't it? is #that a house?

20   George: yeh *(leans over)* um why don' we do it *(points to where pieces*

21   *could go on model)*

22   Mich: can we (?) *(points)* o#ver one door *(points)* #dere *(glance to*

23   *George)* #could you pu' #dat #dere?

24   George:yeh *(tries piece)* like that?

25   Mich: #put it *(points)* #dus' here?

26   George: yeh *(places piece)*

27   Mich: *(picks up brochure and studies it)* (?) our (?) house need a #w/roof

28   er *(studies illo)* no (?) an #de flowers *(looks in box)* here you go

29   *(selects piece)* (?) put flowers in #nere *(tries piece in model)*

30   in #de garden

31   George: yeh

32   Mich: got (?) put flowers in #de garden *(searches in box)* an butterflies

33   *(searches)* butterflies in #de garden   (Michael, 23.04.01, pp1-2)

Throughout this episode, George acted as Michael's equal in status. Unlike Michael's encounters with other children, he fully cooperated with Michael's requests, and unlike staff, he gave Michael his close attention without directing him, other perhaps than L45 and making a suggestion (p2:L20). Although he did not know Michael, his focused, unhurried attention allowed Michael to construct and direct construction of a highly complex model of a house with garden, flowers, animals, a drive and a car- resembling the Lego illustration, but with improvements, mostly suggested by Michael, including 'butterflies in the garden' (p2:L33). The component parts of the model reflected Michael's interpretations of houses from home, playgroup and the Lego booklet: the life cycles of butterflies had been a recent curriculum focus; the model had a wall in the back garden, a cat in the kitchen and white dog like his

neighbour; the size of house and drive resembled the Lego illustration. The activity was interrupted after 23 minutes by Holly calling out 'tidy up time', whereupon Michael immediately pulled the model apart and put all the pieces in the box. Only Michael, George and myself ever saw the model.

Examples *7.14* and *7.15* draw attention to the transitory nature of many of the children's, and particularly the boys', constructive and creative efforts in playgroup, particularly at Free Choice Tables. For reasons of practicality and limited resources, children's puzzles were taken apart, their doh models squashed and their often highly complex construction models broken to pieces and put back in their boxes. Yet the creation of these models and puzzles was frequently the result of extended periods of concentrated interaction between adults and children or between peers involving multi-modally negotiated joint constructions of meaning and containing a wealth of insights into the children's understandings of the worlds around them. Staff occasionally noted children's construction achievements in child portfolios, and twice during data collection, took photographs of joint constructions made by several children, but the vast majority were tidied up, destined by their nature to be 'ephemeral' (Pahl, 2002). In construction, where toys had to remain in playgroup for future use, as opposed to crafts made of recycled 'rubbish' that were taken home, the final product wielded far less authority.

These examples illustrate how, in a busy playgroup, with the complex dynamics of movement of many children engaged in many activities, it is all too easy for individual children's achievements to be overlooked, particularly if no evidence is left of their existence. In the case of Michael, during interview the staff reported that he spent very little time at puzzles and rarely had models to take home (Chapter 6, Section 6.3). June also identified that staff tended to monitor 3 year olds less closely than 4-year-olds as the latter children's documents were more likely to be inspected (Chapter 5, Section 5.6.3). During consultation (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3.1), staff were surprised by Michaels' extended periods of model-making, and planned to build

on these areas during his second year. They also reconsidered their monitoring systems to ensure closer records of all children's work at these activities.

7.3.3.2 Peer interaction at Free Choice Tables: child-led

Many children played on their own at these activities, often engrossed in tasks. On other occasions, if several children were around a table, they might play together. Jake sometimes played with Nick and Zara with Helen at these tables, whilst Tallulah and Michael tended to play with adults or by themselves. All the case study children interacted multimodally with their peers, even if minimally, through words, gaze, facial expression and body language. However, by playing with their friends, Jake and Zara both became involved in interaction with other children, often the same gender, through their friends' acquaintances. This increased tendency to interact with others appeared to continue even if their 'friends' were not present. For example, Zara's friend Helen sometimes played with an older girl, Faith, who Zara came to know at playgroup through Helen, as illustrated in Example *7.16* , and Jake sometimes became peripherally involved in older boys' play through his friendship with Nick, as in Example *7.17*. These examples are selected from many similar incidents that revealed gender-related patterns of interaction, as discussed below.

In Example *7.16*, Faith (4y3m) joined the playdoh table where Zara (3y3m) had been modeling doh on her own. Faith watched Zara working and enquired what she was making (L1 +2). This served as an overture for the two to play together. Faith, having difficulty cutting her doh, shared her problem with Zara (L3), but Zara responded with enthusiasm about her own creation (L4), making Faith laugh (L5). Zara then consulted Faith about her plan to put her 'cake' in the oven (L6), thereby inviting Faith to join her, and Faith, perhaps partly intrigued by where the 'oven' was, followed Zara (L6-8). Next to the Playdoh Table stood the Nature Table, where Zara often used an empty box as an oven for playdoh baking. However, on this occasion there was a tank of freshly hatched tadpoles where the box had stood. Fascinated, Zara watched the tadpoles and noting her interest, Faith informed her what they were (L10), to which Zara responded by treating Faith as a 'knower' (L11). Using a

303

diagram on the wall to support her instruction, Faith gave an accurate account of the life cycle of a frog, to which Zara responded by vocalising her interest (L16), at first using non-conventional use of 'watch' which Faith did not understand (L17), and self-correcting to a more standard use supplemented by pointing gestures, giving more detail of her particular interest (L18-19), with which Faith agreed (L20). Zara then proceeded to use the tank as an oven, despite Faith's advice to the contrary (L22), but within moments followed Faith back to the Playdoh table where they spent some minutes making cakes together, laughing at their creations and baking them in Zara's non-conventional oven.

Example 7.16 *(Videocode = 00:00 - 01:09)* **Video clip**

1	Faith:	what's #dat?
2	Zara:	*(showing Faith doh cake she has made)* it's a bir#fday cake
3	Faith:	*(trying to cut doh with knife)* sometimes it doe#sn't (cut?) does it?
4	Zara:	*(excited intake of breath)* it's a birthday cake!
5	Faith:	*(excited giggle)* uh huh
6	Zara:	#shall I put it in #de oven? *(moves to adjoining nature table,*
7		*indicates a box under the nature table, which she sometimes uses*
8		*as a pretend oven. Faith, seeming intrigued, follows her. Zara*
9		*begins to look at tadpoles in tank on nature table)*
10	Faith:	#they're tadpoles
11	Zara:	what do #they do?
12	Faith:	we#ll #first of all #they grow into #dat *(points to diagram of*
13		*growth cycle next to tank)* and #den #dat *(points to diagram)* an
14		#den #dat *(points to diagram)* and #den #dat and #then into frogs
15		big f#wogs like #dat *(points to diagram)*
16	Zara:	I'm #dust watching at #dem
17	Faith:	pardon?
18	Zara:	I'm #dust looking at #dat *(points to tadpole)* an down #de bottom
19		an up it *(follows tadpole with finger)*
20	Faith:	they're doing that

21   Zara: *(puts 'cake' on top of tadpole tank)*

22   Faith: ooh no no it'll fall down #dat side *(indicating how tank lid opens)*

23   Zara: *(giggles and smiles at Faith, keeps holding cake on top of tank)*

24   Faith: *(returns to doh table)*

25   Zara: *(turns 'cake' on top of tank, as though on a griddle, removes cake*

26   *and returns to doh table)*   (Zara, 20.03.01, p2)

By talking to an older child, Zara was encouraged to correct her vocabulary to maintain the conversation (L16 and L18). There are very few examples of this kind of self-correction in the data gathered on the case study children, but almost all examples occurred while a younger child was interacting with an older child. When interacting with adults, the adults tended to guess what the child was trying to say, and uttered a 'correct' version, which the child then occasionally repeated.

Example *7.16* is one of many observations of girls interacting cooperatively. Here, two girls, who were not particular friends and had a considerable age difference shared their different strengths to exchange information and enrich their play. Their joint play was enhanced by Faith's knowledge and by Zara's inventiveness. Similar episodes were also observed between older girls and younger boys, although these were less frequent.

This female cooperation contrasted with many examples of boys' interactions, as illustrated in *7.17* below. Here, Jake (3y1m) was playing with doh, occasionally showing his shapes to Faith (4y5m), who was cutting out shapes beside him (L45-48). A work experience student, Jackie, was seated at the far end of the table, engrossed in making doh shapes. This tranquil scene was interrupted by the arrival of Arnie (3y3m), who angrily claimed that Jake was playing with 'his' doh (L51-52), rephrasing his assertion when Jake ignored him (L53-54), and eventually taking some of Jake's doh when Jake continued to ignore him (L55-56). Nick arrived, announced his need for doh (L59), and sat in Faith's seat (L60). Faith acknowledged this by turning her gaze to him and smiling (L61). Rather than standing to reach the doh, and

thereby risk losing possession of the chair, Nick shouted for dough (L62), attracting Jackie's attention, who responded verbally, but did not pass him any doh (L63), so Nick helped himself (L64), standing up just enough to reach the doh. Faith remarked she no longer had a chair (L66), and quietly fetched one from a neighboring table (L66-68). Arnie, although temporarily satisfied by his acquisition of doh, drew my attention to the fact that I was 'trespassing' by standing in the area he had previously been playing builders (L69). Meanwhile, Jake had been playing and humming contentedly and Nick had been watching him. Eventually, Nick began to copy what Jake was doing (L73). Stan (4y0m), who Nick had been playing builders with, attempted to show a plan to Nick. Nick studiously ignored him, and Jake intervened (L80). Nick eventually responded to Stan's persistence by glancing at his plan (L75-86), then continued to keep a close eye on and to copy Jake's actions (L88-94), but refused to let Jake share 'his' mould, by holding it beyond Jake's reach (L90). Eventually Nick relaxed from his defensive/aggressive stance and called to Jake to look at what he had made (L95), confirming his wish to play with Jake by a smile and extended gaze (L94). After this, the boys continued to play together for several minutes, making doh 'hair', cutting it and laughing.

Example 7.17 *(Videocode: 10:18 – 14:34)*
(Jake joins doh table and sits down. Faith, standing next to a chair, and work experience student, sitting opposite Jake, also at table making doh shapes. Student not interacting with children.)

45	Jake:	*(collecting pieces of doh from table and rolling them into long*
46		*'sausage')* a big *(pats doh)* big *(pats doh)* lum#p *(rolls doh)* de bi
47		*(rolls doh)* big <u>lump</u> go long here *(arranges doh on table)* a big big
48		lump loo#k!
49	Faith:	*(looks at Jake's doh, laughs)*
50	Jake:	*(laughs)*
51	Arnie:	*(comes to doh table from building site, to Jake, angrily)* #dat was
52		my paydoh
53	Jake:	*(ignores Arnie, patting doh)*

54 Arnie: *(leaning over table towards Jake)* I had #dat paydoh

55 Jake: *(ignores Arnie, patting doh)*

56 Arnie: *(reaches across table, takes one of large lump of Jake's doh)*

57 Jake: *(ignoring Arnie, making noises as plays, pats doh, to self)* here you

58   go *(kneads doh, making sounds as plays)*

59 Nick: *(approaches table next to Jake)* I want #some paydoh *(sits in*

60   *Faith's seat)*

61 Faith: *(smiles at Nick, moves a little further along)*

62 Nick: *(shouts)* I wan some playdoh

63 Student:*(to Nick)* yeh you can have some yeh

64 Nick: *(stands, reaches doh from table, sits)*

65 Jake: *(makes noises and hums as plays with doh)*

66 Faith: *(quietly)* I haven't got a chair *(continues playing, standing as*

67   *before, looks around room, walks across to game table, takes a*

68   *chair, drags it across to doh table next to Jake and sits down)*

69 Arnie: *(notices me behind him)* you're standing in my building

70 Rosie: *(moving)* oh sorry Arnie d'you want me to get out?

71 Arnie: *(nods, then smiles)*

72 Jake: *(still humming as plays)*

73 Nick: *(glances at Jake's doh, reaches for doh mould and copies Jake)*

74   Jake: *(makes sounds as plays)*

75 Stan: *(approaches table, taps Nick on shoulder to show him paper he*

76   *has been drawing on)* Nick

77 Nick: *(ignores Stan)*

78 Jake: *(looks at Stan)*

79 Stan: *(returns Jake's gaze)* Nick

80 Jake: I'm not Nick

81 Stan: *(tapping Nick on shoulder)* Nick

82 Nick: *(glances sideways at Stan's paper while playing with doh, then*

83   *back to doh, does not look at Stan)*

84 Stan: Nick *(taps Nick on shoulder)*

85   Nick: *(plays with doh, ignores Stan)*

86   Stan: *(walks off with paper)*

87   Jake: *(pushes doh inside deep mould)*

88   Nick: *(watches Jake, grabs mould Jake had been using and copies Jake's*
89   *actions)*

90   Jake: *(reaches for his mould that Nick is now using)*

91   Nick: *(holds mould out of Jake's reach)*

92   Jake: *(plays with doh, glances at and smiles at Nick)*

93   Nick: *(glances at Jake, copies Jake's actions, then begins to push doh*
94   *through mould to make doh 'hair', then smiling gaze to Jake)*
95   Jake look my hair!

96   Jake: *(fixed gaze to Nick's doh as 'hair' becomes longer, smiling)*

97   Nick: shall I chop it off? *(taking knife from table)*

98   Jake: yehhh *(fixed gaze to Nick's doh)*

99   Nick: *(cuts dough)*

100 Jake: *(laughing, pulls off rest of Nick's doh 'hair')*

101 Nick: *(laughs)* shall I make #some more?

102 Jake: yeh *(laughs)*

(Nick continues to make 'hair' and cut 'hair' with knife, both Nick and Jake laughing, play interrupted when boys are distracted by Sarah calling out to stop rough play on 'building site', Jake moves to Home Corner) (Jake, 09.05.01, pp2-3)

Examples *7.16* and *7.17* both illustrate children becoming involved in shared activities in same sex pairs. However, the paths chosen in the processes of negotiation from solitary to shared activity were markedly different. Through their gaze, facial expression, body language and words, the two girls in *7.16* repeatedly made openings for each other to enter into a shared activity, and within moments had begun to cooperate in a manner where each could learn from the other, with Faith using her knowledge to capture Zara's interest, and Zara using her imagination to capture Faith's interest.

By contrast, the boys in Example *7.17* made a point of initially staking a claim on something at the table: Jake had been collecting all the doh on the table and declined to share it with Arnie; Nick took possession of Faith's chair, and his fear of losing this territory hampered his quest for doh; Nick excluded Stan from the table by purposefully ignoring his repeated requests and prods and refused to let Jake share his cutter. Boys and girls at the table tolerated Nick's competitive and Arnie's territorial behaviour, as did the attending work experience student. Jake simply waited, entertained by his private doh play, quietly retaining most of the doh, until eventually, after almost 4 minutes, they began to play together.

Examples *7.16* and *7.17* have been selected for close scrutiny partly because they form a neat contrast, but also because they are representative of many examples of predominantly male peer groups disputing rights to access and control of activities, and predominantly female peer groups being more cooperative and conciliatory, even when not in friendship pairs. Yet these were not uniquely gendered characteristics. Girls also asserted their rights to access to activities, eg who had how much doh, refusing to share their doh with others, refusing to move to make room for and ignoring others (as in Example *7.1*). Boys also played cooperatively and considerately. However, the data from this study suggests that cooperation between children occurred primarily when: boys played with shared goals in already established male friendship pairs; girls initiated conciliatory actions in girl/boy pairs; girls played in friendship pairs or between older and younger girls, when the older girl accurately interpreted the younger girl's meanings. This is in line with milk time observations that overall, boys engaged in more peer disputes than girls (Chapter 6, Section 6.6.6).

7.3.3.3 Child participation at Free Choice Tables: child-led

There was great variation in the amount of time children spent at these activities: Jake 4%; Zara 11%; Michael 15% and Tallulah 25% of their total time. The high percentage for Tallulah reflects the fact that she tended to stay for a long time at activities once she, or her mother when she arrived, had selected them, with the

309

shortest time in this category of 5 minutes, and the longest 36 minutes[7]. Most of her time was spent in solitary play, but sometimes she played alongside other children, communicating mostly through gaze, facial expression and body movement, and sometimes in an adult/child dyad, particularly with her key worker Sarah. For Tallulah, these tables not only offered interesting activities that resembled what she did at home, but also offered occasion either to remain in unobtrusive, silent, solitary play or to interact with her peers through gaze, facial expression and body language, thus reducing the number of risks attached to social interaction whilst remaining acceptable within the communicative practices of these activity types. Furthermore, these tables sometimes offered adult dyadic support of a kind that was similar to home, and it was during these, when the adult was able to prompt and prop her tentative verbal responses that she spoke most extensively.

Michael spent several extended periods at Free Choice Tables when engrossed in a task, particularly when an adult offered finetuned, advisory support that helped him achieve his goal. However, little evidence remained of his intricate constructions, as they were all dismantled. Jake only used these activities 4 times over all the observations, twice for 2 minutes, once for 11 minutes with peers (Example *7.17*) and once for 9 minutes with some adult support to make a model. Zara tended to stay at these tables for short periods, often to join her friend Helen, who Zara frequently attempted to entice away from the activity to join her in role or fantasy play. Her longest stays (9, 16 and 31 minutes) were at the Playdoh table, on each occasion playing with peers, and gradually converting the joint play into role or fantasy play.

7.3.4 Free Choice Open Spaces: child-led with distant adult supervision

These activities were usually available to the children at any stage of each session, apart from during Whole Group Organised activities, and were planned either to promote fine or gross motor development and/or to provide a platform for fantasy play eg Climbing Cubes (climbing up and down, sliding, jumping), Home Corner

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[7] See Appendices 7.1-7.4 for breakdown of time case study children spent at different activities

(manipulating larger objects eg child-size household equipment), Dressing Up (undoing/doing up buttons and zips, putting on/taking off shoes, balancing large hats precariously on heads), 'Small World' Mat (eg Brio trains, cars, doll's house).

Some Open Space activities occupied clearly defined physical spaces in the two playgroup rooms. For example, the Home Corner was enclosed within wooden 'walls', which had been made by parents and staff to look like a cottage with windows cut through the sides. However, within these walls, individual spaces were not delineated and younger children were observed to hesitate before crossing the boundaries of Open Spaces activities to claim a space 'inside'.

Open Spaces were essentially adult-free zones, watched over with half an eye and half an ear rather than closely monitored, although adults occasionally assisted children when requested to do so. These were sites for solitary, pair or small group fantasy play, which was frequently very active and involved multimodal negotiation between peers, resulting in some cooperative interaction and some disputes.

7.3.4.1 Peer interaction in Open Spaces

Silent Exploration of Open Spaces: During their early months in playgroup all the case study children were observed approaching Open Space activities, watching other children's play for a few moments and then turning away and opting for an alternative activity. They all explored Open Space areas when no one else was playing there, walking around the site, examining items, opening doors to see what was inside etc. One of many of these silent explorations was recorded in the following Field Note:

> *Michael wanders over to the shop (Creative Space). There's no one there, looks around shop, runs fingers along keyboard and shop till, peeks in drawer, studies posters on wall behind shop, leaves shop, shrugs, moves over to Puzzle Table.*
>
> (*Michael Field Notes, 30.03.01*)

Solitary Fantasy Play in Open Spaces: Although in playgroup gender roles sometimes appeared flexible, for instance, it was not unusual to see a boy wearing a girl's party dress or a girl being a mechanic, throughout the period of observation the case study children adhered mostly to same-gender stereotypes in their Fantasy Play. However, when playing on their own, both Jake and Michael were observed silently preparing meals, ironing in the Home Corner and playing with a miniature family in the Dolls House. When joined by other boys, their quiet play switched to a dispute, leading to them to abandon their more 'domesticated' play. For example, Michael frequently spent time in the 'Small World' area, playing with the doll's house. The Field Notes below describe how Michael's quiet solitary play (aged 3y4m) disintegrated when he was joined by Ian (4y1m):

> Michael wandered to Doll's House and began to put dolls to bed. Ian approached, played alongside for a few seconds then tried to take doll from Michael. Michael held the doll away from Ian's reach. Ian turned back to doll's house. Michael took bed and began to place doll in bed, Ian put his hand over the bed, claiming it for himself. Anna (Ian's friend) approached, took Ian's hand and led him to the carpet for registration. Michael quickly put the doll in bed, carefully tucked it in and placed it in the bedroom before going through for registration.
>
> <div align="right">(Michael Field Notes, 26.02.01)</div>

Fantasy play and friendship pairs in Open Spaces: Throughout the period of data collection, few observations were made of Michael playing for extended periods with other children in Open Spaces. Occasionally other children joined him but either left or did not really engage in the activity with him, despite his attempts to include them in his play. For example, in **7.18** Michael (3y6m) had been setting up a Brio train track on his own and was welcoming towards Terry (4y7m), inviting him verbally in four different ways, directing his gaze to Terry and showing him what he was doing (L18). Although a very competent talker, Terry responded silently by imitating Michael's movements (L19), selecting a train and beginning to play with it on the track Michael was laying (L20-43), responding to Michael's questions with

movements that indicated a desire to play with the track Michael was laying rather than with Michael (L21,23,25,29). Michael again attempted to engage Terry in talk, but Terry could not make out what Michael was saying, and returned his attention to the train (L28-35). Eventually, Terry suggested Michael pass him some more pieces of train, but this time Michael declined (L37-42) and they both returned to their separate play. Shortly afterwards, Terry left. This incident illustrates how for Michael, the lack of a particular friend with whom he could share meanings limited his opportunities for joint fantasy or role play and for the joint construction of meanings with his peers. As observed at milk time (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.7), although Michael remained open and inviting towards others in the group, his overtures at social interaction were largely rebuffed.

Example 7.18

Video code	Participant	Language	Action	
29:45	Terry		goes over to Michael on mat	17
	Michael	make a train track wiv me? yeh? ah d'you wanna make a train track? I'm making a train track want make one?	to Terry looks for pieces in box finds piece holding up piece, to Terry standing up, walking to Terry	18
	Terry		searches through box of track pieces, finds engine, plays with engine on track	19
	Michael		builds section of track	20
	Terry	(engine noises)	pushes engine along track	21
30:25- 30:46	Michael		stands, walks over to and watches Terry playing selects track from box	22
	Terry	(engine noises)	drives engine on newly laid track	23

	Michael	look #dat	points to track	24
		want #dat	gaze to Terry, continues to build track	
	Terry	(engine noises)	continues to drive engine	25
31:20	Michael		fits new piece of track to other end of track	26
	Terry		drives engine towards Michael	27
	Michael	why you doin' it where you are … for?		28
	Terry		drives train to other end of track	29
31:22	Michael	wha#t 'e say 'oi' for?	fetching another piece, gaze to track piece	30
	Terry	wha?	gaze to engine as plays	31
31:27	Michael	why #dat (?) say 'oi' #like dat?	fits track piece	32
	Terry	(?)		33
31:42	Michael	wha? …wha? … wha? … what Terry?	as fetches another track piece	34
	Terry	(engine noises)	plays with trains on incomplete track	35
32:00	Michael		makes more track, , picks up one of Terry's train carriages, looks at it, throws it down again, sits next to box of track pieces	36
	Terry	right now it's going put it onto #dis one	pushes train on track	37
32:10	Michael	(?) ooh sorry I got one	looks in box gets carriage out of box	38
	Terry	(laughs) put it onto #dis one		39
	Michael	wha?	holding carriage	40
32:25	Terry	look where #dis goes! put it onto #dis one!	'chuggiing' train around track	41
	Michael		shakes head, turns back to box,	42

			sorts through box	
	Terry		continues playing with train on track	43
32:30	Michael		continues building track	44

(Michael, 23.04.01, p7)

By contrast, Zara and her friend Helen often created elaborate games together, frequently involving dolls, setting up homes in the Home and Book Corners, inside the Climbing Cubes and going on pretend outings in the Cube Car. As in Zara's home (Chapter 6, Section 6.5.5), the girls negotiated their play multimodally through movements and cooperative talk, as in Example *7.19*, taken from audio recordings and Field Notes of the two girls playing inside the Climbing Cubes, out of sight. Although they had different ideas about where to play (L22-24), Zara became excited by Helen's tantalizing proposal to play under the slide rather than in the Home Corner (L25), and her suggestion that they should make a mess there (L27-28). Helen accepted Zara's division of 'babies' (L28-29), and her suggestion that they should take their adventure into further darkness by climbing inside the inner cubes (L30-31):

Example 7.19 *(Audio recording and Field Notes)*

22 Zara: come on Helen I wanna go in #ne home corner *(moves away from*
23   *cubes)* I#'m goin on #ne home corner Helen
24 Helen: shall we go under #the slide? *(climbs through hole under slide)*
25 Zara: mmmmmyeh! (?) under de slide under de slide under *(follows*
26   *Helen through hole under slide)* ooo Helen
27 Helen: shall we make a mess down here?
28 Zara: mmm Helen can you can you (?) #dis is your baby an #nat's my
29   baby co#me on Helen *(crawls through to cube further under slide)* I
30   going under dis one
31 Helen: an I goin' in   (Zara, 04.04.01, p12)

315

This highly cooperative talk and action was a marked feature of Zara and Helen's interactions, each knowing how to stimulate the other's compliance by making suggestions that were rarely refuted, leading to the development of elaborate joint fantasy play, both at home and in preschool, scripted by cooperative talk, each stimulating the other to express ideas in words to further enhance their play. Examples *7.18* and *7.19*, along with many other data samples not presented here, suggest that it is chiefly through the mediational relationship of established friendships that opportunities occur for elaborated or extended joint play, with concomitant opportunities for peers to explore and exchange meanings.

Territorial disputes and attempts to enter others' play: Both girls and boys attempted to define and claim private 'territory' for their Fantasy Play in Open Spaces. For example, Zara and Helen's games with dolls always involved at some point the exclusion of others from the private spaces they had created, sometimes by calling boys names (Zara transcript, 04.04.01, p13) or by going to considerable trouble to bar the entry of potential intruders by placing stools or rugs across the entry to their newly made 'homes'. Many instances were also observed of Michael, Jake and Zara being excluded from others' play in Open Space areas.

Example *7.20* illustrates how Jake (3y1m) began to learn how to be included in older boys' play through his experiences of being systematically excluded, including by his 'friend' Nick (4y0m). Before approaching the boys' game, Jake watched them for several seconds, standing outside the perimeter of their activity, then stepped across the imagined line that defined their 'building site' and began to imitate what Nick was doing (L1-3). As has been seen in previous examples, this physical mimicry of action by younger children often served as a way into other children's play. However, on this occasion, every time Jake picked up a tool, Nick took it from him, using emphatic negative words to reinforce his actions (L4 and 6). Nick then brandished the prize tool – a real trowel (L8) and, despite Jake's smiles, responded by turning away when Jake brandished his less impressive plastic spanner in response (L9-10). Jake left the area for a few moments before returning again, this time approaching another boy,

but again he was not allowed to touch anything and eventually walked to the Playdoh table nearby, where he settled to play, frequently glancing over to the older boys' active play on the 'building site', but never rejoining them.

Example 7.20

Video code	Participant	Language	Action	
03:18	Jake		watches older boys playing in Creative Space	1
03:22			starts to approach boys slowly, watching them	2
03:30			stands next to Nick at bench in Creative Space, watches him picking up tools, picks up a plastic brick	3
03:31	Nick	no	takes brick from Jake and puts it back on bench	4
03:32	Jake		gaze to tools, reaches across Nick to retrieve brick	5
	Nick	no Jake	takes brick and puts it emphatically back where it had been	6
03:35	Jake		takes plastic spanner, holds it in air, gaze to Nick	7
03:40	Nick		gaze to tools, arranging tools, holds up real metal trowel, waves it in front of Jake	8
03:43	Jake		waves plastic spanner at Nick, smiling	9
03:47	Nick		turns away from Jake, puts trowel carefully back on bench	10
03:49	Jake		glance to Nick, who is busy arranging tools, puts down spanner, walks away	11

(Jake, 09.05.01, p1)

Michael, Jake and occasionally Zara were all observed using primarily imitative body movements to inveigle their way into others' play. This silent negotiation of access was generally more successful than talk, partly because other children seemed more accepting of imitative behaviour, and partly because their attempts to talk to other children frequently broke down as others failed to understand what the younger members were saying, or simply rebuffed their clear utterances. Example *7.21* shows

Jake at the Sand Tray, where he had carefully negotiated access to the activity alongside older boys, using his body to manoeuvre into a position where he could reach the Sand Toys, frequently mimicking their actions as they drove the tractors and diggers around the sand. The older boys (Aaron, 4y3m, Tobias,4y10m and Bertie, 4y9m) chatted to each other, but did not address Jake. Jake made repeated attempts to talk to the older boys, but each attempt was ignored. After 16 minutes of almost totally silent play, he referred to his spade (L44) and Aaron acknowledged his comment (L47), but Tobias responded by questioning Jake's pronunciation and modeling how he thought the word should be pronounced (L49, 51,53). Jake did not take kindly to this indignity, and attempted to defend his honour by changing tactics (L54). Undeterred, Tobias called on the opinion of an adult (L57). When the adult did not intervene, Tobias attributed Jake's pronunciation to his young age (L60-62), but Jake again attempted to assert his own authority by (mistakenly) saying he would soon be going to 'big school' (L63).

Example 7.21 *(Videocode 35:40-37:00)*

44　Jake:　 I #got #de lellow one

45　Bertie: *(building 'wall', gaze at his creation in sand)* dis is a very very big
　　　　　　　place an so *(patting wall)* an so you won't (?)

46　Tobias: *(banging spade in sand in bucket)* I can't dig

47　Aaron: *(holds spade up to Jake)* I got #lellow!

48　Jake:　 *(to Tobias, but pointing to Aaron)* an he got lellow

49　Tobias: *(shoveling sand in bucket)* not lellow *(gaze to Jake)* yellow

50　Jake:　 yeh lellow

51　Tobias: *(shoveling sand)* <u>yel</u>

52　Bertie: dis is a normous hole isn' it?

53　Tobias: *(modelling pronunciation for Jake)* yellow *(shoveling sand)* yellow

54　Jake:　 *(to Tobias)* I don't like you

55　Bertie: *(to Aaron)* move! I'm making a wall

56　Aaron: *(moves back a little)*

57　Tobias: *(gaze to Rosie)* he … um … he said um lellow but you're sposed to

58   say <u>yel</u>low an he keeps saying lellow but you say yellow

59   Rosie: that's right you do

60   Bertie: *(smoothing down sand in rim, to no-one in particular, admiring his*

61   *work)* hey whadja think of #that wall?

62   Tobias: *(gaze to Jake)* I fink you are (two?)

63   Jake: *(shoveling sand)* no I (?)

64   Tobias: oh *(gaze from sand to Jake)* are you #free?

65   Jake: yeh *(smoothing out sand)* I fink *(smooths sand)* I gonna a gool

66   *(gaze to Tobias)* to big s#gool *(pointing in direction of primary*

67   *school)*   (Jake, 11.07.01)

This extract was one of many observations of a rank order in status, particularly between boys in the group. The 'rank' of authority appeared to be directly related to the degree of confidence different boys displayed within the group, which in turn appeared to be related to their mastery of playgroup routines and etiquette and also had some relation to their friendship patterns. However, the boys appeared to be fickle in their friendships and to align themselves with more authoritative members of a given group rather than necessarily with friends established outside playgroup, as observed repeatedly in the case of Nick and Jake. Less experienced members of the group were tolerated on the borders of activity by more dominant boys, and less experienced or less confident boys employed a range of largely silent tactics either to gain entry to the central activities of older boys or to act out legitimate roles on the edges of their play.

These observations imply a gendered social structure that newcomers to playgroup had to learn in order to gain entry to the kinds of pair or group play that they were attracted to. For some, this rank order appeared new and daunting, particularly in Open Space areas, where adults monitored the children less closely. Tallulah only entered these zones if they were unoccupied, other than when her brother visited. Zara tended to claim Open Spaces as private areas for joint role and fantasy play with Helen, but eventually gave up on trying to gain entry to the largely male dominated

Creative Space. Jake often played on the imitative fringes of older boys' play, as did Michael occasionally, but, perhaps because Michael was already familiar with 'pecking orders' from home and his child minder's, he frequently opted for solitary play, whilst attempting in vain to include others in his play. These territorial issues could be partly attributed to the fact that, as discussed earlier, this cohort had a particularly dominant group of older boys.

7.3.4.2 Child participation in Open Spaces

Figures 7.1-7.4 show that Jake spent 24%, Michael 19%, Zara 18% and Tallulah 6% of their overall observed playgroup time in Open Space activities. Each child also had clear preferences for particular Open Space areas[8]. Out of a total time of 162 minutes observed in Open Space areas, Jake spent 104 minutes at the Sand Tray, 15 minutes in or trying to get in the Cube Car, 16 minutes running up and down the Climbing Cubes, 12 minutes in the Home Corner, 11 minutes in the Small World area on the mat, and just 4 minutes in the Creative Space, which as discussed above, tended to be dominated by older boys. Jake visited the Sand Tray on every observed session, usually staying for long periods (16-29 minutes), sometimes on his own and sometimes with other children present, occasionally joining in as a peripheral member of older boys' play. Jake was dextrous and particular in his use of the equipment in the Sand Tray, and frequently recreated in his play complex uses of the tippers, tractors and diggers that were reminiscent of his father's agricultural work at home. Thus, the Sand Tray appeared to allow him a space where he could invoke his home 'field' (Bourdieu, 1977), where he could engage in imaginary conversations with his father and Don, the tractor driver, and where he could display his confident expertise at handling machinery. His credible mastery of the Sand Tray toys meant that, occasionally, older boys watched and imitated him, thereby increasing his status within the group at this particular activity.

Michael also spent long periods at the Sand Tray: 73 minutes out of a total 169 minutes in Open Space areas. Like Jake, Michael frequently played on his own or on

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[8] See Appendices 7.1-7.4 for details of where all children spent their time in Open Space areas

the borders of others' play, often using buckets and spades to construct walls and buildings. Again, this activity resembled home activities where during the period of data collection, Peter had been remodelling the garden with Michael as a 'helper' (Mother Chat, Field Notes, 26.02.01). Michael also spent long periods playing on his own in the Small World mat, 64 minutes overall, constructing with Brio and Duplo, playing with small cars and exploring the Doll's House – always open to others as in Example *7.18* but not engaged in extended play with other children. Although after several months in playgroup, Michael was developing a friendship with David, another boy of his own age, they only shared one playgroup session per week, and unfortunately did not play together during observations of Michael.

Zara spent most of her Open Space time in the Home Corner (66 out of a total 155 minutes), and the Climbing Cubes (39 minutes), almost always playing with dolls on her own or with Helen. Although intended for gross motor skills, Zara used the Climbing Cubes both for physical play and as an alternative home for fantasy play. Zara spent a mere 10 minutes at the Creative Space, most of which involved retrieving items taken by boys from the Home Corner, 16 minutes in the Small World area, 15 minutes in the Cube Car, mostly taking dolls on outings, and 5 minutes selecting dolls. During the observations, Zara did not use the Sand Tray.

Although Tallulah spent 6% of her observed time in Open Spaces, the detail of how this time was spent reveals that a total of 31 out of 48 minutes were spent in the Book Corner with her mother or member of staff reading to her. On these occasions, the communicative strategies she used resembled the strategies used at home. That is, she frequently responded verbally to the prompts and props provided by the adult, commented on the stories, made suggestions and explained certain elements of what was happening in the stories, thereby displaying attentive listening and interpretive skills expressed accurately in words. A further 10 minutes of her Open Space time were spent in the Home Corner with her brother and the remaining 7 minutes were spent on the Climbing Cubes when she discovered that no crafts had been set up and was invited by an adult to play on the cubes. In all the observations of Tallulah, she

only explored Open Space areas if accompanied either by an adult or her brother. As discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.3, members of staff were aware that for Tallulah, Open Space activities were simply not 'safe' (Staff Interview 1.5.01, p23).

The data suggests that during their first year in playgroup the case study children were obliged to some extent to respect or comply with established gendered patterns of usage of Open Space activities, where older members of the group, particularly more dominant older boys, staked territorial claims. Both boys used a variety of multimodal strategies in their attempts to gain entry to older boys' play in these areas, but, as pointed out by staff, Open Space areas were risky, too daunting for Tallulah to venture into. Zara, Michael and Jake all appeared more willing to take these risks, but frequently recreated 'safe havens' of fantasy and role-play by invoking home 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1977) where they had more mastery of the institutional practices.

7.4 Unravelling the dynamics of playgroup interaction

Data presented in Chapters 6 and 7 have illustrated how over time in playgroup all the case study children adapted their home communicative strategies, and in varying degrees and varying combinations, used a range of multimodal strategies in their attempts to unravel the complexities of the constantly changing dynamics of playgroup. These are now discussed and summary answers to Research Questions 2 and 3 are proposed.

7.4.1 Patterns and developments in the children's communicative strategies during their first year in playgroup

7.4.1.1 Michael

During his early months in playgroup, Michael explored a wide range of playgroup activities, and on many occasions attempted to initiate talk with his peers and adults, but the former often ignored his attempts, and, in the kinds of activities he selected, adults tended either not to be present or were too pre-occupied with the practicalities of managing playgroup to engage in extended exchanges.

Over time, he began to stay for longer periods at particular favourite activities, spending overall almost 2/3rds of his Free and Guided Choice time in Open Spaces and Free Choice Tables. In Open Spaces, despite his repeated attempts to include other children in his play, he spent long periods on his own constructing games and models that often recreated aspects of his experiences of life at home. He also played alongside other children, particularly older boys, imitating their actions on the fringes of their games but never gaining the status to become a central figure in older boys' play. At Free Choice Tables, he tended to play on his own for short periods, or, if he had sensitive, responsive adult assistance, where the adult attributed meanings to his multimodal signs and allowed him a high degree of control of the activity, then he spent long periods constructing complex models and puzzles that were dismantled at the end of the activity. Given his choices of activity, he spent long periods in silence, or learning silent multimodal, imitative strategies to gain entry to others' play. Towards the end of his first year, he began to talk more both to adults and children.

This contrasted with his home communicative strategies, where, with the help of others who knew the idiosyncrasies of his speech and had shared knowledge of home life events, he used primarily talk to convey meanings, was confident of word meanings and supplemented talk with gaze and movement mostly in place of elusive vocabulary. Over time, his speech became noticeably clearer at home.

7.4.1.2 Jake

Jake, like Michael, over time began to stay for longer periods at particular activities, spending almost half his Free and Guided Choice time in Open Space activities, where he frequently appeared through his play to recreate scenes reminiscent of his home life. Within the comfort of these imagined places, Jake's sense of his own identity and abilities gained tangible strength, and his peers' assessment of his status as a member of the group was at its highest when he was engaged in role and fantasy play, as illustrated when older boys imitated his detailed play in the Sand Tray.

Sometimes, Jake began to join in peer talk, yet these attempts were often ignored and occasionally his ability to talk 'correctly' was queried by his peers, as illustrated in Example *7.21*. On many occasions older boys, and sometimes also girls, attempted to exclude him from 'their' activities, but he used imitative body movements combined with a skilful combination of fixed and averted gaze to gain peripheral entry to their play. Over time, he increasingly used gaze, facial expression and body movement to gain entry to peer play, but only achieved the status of a peripheral member of peer group play and as such was largely excluded from group talk.

At quiet Games Tables, Jake had many opportunities to work in a dyad with a supportive adult who increasingly over time became more able to support his speech, particularly through her knowledge of his home life, and acknowledged his multimodal expressions of meaning. At busy Game and Craft activities he witnessed as a silent member older children participating in adult-led small group work. Like Michael, the staff considered Jake to be a happy young boy who was quiet but who would blossom during his second year in playgroup.

7.4.1.3 Zara

Zara, like Michael and Jake, spent a great deal of her Free and Guided Choice time in imagined worlds created during Role and Fantasy play. However, although she spent considerable amounts of time in solitary play, she also, unlike the observed boys, had a 'particular friend' in playgroup with whom she spent long periods talking as they jointly constructed and negotiated their play. With the added confidence brought to her by her imagined worlds, Zara occasionally attracted older girls into her play, usually through talk, seeming to arouse their interest by her inventive uses of playgroup materials. Rather than being restricted by the potentials of many of the playgroup activities, Zara tended to impose her rich fantasy worlds upon the activities. She spent only a small percentage of her time at more adult-controlled activities, such as Games. However, she did spend a high proportion of her Free Choice time at Crafts, where she experienced as a peripheral participant 'school-like' small group adult-led interactions. Regardless of the activity type, she sometimes

became engaged in more extended talk with one particular adult - her best friend's Mum, who happened to be training as a member of staff. By the end of her first year in playgroup, staff recognised that although happy, confident and conversant, Zara had spent very little time on pre-literacy and numeracy tasks, but felt that her second year in the group would be ample time for her to develop these skills.

7.4.1.4 Tallulah

Tallulah began playgroup by remaining at the activity where her mother had settled her before leaving at the beginning of the session. Over time, she began to explore a slightly wider range of activities, still tending to opt either for Free Choice child-led activities, where physical spaces were clearly defined and where she did not need to interact with adults or peers in order to take part in an activity, or for Crafts, where interaction with peers and adults was avoidable and, as discussed earlier in this chapter, was frequently negotiated by all children through gaze, facial expression and body movement. She generally avoided Open Space areas, until, after many months in playgroup, she ventured into them on a handful of occasions, always when no other children were there or with her mother or younger brother, when the mother happened to be helping in playgroup.

By using only a limited selection of playgroup activities, Tallulah thereby managed to engineer and control communicative environments where she seemed to feel more comfortable, where her silence was less at variance with the communicative behaviours of the children around her, and where, if in contact with adults, she was most likely to receive the kind of dyadic communicative support that she was familiar with at home. Staff perceived Tallulah as a shy, quiet, able and strong-minded girl who found the playgroup environment challenging and who they only had one year to prepare for primary school. Over time, Tallulah's key worker Sarah created opportunities for 'home-like' dyadic interactions, and with sensitive and responsive support, acting as a prop and a prompt as Tallulah's mother at home, Tallulah began to talk more. However, the 3 ½ terms Tallulah spent in playgroup before starting school was simply not enough time for her to experience as an apprentice and

ultimately as a master the kinds of interaction that enabled older or more confident children in playgroup to experiment with and develop their own effective communicative resources as pupils and playmates, or even for her to witness as a peripheral participant the kinds of small group peer and child/adult interaction that served as a preparation for primary school.

7.4.2 Factors that influenced the children's communicative strategies

7.4.2.1 Adult-led activities and adult/child interaction

Overall, a detailed analysis of the different activity types, based on observations of 23 playgroup sessions throughout the year, totalling 23 hours' video data supported by audio recordings, 60 hours' Field and Diary notes, showed that in adult-guided activities, such as games and crafts, **the nature of the activity**, the **style of adult talk** and the **degree of control the children had** all combined to define parameters for talk, and the child talk corresponded to the opportunities offered within those parameters. The **richest exchanges between adults and children** occurred when the child was allowed either to **set the pace of, initiate or take control of an activity**, and the child was with an adult either in an **uninterrupted dyad** or occasionally also in a **small group**, **provided that the adult was sensitive and responsive to the child's combined uses of gaze, facial expression, body movements and talk as means of expression.**

Particularly rich adult-child interactions occurred as adults grew to know the children better and were able, particularly through their knowledge of the child's life outside the playgroup, to **act as a prompt and a prop to the child's attempts to converse**, in a similar fashion to that observed at home with the mothers as they supported their children's talk. In short, the less controlling, more sensitive, responsive and knowledgeable about the children's lives adults were, the more likely they were to create opportunities for the children to talk and/or explore meanings through different modes. In adult-led activities where the adults focussed on giving instructions or explaining and enforcing rules, the children tended to respond with gaze, facial

expression and body movement, and only when these strategies were not precise enough, to use words for expressing specific needs or wishes.

In adult-led activities, particularly those with specific, planned learning outcomes such as games devised for the teaching of specific vocabularies and model-making linked to curriculum themes, there was a tendency for all adults, in differing degrees, to deliver teaching in a functional framework, seemingly based on a transmission model of learning. During consultation, staff were surprised by, and not happy about, the frequent recurrence of such teaching, and felt this represented a change in their practice as a result of top-down pressures to prepare children for primary school and assessment, particularly children who would only spend one year at playgroup.

In addition, particularly when working in small groups with an adult, this study has shown how younger members of the group acted as **peripheral participants** to a variety of discourse features required for 'legitimate' membership of the playgroup community, gradually becoming more active participants if supported by a sympathetic, responsive and quietly encouraging adult. This **mastery in turn slowly changed the role and status of the younger children** within the group, particularly as they became more experienced members of the group when the older cohort left and new fledglings arrived.

7.4.2.2 Child-led activities and peer interaction

In child-led activities and peer interaction, meanings were more fluid, the parameters for talk were less clearly defined and therefore the opportunities for talk were potentially more varied. However, **gaining entry to activities or to others' play was a risky business that had to be skilfully negotiated, mostly through gaze, facial expression and usually imitative body movement**, before any talk could take place. Using repeated viewings of the videos, it was possible to observe how younger children were regularly unable to claim a space at an activity after being literally 'cold-shouldered', particularly by older peers, both girls and boys, as the latter sought to protect or claim their own territory. Sometimes, having silently negotiated their

way into peer play, the **children's attempts at talk broke down as older peers ignored their utterances, corrected the younger children's uses of language or failed to understand** what the younger children were saying. Often, younger children **repeated word-for-word expressions that were used frequently in playgroup**, literally acquiring an institutionalized 'voice'.

Construction activities and puzzles were almost invariably dismantled on completion or at the end of part of a playgroup session, leaving no record of the children's often intense concentration on these tasks. The lack of recording of these activities, and frequent absence of adult at these tables, meant that the children's processes of engaging with and expressing meaning multimodally were often overlooked.

7.4.2.3 Season of birth and communicative strategies

The **child's season of birth** appeared to have considerable bearing on the child's experiences in the playgroup. Firstly, the season of birth had a straightforward, direct effect upon the number of terms the child would spend in the playgroup, thereby **lengthening or shortening the period of time the child had to become a legitimate rather than peripheral member of the group**. This in turn had an impact upon the child's **peer status** within the group, which in turn had an influence on the **child's access to and mastery of activities and the communicative practices and challenges of the range of preschool activities.** Thus a child who spent less time in playgroup could be locked in a cycle of peripheral participation in or exclusion from activities.

Furthermore, the season of birth and anticipated length of time in playgroup **impacted upon staff practices with children**. In order to prepare late Spring and Summer born children for school, staff tended to spend more time trying to engage them in talk than children who would spend more overall time in the group, thus pathologising the absence of talk rather than acknowledging the strengths of the children's more silent multimodal expressions of meaning.

7.4.2.4 Child gender and communicative strategies

The **child's gender** appeared to have **links to the kinds of activities the children took part in** and to their experiences of peer interaction, both of which in turn **provided different parameters for different kinds of communicative strategies**. Overall, the case study boys spent much less time on Craft activities, where the particular communicative practices observed resembled school practices, for example, listening to and following adult instruction, or being active or peripheral participants in small group cooperative talk, exchanges of ideas and the co-construction of meaning.

In general, peer interaction between girls was more cooperative, giving rise to more opportunities for talk, whereas younger boys' attempts to talk to older boys were often rebuffed or ignored. Over time, the case study boys both appeared to use imitative body movements to gain entry to older boys' play.
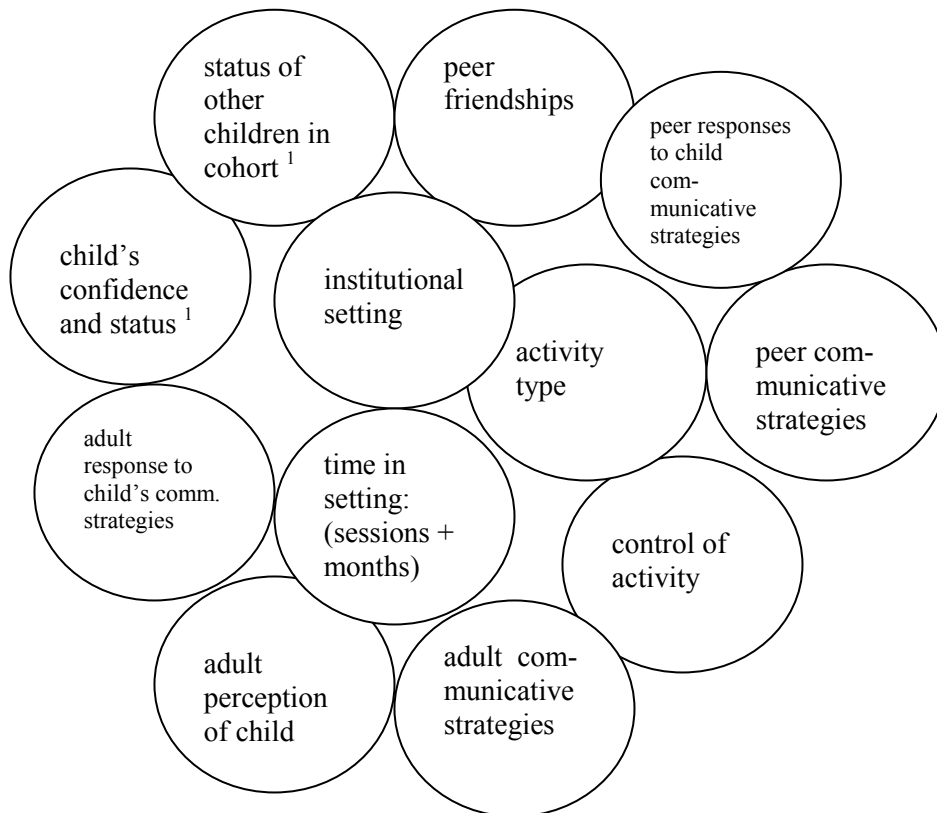
In the case of the particular children studied, a particularly close friendship between two girls created many opportunities for both girls to explore, negotiate and share meanings through their friendship. The case study boys and one girl did not appear to have similar mediational relationships with their peers. Although one boy had an older friend, there was a rank order in the boys' patterns of play, linked to age and status within the group that appeared to dominate.

7.4.3 Summary conclusions

The conclusions discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, drawn from detailed observation and analysis of four children's experiences at home and in one preschool playgroup, clearly imply that in the case of those four children in that one playgroup, there were identifiable patterns and developments in the children's communicative strategies during their first year at playgroup that differed significantly from their communicative strategies at home. The factors identified afford some insights into the complex dynamics of children's playgroup experiences and personal backgrounds.

To lend some clarity to this complexity, the factors identified have been represented in Figure 7.5 below. In the diagram, each factor has been set in a circle, and each circle has been made the same size. However, not all the factors were necessarily present in any single moment of time, and the relative impact of particular factors changed from moment to moment, as the dynamics of any interaction are multi-layered and change with a rapidity and fluidity that is impossible to capture on a two-dimensional page. When considering the diagram, it would therefore be more useful to think of all the circles as being in constant motion, not only moving around each other, but also increasing and decreasing in size, sliding over each other, sometimes combining with and sometimes eclipsing each other.

Figure 7.5 *Diagrammatic representation of factors that impact upon children's communicative strategies*

status of other children in cohort [1]

peer friendships

peer responses to child com-municative strategies

child's confidence and status [1]

institutional setting

activity type

peer com-municative strategies

adult response to child's comm. strategies

time in setting: (sessions + months)

control of activity

adult perception of child

adult com-municative strategies

[1]

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[1] Related to child age and/or gender

Although diagrammatic representations such as this may be useful for practice, reflection and theory building, their two-dimensional, static format is in itself misleading. Through the use of case studies and detailed reproduction of data, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have portrayed some of the complex dynamics of factors that bring to bear on the communicative strategies used by four young children during their first year in one particular preschool. It must always be remembered that underlying and overarching any patterns found in the interactions are individual life histories of socially and culturally transmitted perceptions, understandings and actions. The implications of these findings for early years theory and practice are now summarized and discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8

Implications for theory and practice

This concluding chapter summarises the study findings, discusses how the thesis contributes to theories of multimodal communication and meaning making and considers the implications of that theory development for early years practice, assessment, training and policy.

8.1 Changes in the children's communicative strategies

Past research has found that children talk far more at home than in preschool, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.5. Despite changes to early years funding, training and curriculum, as discussed in Chapter 1, the data from this study indicate there is still a marked difference in children's actual and perceived uses of talk in the two settings. However, the study has identified that the absence of talk at preschool does not necessarily imply a lack of communication or meaning making. On the contrary, for newcomers to the playgroup studied, learning to be included in peer play and learning the routines of the new institutional establishment were negotiated primarily through observation and imitation, with talk used for certain specific functions. This section summarises the study findings of how the four case study children integrated talk, gaze, facial expression and body movement as they played at home and as they became inducted into the art of being a 'pupil' at playgroup.

8.1.1 Talking at home and in playgroup

At home, the case study children's interactions were dominated by talk, with gaze, facial expression and body movements used mostly for emphasis when being assertive or to replace particularly complicated explanations or vocabulary. The mothers all displayed deep understandings of their children's past experiences, particular interests and areas of specialist knowledge, which enabled them to provide finely-tuned assistance that filled the gaps in their children's talk by 'propping up'

and 'prompting' the children to expand upon their developing ideas through further talk. The unhurried and familiar home context, where children were treated and behaved as masters rather than apprentices of the procedures and routines of their worlds, provided safe platforms upon which they practised and took risks, free of any major threat to their self esteem and almost always assured of adult attention and support – even if they sometimes had to wait a while.

By contrast, in playgroup, the children's initial attempts to talk to others were frequently ignored, misunderstood or rebuffed by their peers, and adults were often too busy or too unfamiliar with the children to replicate the kinds of support the children received at home. Within weeks of being in the new, active and noisy preschool setting, all the case study children were comparatively quiet and watchful. Over time, as they became more familiar with the meanings and sign systems of the playgroup, and as others got to know them better and were more able to support their talk, they all, though in widely varying degrees, became more assertive and more confident speakers. Thus as the children began to adapt their talk to the conventions of the institution of playgroup, they appeared to develop their own communicative identities as younger members of this particular educational establishment, which complemented but were distinct from their home practices.

However, their uses of talk as a mode of communication appeared to be specific to playgroup and distinctly different from their home practices, used to:

- o *fit in with institutional practices and master the art of being a 'pupil'*, for example: citing playgroup rules to other children; learning to be silent when seated in certain Whole Group activities (such as Registration), and to be particularly polite during others (such as Milk Time); learning to wait quietly for a 'turn' at all adult-led activities; learning to give particular kinds of verbal response to adult prompts during small group activities, thus moving from the position of 'peripheral' to 'legitimate' participation in small group activities; appealing to an adult to settle a dispute

o   *share and negotiate meaning with adults and peers*, for example: relating playgroup activities to experiences outside playgroup; talking to other children during group fantasy play; expressing a specific need or want; participating in small group co-constructions of meaning

o   *fit in with established peer groups*, for example: word-for-word repetition of other children's utterances; joining in group chants; citing or repeating playgroup-specific terminology; attempting to initiate talk with other children

In addition to these uses of talk, this study has illustrated how in playgroup, each child over time began to find a new voice (Bakhtin, 1986), or new voices, that were tentative and often expressed in different modes: sometimes verbal and sometimes through gaze, facial expression and body movement, but almost always linked in some way to the communicative practices of more established members of the group. Focussing exclusively on the children's talk therefore excluded the majority of their interactions, and a more integrated approach to the multimodality of their expressions of meaning was adopted.

8.1.2 Multimodal communication at home and in playgroup

The data have illustrated how in playgroup, rather than using talk as a primary means of expression as they appeared to do at home, the children all frequently used combinations of body movements, facial expressions and gaze to communicate with others. Over time, the children not only each in their own way began to follow playgroup conventions of talk, but also to develop context-specific uses of different communicative strategies. These observations could be partially explained by Streeck's proposal (1993) that young children use combinations of talk, gaze and gesture in order to make maximum use of the symbolic resources available to them, resources that they are more likely to draw on widely in new and unfamiliar environments. However, the longitudinal nature of this study has given insights into how, over time, there was not only a tendency for the children to talk less than at home but they also appeared to use gaze, facial expression and body movement for specific purposes that were shaped by the norms and practices of established

members of playgroup, both children and adults. For example, in playgroup, the case study children frequently, and for Michael, Zara and Jake increasingly, used body movements, facial expressions and gaze to:

- o *negotiate entry to others' play or activities*, for example: to gain physical access to activities, particularly activities where physical spaces were not clearly defined, or to negotiate possession of chairs; to gain access to other children's' play by observing and physically imitating the actions and movements of other children

- o *learn how to 'do' playgroup,* for example: watching and imitating other children's uses of playgroup equipment and games; imitating other children's movements, particularly concerning playgroup routines and structures eg moving from Free or Guided Choice to Whole Group activities and vice versa

- o *express their needs, wishes or understandings,* for example: responding to adult instructions and questions, particularly closed questions; to replace talk, when communication through had talk broken down

Not only the children but also the staff used a range of strategies particular to the playgroup setting. Although adult uses of gaze, facial expression and body movement in place of talk were observed in the children's homes, their usage was far more frequent, exaggerated and specific in the playgroup. For example, within the group as a whole, the staff:

- o used primarily gaze direction to indicate to whom an utterance was addressed

- o used fixed gaze on individual or groups of children to attract their attention and/or exercise control

- o scaffolded the new children's induction into the rituals and routines of playgroup through gaze and body movements, often coupled with reassuring smiles and only sometimes accompanied by talk

- o frequently accepted the children's physical rather than verbal responses as signs of understanding when supporting children's learning, sometimes responding through gaze and body movements and sometimes putting into words, or 'resemiotizing' (Iedema, 2003), the children's physical responses

Adult and child uses of gaze, facial expression, body movement and talk all formed part of the communicative practices of the playgroup, practices that the case study children had to decipher, interpret and replicate in order to move from being apprentice, peripheral participants to established members with a certain mastery of the norms and practices of this particular socio-cultural and institutional group. The study has identified a range of factors inherent in these practices, linked to the immediate and institutional contexts the children found themselves in, that impacted on the children's uses of different communicative strategies (Figure 7.5, Chapter 7).

These findings give insights not only into the different modes young children use to communicate, but also into their uses of different modes for making meaning, interlinked with their nascent identities as learners in an institutional setting. The observations made in this study of adult and child uses of gaze, facial expression and body movement for expressing, supporting and constructing meaning echo observations of non-western cultures (eg Rogoff, 1990), where guided participation has been found to rely extensively on non-verbal forms of communication. As Wertsch (1991, p30) suggests, the making of meaning in the absence of talk calls into question Vygotsky's socially, culturally and historically situated assumptions that verbal mediation is the prime means used by adults or more knowledgeable others to support children's learning.

Section 8.2 now discusses how this thesis makes a small contribution to theoretical understandings of the complexity of factors that bring to bear on young children's multimodal communicative and meaning making strategies, taking into account how these factors overlap with the particular life histories and dispositions of each child, that in turn influence the ways they adapt to the communicative practices they encounter in different settings and how they are perceived by others within those settings.

8.2 Building on theory

8.2.1 Theory and knowledge claims

In Chapter 4, I discussed how the ethnographic case study methodology adopted in this study was underpinned by post structuralist approaches to the instability and contingency of 'reality', to possible representations of 'reality' and to subsequent understandings of what counts as knowledge and truth. The knowledge claims made in this thesis reflect both my own subjectivity and life history, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4.2, and the continuities and discontinuities observed in the individual case study children's lives. As Bourdieu proposes:

> … the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction. This is what social psychology and interactionism or ethnomethodology forget when … they seek to explain everything that occurs in an experimental or observed interaction in terms of the experimentally controlled characteristics of the situation, such as the relative spatial positions of the participants or the nature of the channels used. In fact it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions … In short, the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices … (and) … is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism discerns in the social world without being able to give them a rational basis.

> (Bourdieu, 1977, p82)

8.2.2 Theorising communication and meaning making in the early years

8.2.2.1 Habitus, life histories and collective practices

In previous chapters, I have discussed how in this thesis Bourdieu's theory of practice has been instrumental in conceptualising and applying a post structuralist philosophical stance to the 'messiness' of the practices observed during data collection. By exploring the complexities of the children's lives through interviews and observations in the two settings of home and playgroup, the study has unveiled how certain home practices carried over into the children's interpretations of playgroup practices and how these shaped the different communicative and meaning making strategies the children used in the new environment of playgroup, sometimes literally embodying their emerging identities as pupils.

Lave and Wenger's notion of legitimate peripheral participation has shed light on the processes by which new children in the playgroup were initiated by staff and peers into the collective practices of pair, small and large group interactions, and in the conventionalised uses of a wide range of playgroup activities. The study has noted how the children's initiation into these processes was executed primarily through observation and mimicry, with talk used to respond minimally to adult questions or to make specific requests or express specific needs to adults or peers. These observations are in line with Bourdieu's proposal that:

> … the essential part of the *modus operandi* which defines practical mastery is transmitted in practice, in its practical state, without attaining the level of discourse.   (Bourdieu, 1977, p87)

The children in this study did not appear to learn playgroup patterns of behaviour by random trial and error, but with time began unconsciously to grasp the rationale of series of patterned behaviours that corresponded to structures and routines, to activity types and to the complex range of factors identified in Figure 7.5, Chapter 7. As Bourdieu suggests, these systems of behaviour, or 'schemes' (Bourdieu, 1977, p87), pass from practice to practice without going through discourse or consciousness. Just

as each child unconsciously unravels and adopts the structures of language, so that child unravels the 'rationale of what are clearly series and in making it his own in the form of a principle generating conduct organized in accordance with the same rationale' (Bourdieu, 1977, p88).

Over time, all the children studied adapted the home communicative strategies, that they brought with them to playgroup, to the conventions of the playgroup, developing individual communicative identities as pupils, which complemented but were distinct from their home practices. These insights lend new significance to the already recognised importance of home/school liaison and ongoing parent contact in the early years. Understanding how children's home communicative practices blend with or become silenced by institutional practices lies at the very core of understanding how children make and express meaning in early years institutions.

8.2.2.2 Multimodal communication and meaning making

Although Bourdieu can help interpret the genesis of pupil identity and socio-cultural reproduction in terms of 'a dialectical relationship between individuals' thought and activity and the objective world' (Grenfell and James, 1998, p14), his theoretical approach does not claim or aim to investigate the relationships between children's multimodal sign and meaning making. For this, I turn to the fundamental question of 'What constitutes evidence of learning?' (Kress et al, 2001, p179). The data from this thesis strongly support Kress et al's findings that by continuing to focus on the verbal expression of meaning making, the British education system is closing its eyes to the complexities and subtleties of children's multimodal sign making and expressions of learning.

I return to just one of countless examples from the thesis data to illustrate this point. In Example *7.15*, Chapter 7, an extract is given from a 23-minute period of Michael constructing a complex model of a house, with doors, windows, furniture, pets, a garden and a drive. As we have seen, he picked up some ideas for this model from an illustration in a Lego brochure, some ideas from his own home life, some appeared to

draw on his wider social and cultural knowledge, and some related to topics introduced in playgroup as part of the curriculum. Michael was supported in this activity by a work experience student, who had no particular agenda to follow and helped Michael by finding pieces he needed and completing more 'tricky' construction tasks. He always followed Michael's requests for help, which Michael expressed partly through words and partly through gaze and body/hand movements. Thus, during this episode, Michael drew on a wide range of his knowledge and social skills, and expressed them partly through talk, but mostly through gaze, facial expression and body movement during the joint construction of the model[1]. Are these actions not evidence of social, communicative and cognitive aspects of learning, evidence that has been recognised as present in speaking and listening (National Oracy Project, 1990), but not yet officially validated in multimodal communication?

If, in a hypothetical situation, instead of building a model, Michael had been asked to describe in words how he would build a house, would he have been able to express, in a necessarily limited amount of time, the same depth and breadth of understanding that was expressed in his model? Would he have had immediate access to the breadth of resources he used in the construction task? If asked about the model after constructing it, then deeper insights into his understandings could be obtained, but is such immediate oral assessment realistic in a busy learning environment, when other pressures are on the staff to proceed with the session's activities and attend to other children? And yet, as observed in the data, oral evidence of learning continues to be prioritised by practitioners, partly because 'they could've got something completely wrong and unless they tell you what they think you don't know' (Holly, Staff Interview 01.05.01), and partly because, as discussed in Chapter 1, children are assessed on entry to school primarily through their listening and speaking skills.

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[1] Similarly, Zara expressed complex understandings of social processes through combinations of actions and talk, for example, home making and childcare (Ex.7.19); Jake experimented with the uses of farm machinery (Ex.7.21) and Tallulah silently explored the properties of glue and mixing colours (Ex. 7.6, 7.7).

The data in this thesis clearly indicates the need for more recognition and deeper understandings of the many different modes or strategies that children use both to communicate with others and to learn in different social and institutional settings. As Kress et al argue:

> An education system which denies what are to us the palpable facts of human semiosis sacrifices the central resource of its society.

(Kress et al, 2001, p8)

8.2.2.3 Collective consciousness and the social construction of meaning

As discussed in Chapter 2, Wertsch (1991) uses the term 'mind' rather than 'cognition' to reflect how mind does not operate 'in vacuo' (Wertsch, 1991, p14), but is often socially distributed, connected to the notion of mediation and part of a collective consciousness. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and Bruner (1986) have discussed how mental activities such as memory and reasoning can be socially distributed. The observations of the case study children at home have shown the extent to which the children's reasoning and memory resources were shared collectively between the children, their siblings and mothers and manifested in their joint constructions of talk.

Similarly, the playgroup observations have identified how the staff, and sometimes peers, particularly if familiar with a child outside playgroup, could support the child's meaning making and expressions of meaning through their knowledge of the child's past experiences, both at home and in the playgroup. Yet these incidents of shared meaning making were by no means always dependent upon talk. The staff's knowledge of children's previous achievements enabled them to fine-tune their support at games or puzzles, where staff and children could exchange shared understandings through a glance, perhaps towards the next 'move' in a game, or the right 'piece' in a puzzle.

By recognising that young children construct and express meanings not only through talk, but also through their uses of gaze, facial expression and body movement, and by illustrating how meanings are co-constructed in child/adult and peer dyads, and in small, adult-led groups, this thesis brings new shades of meaning to Vygotsky's proposal that to understand semiotic mediation on an intramental plane, it is necessary to understand how meanings are constructed on an intermental plane:

> … a sign is always originally a means used for social purposes, a means of influencing others, and only later becomes a means of influencing oneself.

> (Vygotsky, 1981, p157)

8.2.2.4 Future research in early years communication

If we are to develop understandings of how meanings are communicated and constructed through different semiotic modes, then we need to identify how certain modes are used for certain purposes, as this study has begun to identify, and to explore how, over time, children learn to convert or transform their understandings from one mode to another, for example, from the physical materiality of making a model or stirring glue to the dominant schooled mode of talk, and consider how mental functioning is shaped and defined by the mediational means it employs to carry out a task.

If a central role is to be attributed to modes of representation, then it is essential to understand and specify the forces that shape the modes employed. Halliday has accomplished this with language, examining how and why particular sets of structural and semantic properties are used when others are possible. Kress et al (2001), pursue this by considering the properties or 'affordances' of different modes. If we study what 'affordances' pertain to different modes of representation, then modes of learning and interacting that previously may have been attributed to developmental 'stages' (eg by Piaget), or interpreted as 'immature' (Staff Interview, 05.12.00), can be viewed not only as other ways of knowing but also as part of the child's

positioning when faced with new and highly complex communicative practices, such as those encountered and identified in the preschool site of this study.

8.3 Implications for practice

8.3.1 'Effective' learning and delivering a curriculum

Donaldson (1978) demonstrated many years ago that children operate at much higher levels if they are involved in tasks that make sense to them, and if the tasks are set in contexts they can engage with. She also cited Whitehead's warning that:

> … in teaching you will come to grief as soon as you forget that your pupils have bodies. (Donaldson, 1978, p83)

Although, as discussed in Chapter 1, the Foundation Stage Curriculum acknowledges that children learn through all their senses, there is currently an inadequate theoretical basis to underpin the delivery of the curriculum definitions of 'effective learning', as discussed in Chapter 3.

The data presented in this thesis clearly signals the need to recognise more fully, validate, record and build, from theory to practical implementation, on the multimodal ways that young children construct and express meaning, rather than continue to prioritise talk due to top-down pressures of early years assessment and early entry to primary school.

Rogoff's concept of 'guided participation' (Rogoff, 1990) has already made clear the need to: take into account a learner's existing knowledge and skills and the demands of a new task; provide instruction and help whilst ensuring the child remains active in the processes of learning and successful solution of problems; and ensure the gradual transfer of responsibility from tutor to learner. Pascal and Bertram (1997) have added that the adult style of engagement effects the child's level of involvement. However, the observations of this thesis have indicated that in addition to these criteria, the most effective transfer of knowledge or skills occurred when adult support was

simultaneously contingent upon the child's understandings and upon the child's willingness to negotiate and share control of an activity, and this was more likely when the adult clearly signalled, whether through talk, gaze, facial expression and/or body movement, that the child would retain some control of the activity by being allowed the freedom to make choices regarding how the activity progressed.

From a practitioner perspective, if child initiation and control of activities are crucial elements of young children's meaning making, how can staff deliver a prescribed curriculum? Is it possible to maintain a balance between these two seemingly opposing aims? Although the Foundation Stage Curriculum allows scope for flexibility in curriculum planning, the interview data from this study has illustrated how the staff in the playgroup studied felt under pressure to prepare children for future life in school. Some of these pressures were 'bottom-up' and corresponded to the 'care' element discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.3, focussing on the social, emotional and physical well-being of the children. Some pressures were 'top-down', corresponding to their understandings of the structures and strictures of the British educational system, such as preparing children for school practices and routines by teaching differently appropriate ways of behaving during different activities, and for the early years assessment that awaited them at school entry. Both these aspects of the staff's responsibilities are incorporated clearly in the Foundation Stage Curriculum, yet when put into practice, they gave rise to inevitable tensions.

There is then a very fine balance between instruction and negotiation that with young children pivots on the child's trust in the adult, earned through the adult's knowledge of and sensitivity towards the child and different aspects of the child's life. At home with their mothers and siblings, this balance offered children a high level of support, as discussed in Section 8.1.1 above, yet staff cannot emulate the depth of understanding produced from such long term relationships. However, the data have clearly shown that different adult approaches resulted in strikingly different levels of engagement in tasks for the case study children. By situating themselves within the flow of the child's play, and temporarily suspending the pressures of a particular teaching agenda, the adults relaxed their reliance on questions, suggestions and

explanations and were more responsive to the children's uses of gaze, facial expression and body movement, accepting these as conveying particular meanings and mirroring them in their own responses to the children. Staff then gradually and skilfully introduced specific teaching elements into the flow of the child's meaning making, as in Chapter 7, Example *7.11*, or referred to aspects of the child's home life, as in Example *7.13*. Other adults, who had little knowledge of individual children, were also observed to enter the flow of children's play and sensitively support their constructions of meaning, as in Example *7.15*. In all these extended exchanges, the dialogic construction of meaning was negotiated multimodally, through combinations of gaze, facial expression and body movement, only sometimes accompanied by talk. Similarly, the most successfully negotiated peer interaction was observed either between established friends, as in Example *7.19*, or between peers in mutually beneficial exchanges, such as Examples *7.7* and *7.16*.

Conversely, where peers or adults were observed to exercise clear control over a child, the dialogues either broke down or, in adult-child exchanges, became dominated by adult talk that was low in ambiguity and very task oriented, such as Example *7.10*.

Thus the study findings imply that in order to help young children learn through play and through all their senses, as proposed in the Foundation Stage Curriculum, adults must rethink their tendency to use talk-biased, teacher-led, structured learning episodes in favour of more democratically mediated, multimodal meaning making. As part of that process, the different communicative strategies young children use in their explorations of meaning must be recognised, validated and reciprocated rather than immediately 'resemiotized' into talk.

By permitting a range of communicative options in this way, the mechanisms of power and control over the children's learning can be played out more democratically between adults and children in the micro interactions of preschool daily life. If individuals are faced with a field of possibilities in which there are several different accepted ways of behaving/communicating, then different ways of knowing can come

to be validated by the education system. This in turn could begin to help early years institutions move away from the pathologising (Walkerdine, 1986, p67) of the absence of talk in early years practice and assessment.

8.3.2 Learning and Assessment

As discussed in Chapter 1, the current systems of early years assessment have undergone radical changes during the period of this study. Baseline Assessment, now being officially phased out, but still widely used to assess children on entry to school (Neill, 2003), is a predominantly verbal assessment of children's understandings and abilities. The Foundation Stage Profile (QCA, 2003) allows the teacher more time to get to know children, and offers some recognition and validation of children's actions as signs of learning. However, young children's talk and their speaking and listening skills remain the chief currency for evidence of their learning.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the ephemeral nature of children's multimodal expressions of meaning, coupled with time and particular inspection pressures on staff, meant they were rarely recorded in children's playgroup dossiers. Even if they were, these dossiers were not recognised as formal assessment.[1] There is therefore a lack of guidance, motivation and support for early years practitioners on how to validate children's multimodal expressions of learning and very little official recognition of the playgroup's recordings of such expression. Rather, in order to become fully-fledged members of the education community, there are constant pressures for children to convert to the dominant educational currency of language, initially through talk, and then gradually through written forms also.

As observed in the case study children, such systems of teaching and assessment place inappropriate pressures and limits on all children's learning, but doubly disadvantage younger members of any year group, particularly those with late Spring or Summer birthdays who have spent significantly less time as apprentices to

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[1] Parents could choose to show them to the child's teacher on entry to school, but they were not requested to, and the level of attention they received was entirely at the teacher's discretion.

institutional systems in pre-school, and have had fewer months in which to unravel the unspoken rules, to adapt their home practices to the new institutional practices and, in essence, less time to find their own voices.

Unless there is greater recognition and understanding, in theory, practice, training and assessment, of the kinds of understandings children express in modes other than talk, then education is failing children by failing to recognise the different modes they use to express and explore meanings. Almost a decade ago, Anning proposed:

> Our system favours those who learn most effectively through the auditory mode, fails to accommodate the needs of those who learn most effectively through the visual mode, and increasingly creates an apartheid for those who persist in a preference for learning through the kinaesthetic mode.
>
> (Anning, 1994, p71)

Since this assertion, although the Foundation Stage Curriculum has opened the door to a multimodal approach to children's learning, at theoretical and grass roots levels there remains little understanding of how different modes contribute differently to children's constructions of meaning. This thesis has clearly identified how meanings for four very different 3-year olds during their first year in a preschool playgroup and at home, were constructed through the modes of gaze, facial expression and body movement, sometimes in place of and sometimes interspersed with talk, and how adults can respond to children's multimodal sign making to create platforms for the co-construction of meaning.

8.4 Conclusion

By tracking changes over time in the case study children's communicative behaviours, this study has gone some way to explain how their individual identities as communicators were shaped by complex and overlapping forces in the different

immediate, institutional and sociocultural contexts of their homes and the playgroup where they spent their first, and for one, her only, year of preschool.

How children learn through different senses and in different modes, including talk, is central to current early years debates. The small sample size of this study has enabled a detailed analysis of how young individuals in particular situations engaged with particular social worlds, shedding some light on the complexities of how and why they expressed themselves in many different 'voices', yet many of these voices remained unheard.

Working with young children is a privilege. This doctoral thesis is an attempt to interpret, understand and give back to children some of the things that they have taught me. If we recognise and begin to understand the multiplicity of children's expressive voices, and identify how those voices result from dialectic between the forces at play in institutional settings and the 'habitus' children bring with them to new settings, then this has profound implications not only for early years practice, assessment, training and policy but also for future research and theory building in multimodal communication and meaning making across all age ranges.

Appendix 1.1

DIFFERENT SETTINGS FOR THE FOUNDATION STAGE

		January	September	September	September
A **September Born** Boy		3.3 years Joins nursery class	3.11 years In nursery class	4.11 years Joins reception class	5.11 years Joins year 1
An **October-born** girl with hearing impediment	Specialist teacher at home from age six months. From age two attends a local authority family centre two mornings a week	3.2 years Continues to attend family centre two mornings each week	3.10 years Joins nursery school that has special unit	4.10 years Remains in nursery school – joins reception class with support in summer term	5.10 years Joins year 1
A **December-born** girl	Joins nursery centre soon after second birthday	3.0 years Remains in nursery centre	3.8 years In nursery centre	4.8 years Joins reception class – moves to mixed-age (reception and year 1) class in January	5.8 years Remains in reception/ year 1 class
A **February-born** boy with learning difficulties	Receives Portage home teaching from age one	2.10 years Joins assessment unit in special school	3.6 years In special school nursery	4.6 years Joins mainstream reception class	5.6 years Joins year 1
A **March-born** boy	Cared for by childminder from age nine months	2.9 years With childminder plus visits to childminders' drop-in	3.5 years Remains with childminder, who is now accredited as education provider, plus two mornings at pre-school	4.5 years Joins reception class plus before- and after-school care with same childminder	5.5 years Joins year 1
A **June-born** Girl		2.6 years At home and attends parent/ toddler group	3.2 years Joins independent school early years class	4.2 years Remains in school early years class	5.2 years Joins year 1
An **August-born** boy		2.4 years At home	3.0 years Joins playgroup	4.0 years Joins reception class	5.0 years Joins year 1

(DfEE/QCA, 2000, p7)

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Appendix 1.2

PROVIDERS OF PRE-COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS CARE BY COUNTRY

	0 year	1 year	2 year	3 year	4 year	5 year	6 year
England and Wales	DAY NURSERIES/ NURSERY CENTRES						
				PLAYGROUPS			
				PRIMARY SCHOOL RECEPTION AND NURSERY CLASSES/ NURSERY SCHOOLS			
Scotland	DAY NURSERIES		PLAYGROUPS				
				PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSES NURSERY SCHOOLS			
New Zealand	PLAYCENTRES/ EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRES TE KOHANGA REO CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL/ ECD FUNDED CENTRES						
				KINDERGARTEN			
United States				CENTRE-BASED PROGRAMMES			
					KINDERGARTEN		
Switzerland	KRIPPEN CRECHES/ASILO		ECOLES MATERNELLES/ CLASSES ENFANTINES				
					KINDERGARTEN		
			SCUOLA MATERNA				
France	CRECHES		ECOLES MATERNELLES/ CLASSES ENFANTINES				
Germany	KRIPPEN			KINDERGARTEN			
Japan				KINDERGARTEN			
		DAY CARE CENTRES					
DAY NURSERIES/ PLAYGROUPS/CARE			NURSERY SCHOOLS PRIMARY SCHOOLS		KINDERGARTEN		
Private, public or voluntary sector			Private or public sector		Private or public sector		

Source: European Commission / Eurydice / Eurostat, Key data on education in Europe 1999/2000

Appendix 1.3

PRINCIPLES FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

Principles for early years education

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

Effective education requires both a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the curriculum requirements.

Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years-physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Children are entitled to provision that supports and extends knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence, and helps them to overcome any disadvantage.

Practitioners should be ensured that all children feel included, secure and valued. They must build positive relationships with parents in order to work effectively with them and their children.

Early years experience should build on what children already know and can do. It should also encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn and aim to prevent early failure.

No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.

Parents and practitioners should work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect within which children can have security and confidence.

To be effective, an early years curriculum should be carefully structured. In that structure, there should be three strands:
- provision for the different starting points from which children develop their learning, building on what they can already do;
- relevant and appropriate content that matches the different levels of young children's needs;
- planned and purposeful activity that provides opportunities for teaching and learning, both indoors and outdoors.

There should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those that they plan or initiate themselves. Children do not make a distinction between 'play' and 'work' and neither should practitioners. Children need time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.

Practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by a knowledge of how children develop and learn and a clear understanding of possible next steps in their development and learning.

Well-planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process and help them make progress in their learning.

For children to have rich and stimulating experiences, the learning environment should be well planned and well organised. It provides the structure for teaching within which children explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves, thus enabling them to learn, develop and make good progress.

Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high-quality care and education by practitioners.

These principles are the basis on which every part of this guidance has been developed, and are reflected throughout.

(DfEE/QCA, 2000, pp11-12)

Appendix 4.1

DATES OF OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

	All playgroup observations	Playgroup observations used for analysis	Home observations	Mother Interviews[1]	Staff Interviews
Jake	05.03.01 04.04.01 09.05.01 06.06.01 11.07.01	05.03.01 04.04.01 09.05.01 06.06.01 11.07.01	16.05.01 11.07.01	16.05.01 11.07.01	
Michael	17.11.00 19.01.01 26.02.01 26.03.01[2] 30.03.01 23.04.01 21.05.01 25.06.01[3]	17.11.00 19.01.01 26.02.01 30.03.01 23.04.01 21.05.01	30.01.01 27.03.01 26.06.01	30.01.01 27.03.01 26.06.01 26.06.01[4]	05.12.00 01.05.01 24.07.01
Tallulah	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 26.03.01 27.04.01 24.05.01[5] 15.06.01	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 27.04.01 15.06.01	05.12.00 22.03.01 22.05.01	05.12.00 22.03.01 22.05.01	
Zara	01.12.00 02.02.01 07.03.01[6] 20.03.01 04.04.01 18.05.01 12.06.01	01.12.00 02.02.01 20.03.01 04.04.01 18.05.01 12.06.01	12.02.01 02.04.01 11.06.01	12.02.01 02.04.01 11.06.01	

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[1] Plus informal 'chats' with mothers and staff in Field Notes
[2] Audio deleted in error
[3] Sports Day: irregular session
[4] Child minder interview
[5] No audio
[6] Intermittent audio as came unplugged

Appendix 4.2
CORE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

1. Group Interview Playgroup Staff 05.12.00

Start by emphasizing confidentiality of all interviews.

Child specific questions

1. How long has (X) been playgroup? Key worker?
2. How would you describe (X)?
3. Any changes since started?
4. Settled? Is (X) ok when parent leaves? *Probe for perceptions of each child.*
5. How often does child see key worker/other adults/other children?

General questions

1. How do you think children benefit from their time in playgroup?
2. What do you think children learn at playgroup that they don't learn at home?
3. What do you think children learn at home that they don't learn at playgroup?
4. How can you help them make the transition from home to playgroup?
5. Sessions in this playgroup have a certain structure, why is this?
6. What do you think are the main differences for children between home and playgroup?
7. Do you think it matters how much children talk here? Are there other aspects of children's development/settling that you consider more important?
8. What do you think of the single entry policy? How does this effect children?
9. Do you think the length of time (3-6 terms) children spend in playgroup makes a difference? In what ways?
10. Do you think number of sessions children attend makes a difference?
11. What do you think is the best training for the job?
12. How do the PLA and LEA support you?
13. Pay/Status?
14. How do you feel about Ofsted inspections? Benefits/drawbacks?
15. Role of LEA Playgroup Development Worker?

Appendix 4.2ctd

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2. Group Interview Playgroup Staff 1.5.01

Remind interviews are confidential.

General questions

1. Do you think the National Curriculum has changed what you do in playgroup?

2. Ask what staff do at different activities: their role, intervention etc.

3. Pre-school education is often described as providing a mixture of care and education. Do you agree? Do you see yourselves as educators, carers or both?

4. What do you know/think about Baseline Assessment? Have you introduced any new approaches/activities linked to BLA?

5. Starting School: If parents decide to keep child in playgroup rather than send child to school, how do the finances work? Who pays for child in playgroup?

6. What happens to any other support, eg speech therapy?

7. Current funding = for 4 year olds. When will 3 year olds be paid for by LEA?

8. Which current playgroup children are starting school in September? What are your views? What is your role in the children's transition?

9. Do you think it makes a difference how long children spend in playgroup?.

10. *Training*: In your training, you learn that children learn both by doing and by talking about doing. How do you think this works in daily practice? What about children who don't talk much? Are they learning?

11. *Work experience students*: How is this organised? What is your role regarding the students? What is their role? Do you report on them?

12. *Parent/Playgroup*: In what ways do parents get involved with playgroup? *Prompts:* Rota system; Fund-raising; Is parental involvement satisfactory? How do you feedback to parents how children are doing?

Child specific questions

1. Have you noticed any differences since starting playgroup in the way (X.)

- Mixes with others
- Takes part in activities
- Talks to others

Appendix 4.2ctd

………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. What do you think (X) has got out of playgroup so far?

3. What do you think (X) has still got to learn from playgroup?

Tallulah:

1. Apron – what do you think about this now?

2. New key worker – how's it going?

3. What activities does she do now?

4. How do you feel about her starting school in September? (covered above?)

5. Any friendships/ changes in way interacts with others: children/adults?

Michael:

1. At first interview, you wondered if he might have slight speech problem, any concerns now?

3. Group Interview Playgroup Staff 24.07.01

Remind interviews are confidential.

General Questions

1. *Accreditation/ Inspection of playgroup:* Parents consider playgroup very enriching experience for children, and hold in high esteem. Any recent formal assessments that reflect this? Local / Ofsted inspection feedback?

2. *Parental attitudes to playgroup* What do you think parents expect of playgroup?

3. *Training*

   3.1 What do you think is the best training for the job of working in playgroup?

   3.2 When you started working here did you have any relevant qualifications?

   3.3 Having completed some training do you feel differently about your work?

          a. more 'professional'?

          b. more informed about your responsibilities to the children/ parents/ education system?

          c. more reassured about what you do?

Appendix 4.2ctd

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3.4 On the CACHE training courses there's quite a lot of theory about how children learn. How do you think this theory works in the day to day life of playgroup? *(NB See if matches answer to Curriculum Planning)*

3.5 Is theory useful to you as professional playgroup workers?

3.6 You've mentioned some of your ideas for activities are from your training courses. How useful are these practical tips? What other sources do you have?

4. *Playgroup activities/ Curriculum Planning*

4.1 How do you decide on different topics and how are these threaded into daily practice?

4.2 Do you think that you can guide children's learning through the curriculum, or do you feel that learning is more incidental?

4.3 Although you have many structured activities, children in playgroup enjoy a wide choice of activity, and are allowed flexibility within each task. Do you think this is a good thing? Or should all children be working to a more tightly controlled curriculum, perhaps as they do in school?

4.4 When do you think children learn most? *(probing issues from analysis)*

5. *Funding of playgroups*

Is state funding of playgroups a good/bad thing for: children; parents; playgroups?

6. *Assessment*

What are your thoughts on Baseline Assessment? *(check against previous answers)*

Child specific questions

1. How does (X) spend his/her time in playgroup? (*probe activities, who with*)

2. Do you think (X) talks to adults/children/both? Has this changed over time?

3. If child speaks mostly to other children, do you encourage ch to talk to adults?

4. During chats you have mentioned you regularly have children who are reluctant talkers: What reasons? Do you think it matters if they talk or not? Do you feel you should encourage them to talk?

Appendix 4.2ctd

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    a. Why?

    b. What do you do? What strategies do you think work?

Tallulah

What are your thoughts now about Tallulah starting school in September?

Zara/ Michael/ Jake

1. How would you feel about Zara/ Michael/ Jake starting school in September?

2. If say better in playgroup, probe what playgroup offers that school doesn't. What would school offer?

3. *(inc Tallulah).* Looking back over the year, what are your general feelings about (X) in playgroup over his/her time here?

Mother Interviews

4. Mother Interview 1

Start by emphasising confidentiality of all interviews.

1. Ask when child: birthday; started playgroup

2. How would you describe (X)? *Prompts if need:* outgoing/shy; talkative/quiet; self-confident/self-doubting?

3. Does (X) have a close friendship outside immediate family/ in playgroup?

4. How do you think (X) finds playgroup? *Prompts:* Settled? Enjoy it? Look forward to going? Talk about it? Do playgroup activities at home?

5. Have you noticed or have staff reported any differences since started playgroup?

6. Why did you decide to send (X) to playgroup? Other facilities/options?

7. Why this playgroup?

8. How do you think children benefit from their time in playgroup?

9. Any drawbacks?

10. What do you think children learn at playgroup that they don't learn at home?

Appendix 4.2ctd

…………………………………………………………………………………………

11. What do you think children learn at home that they don't learn at playgroup?

12. So far, have you been pleased with the way your child has adapted to playgroup?

5. Mother Interview 2

Remind interviews confidential.

1. It's now (X) weeks since we last met. Have you noticed any particular changes in (X) since then? *Prompts:* in behaviour at home; at playgroup; outside home and playgroup

2. How often does (X) go to playgroup now? *Prompts:* Why have you made this change? Is (X) with the same adults? Is (X) with the same children? Is (X) developing friendships with other children? (in or out of playgroup)

3. Have you noticed any differences in the ways (X) expresses him/herself? *Prompts:* at home; when out; with close friends/ family; at playgroup; with other children not at playgroup

4. How is (X) enjoying playgroup? *Prompts:* Does (X) talk about it? Bring ideas/activities home? Ever not want to go?

5. Have you or staff noticed any changes in (X) in playgroup? *Prompts:* activities; with other children? on own? with adults?

6. Do staff feed back to you how (X) is getting on?

7. Ask questions arising from previous interviews regarding each child.

Appendix 4.2ctd

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6. Mother Interview 3

Remind interviews confidential.

1. Have you noticed any particular changes since we last met in the ways X talks to others at home; at playgroup; in outside world?

2. Does X still talk about playgroup: things that X has done; things that other children have done; showbox?

3. Does X enjoy doing drawing/ colouring in/ writing/ any number games at home?

4. Any new friendships/ continuation of established friends?

5. How do you feel about/ would you feel about X starting school in September?

6. Are you generally pleased with playgroup so far? What impact do you think attending playgroup has had on X? On yourself?

7. Looking back over the year, what are your general feelings about how X has changed over the last year?

Child specific question:

1. *Tallulah:* Tallulah sings to herself and says rhymes at playgroup, does she do this at home also?

2. *Zara:* Zara plays a lot at dressing up and role-playing, making homes, going on journeys etc. Does she do this also at home?

3. *Jake:* Has Jake formed any friendships in his own year group?

4. *Michael: Q1* Michael is a very sociable and active child at playgroup. Is this also the case at home?

   Q2 At playgroup, Michael plays a lot with the cars, building blocks and role playing. He also enjoys 'table top' activities. Does he do all these things at home? What does he do most?/ What other things does he do?
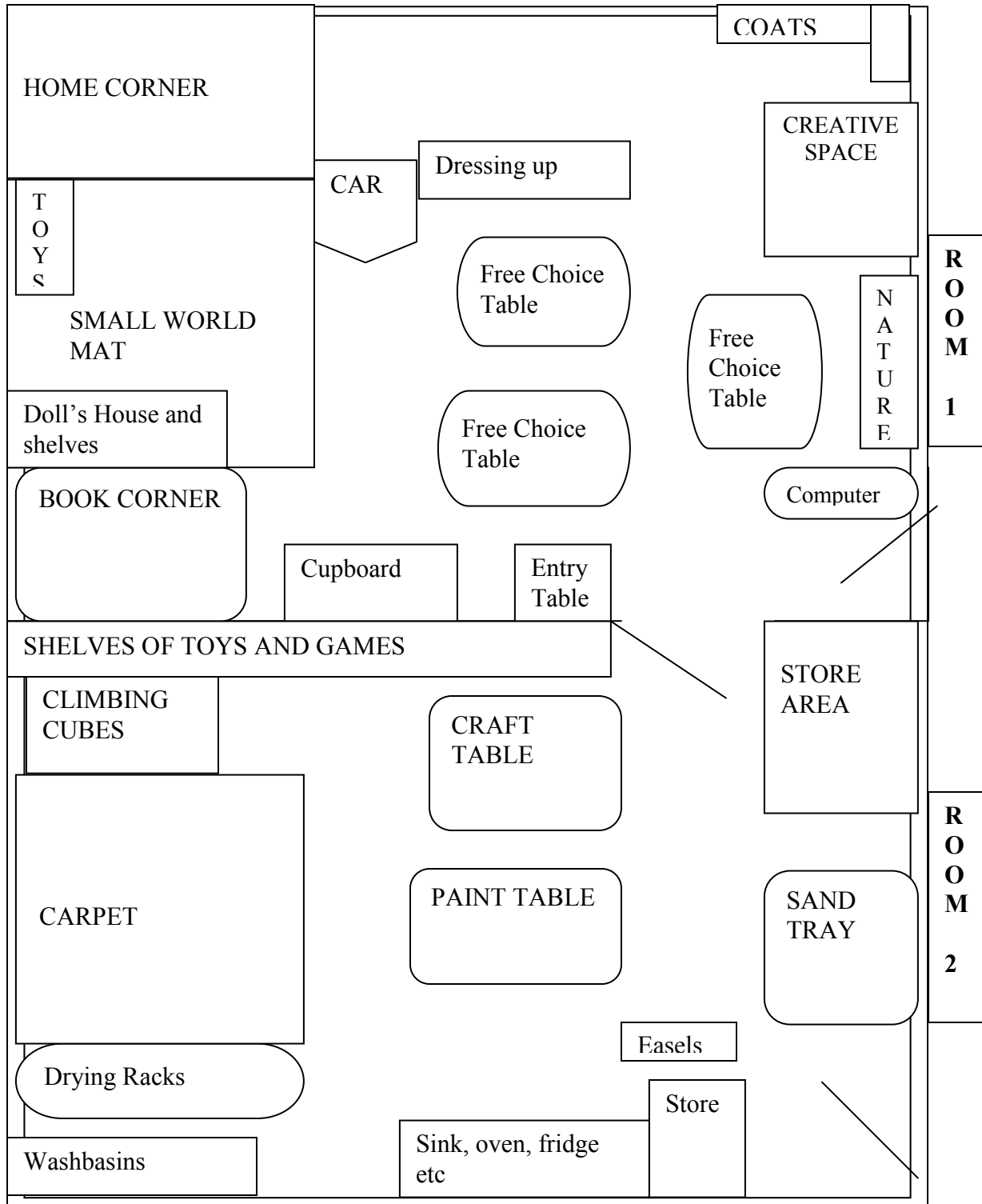
Appendix 4.3
SAMPLE ANALYSIS DOCUMENTATION FORM

Appendix 4.4
SAMPLE PAGE VIDEO LOG

Appendix 4.5
LETTER SENT TO ALL PARENTS AND STAFF

Appendix 4.6
LETTER SIGNED BY ALL CASE STUDY PARENTS AND STAFF

Appendix 5.1
PLAN OF PLAYGROUP

COATS

HOME CORNER

CREATIVE SPACE

T O Y S

CAR

Dressing up

R O O M 1

N A T U R E

SMALL WORLD MAT

Free Choice Table

Free Choice Table

Doll's House and shelves

Free Choice Table

BOOK CORNER

Computer

Cupboard

Entry Table

SHELVES OF TOYS AND GAMES

STORE AREA

CLIMBING CUBES

CRAFT TABLE

R O O M 2

CARPET

PAINT TABLE

SAND TRAY

Drying Racks

Easels

Store

Washbasins

Sink, oven, fridge etc

Appendix 5.2
TOPICS OF TALK AT MILK TIME

Adult talk all sessions
cups (colour)
giving out milk/biscuits/preferences
cleaning up spillage
congratulate children for being good/polite
direct children:
- to encourage good/quiet/polite behaviour
- to hand out biscuits
- to next activity
- to behave quietly, or as group eg playing 'Simple Simon'

model polite behaviour

Adult talk some sessions
direct children:
- to find their name
- to collect name cards
- to next activity using shape on their table

reprimand for poor behaviour:
- (directly) by saying child's name
- (indirectly) make general comment

ask children if need toilet
reassure anxious children

Child talk all sessions
cups (request/compare and play with)
express preference for drink
ask for more milk and/or biscuits
talk about finishing drink
say please and/or thank you
refer to spilt drink

Child talk some sessions
discuss who is sitting where
request reward for being good
count children at table(s)
say out loud letter sounds
talk about someone/thing from home; about chasing hands/fingers game
compare self with others (age; strength; when going to 'big' school; clothes)
joint fantasy play (about milk; 'animate' biscuits; pretend to be animals)
private fantasy play (often difficult to discern)
state preference for next activity in response to adult

Appendix 5.3
CATEGORIES OF PLAYGROUP ACTIVITIES

COMPULSORY WHOLE GROUP:
adult-led

R	Registration (including whole group activity on carpet)
M	Milk Time
O	Outside Play
Mu	Whole Group Music
S/B	Showbox

GUIDED CHOICE TABLES: adult-led
craft and paint

P/T	Paint Table
Cr	Craft Table
SIL	One-off activity (Silhouettes)

FREE CHOICE TABLES: adult-led
games

G	Game or game-like activity

FREE CHOICE TABLES: child-led
(adult sometimes present)

BRIO	Brio on table top
C/O	Cutting out
C/S	Construct-o-straws
COMP	Computer
DRAW/WRITE	Pens/pencils/paper on table
LEGO	Lego on table
P/B	Pegboard
P/D	Playdoh
Pu	Puzzles
P/E + Ch/E	Painting/chalk at easel
T/S	Tap-a-Shape

FREE CHOICE OPEN SPACES:
child-led (Distant adult supervision)

B/C	Book Corner[7]
C/A	Carpet Activity (Room2)
C/C	Climbing Cubes
Car	Cube Car
D/H	Doll's House
D/U	Dressing Up
H/C	Home Corner
MAT	Mat Activity (Room1)
Sel	Select toy from shelves
Space	Creative Space
S/T	Sand Tray
W/T	Water Tray

OTHER ACTIVITIES[8]

Ch/Cl	Change clothes
Cl/M	Cling to Mum (after initially settled)
Coat	Hang up/put on coat
S	Settle (not engaging in activities or in interaction other than with departing parent)
T/St	Talk to staff (about what to do next)
TT	Toilet Trip
Video	Child focus on/ask about video
W	Wander around
W/H	Wash hands

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[7] 'Book Corner' was used primarily by children for Fantasy Play, or to browse through books as part of a game. Also used by staff to 'calm children down' if upset or disruptive.

[8] 'Other' activities were treated as private to the children, including moments of intimacy between parent and child, of changing clothes and of personal hygiene.

Appendix 5.4
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Name	*Position held*	*Experience in pre-schools (years)*	*Qualifications*
Holly	Supervisor	15 years	PPA Foundation; Child Observation; Curriculum Planning; SEN training
Sarah	Deputy Supervisor	5 years	Introduction to Pre-School Practice Diploma in Pre-School Practice
June	Senior Pre-School Assistant	5 years	Introduction to Pre-School Practice Diploma in Pre-School Practice
Janet	Pre-School Assistant	3 years	Introduction to Pre-School Practice
Nina	Pre-School Assistant	3 years	Introduction to Pre-School Practice
Paula	Pre-School Assistant	3 years	Introduction to Pre-School Practice

Appendix 7.1
BREAKDOWN OF JAKE'S OBSERVED TIME IN PLAYGROUP

JAKE : Free Choice Open Spaces: child-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Car	09.05.01	6	13.19-13.25 (p6 tr[1])	with Nick+Tobias
	11.07.01	9	13.11-13.20 (p1-2)	with older boys
Creative Space	09.05.01	2	12.58-12.59 (p1tr)	watching older boys,
		2	13.01-13.03 (p1tr)	excluded
Mat	05.03.01	5	10.06-10.10 (p3tr)	private speech
	04.04.01	2	13.24-13.26	with Arnie
	09.05.01	4	13.30-13.33 (p8tr)	
Home Corner	09.05.01	2	12.59-13.01	ongoing Fantasy
		4	13.15-19	Game of baddies
		5	13.25-30	enacted across
	11.07.01	1	13.20	activities
				video only
Sand Tray	05.03.01	6	10.59-11.05 (p7tr)	
	04.04.01	18	14.23–14.40	video only
	09.05.01	18	14.06–14.22(p11tr)	field notes only
		16	14.24-14.40	field notes only
	06.06.01	17	14.15-14.31	
	11.07.01	29	14.18-14.48	video only
Climbing Cubes	05.03.01	11	11.20-11.30	video only
	04.04.01	5	14.16-14.21 (p10tr)	gross motor,
				cooperation, laughter
TOTAL TIME		**162**		

JAKE: Free Choice Tables: child-led adult sometimes present

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Cutting Out	06.06.01	2	13.14-15	Adult busy helping other child
Construct-o-Straws	05.03.01	9	9.56-10.06	on own, occasional adult
Playdoh	04.04.01	2	13.36-38	Nick leaves with girls, then Nick +boys
	09.05.01	11	13.03-15	
TOTAL TIME		**24**		

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[1] tr = transcript page number

Appendix 7.1ctd

JAKE: Free Choice Tables: Games adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Games	05.03.01	9 4	no 10.10-14	older boys watches oldr boys, then plays with ad
	04.04.01 06.06.01	10 7 6	13.13-23 13.07-13 13.15-21	on own with Sarah older girl+boys older boys, tidy up called
TOTAL TIME		**36**		

JAKE: Guided Choice Tables: Craft and Paint adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Paint table	05.03.01 04.04.01 09.05.01 11.07.01	1 2 1 4	11.05 14.21-23 14.05 14.14-17	touches, leaves picks up brushes, leaves starts to paint, attracted by fun at Sand Tray, leaves with older boys, making masks
Craft Table	05.03.01 04.04.01 09.05.01 06.06.01 11.07.01	2 13 11 2 20 2	10.58-59 11.05-18 14.40-14.50 14.22-23 13.55-14.15 14.49-50	leaves when ad. distracted by other table space issue, zebra crossing cake baking, lick bowl etc electricity 'are we making cakes?' making flower in pot mum arrived to take home as bumped head earlier
TOTAL TIME		**58**		

Appendix 7.1ctd

JAKE: Compulsory Whole Group: adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Registration and Group Activity	05.03.01	22	no 10.19-40	music
	04.04.01	18	no 13.38-56	story
	09.05.01	17	13.33-49	story
	06.06.01	17	13.21-13.39	talk re school + story
	11.07.01	7	13.50-13.56	register only, as ch had played outside (nice day)
		15	14.51-15.05	group story
TOTAL TIME		**96**		
Milk Time	05.03.01	20	10.41-58	
	04.04.01	18	13.57-14.15	
	09.05.01	14	13.50-14.05	
	06.06.01	16	13.39-55	
	11.07.01	18	13.57-14.14	
TOTAL TIME		**86**		
Outside Play	05.03.01	13	11.31-52	
	04.04.01	14	14.51-15.04	
	09.05.01	22	14.40-15.02	
	06.06.01	32	14.33-15.05	
	11.07.01	29	13.20-13.50	
TOTAL TIME		**110**		
Show Box	05.03.01	9	11.52-12.00	
	04.04.01	10	15.05-15	
	09.05.01	10	15.03-13	
	06.06.01	9	15.06-15	
	11.07.01	9	15.06-15	
TOTAL TIME		**47**		

Appendix 7.1ctd

JAKE: Other

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Settle	05.03.01	1	9.41	with Dad
	04.04.01	1	13.10	late, rushed
	09.05.01	2	12.58-59	watches older boys
	06.06.01	1	12.58	
	11.07.01	5	13.06-13.10	late as asleep in car, still sleepy
Toilet Trip	05.03.01	5	9.50-55	
	04.04.01	10	13.26-13.55	
	06.06.01	7	12.59-13.06	
Wander	05.03.01	5	10.14-10.19	watches others on carpet
	04.04.01	2	13.10-13.12	with parent
	06.06.01	1	13.06	when comes back from loo
		2	14.31-14.33	before goes outside
Wash Hands	05.03.01	1	11.19	
	11.07.01	1	14.17	
Change clothes				
Put on/ take off coat				
TOTAL TIME		**44**		

Appendix 7.2
BREAKDOWN OF MICHAEL'S OBSERVED TIME IN PLAYGROUP

MICHAEL: Free Choice Open Spaces: child-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Car	17.11.00	5	11.28-32	with Hannah+Zara
	23.04.01	1	10.56	leaves for Brio train
Creative Space	30.03.01	2	9.55-6	on own, shrugs
	21.05.01	11		Wallpapering/ outside
Carpet	17.11.00	10		building blocks, +video
Mat	19.01.01	19	11.31-50	Doll's House+mat
	26.02.01	2	10.00-02	Doll's House
		3	10.50-52	Brio Tools
	23.04.01	31	10.57-11.28	Brio Train track
	21.05.01	9	10.44-53	Duplo Box
Home Corner				
Sand Tray	17.11.00	3	10.57-9	looks around
	19.01.01	8	10.55-11.03	tries to play, excluded by older girls +boys
	26.02.01	20	11.08-28	girls let M play, then on own
		18	11.00-17	older boys, M shows them how pump works
	30.03.01	11	11.08-18	toy animals in Sand, with girl
	21.05.01	5	11.00-05	Water + Sand/ outside
		8	11.16-24	Water + Sand/ outside
Climbing Cubes	26.02.01	1	10.46	
	30.03.01	2	11.06-8	
TOTAL TIME		**169**		

Appendix 7.2ctd

MICHAEL: Free Choice Tables: child-led adult sometimes present

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Cutting Out	23.04.01	1	10.55	
Lego bricks	23.04.01	23	9.37-10.00	with Holly, then George
Brio bricks	30.03.01	6	11.00-06	with older girl, on own
Pens/pencils	23.04.01	1	10.55	writes few seconds, moves to cube car where boys busy
Playdoh	17.11.00	30	9.35-10.05	makes 'cakes' with girls, gives to me
	26.2.1	6	9.42-48	taking turns with equip, adult present
	30.3.01	3	9.53-55	with older girls
	21.5.01	16	9.42-58	adult, girls and younger boys
Puzzle	30.03.01	21	9.56-10.16	complex puzzle with adult
Computer	19.01.01	12	9.36-48	on own, responding to game prompts on screen
Painting Easel	26.02.01	1	10.42	paints picture
	26.02.01	4	11.33-39	paints picture mummy, talks to adult re picture
TOTAL TIME		**124**		

MICHAEL: Free Choice Tables: Games adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Games	26.02.01	9	9.49-58	boys +girls
	30.03.01	6	9.38-53	listening game with tape
TOTAL TIME		**15**		

MICHAEL: Guided Choice Tables: Craft and paint adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Paint table	17.11.00	2	11.25-27	plays with ice, leaves
	26.02.01	3	10.39-42	waits, leaves
		2	10.43-45	plays on own, no adult
	30.03.01	15	no 11.18-32	adult helps/guides
	21.05.01	2	10.42-44	completes task with adult, leaves
Craft Table	17.11.00	6	11.19-25	makes paper 'ice cream', licks it
	19.01.01	6	10.49-55	makes bird cake for garden
TOTAL TIME		**36**		

Appendix 7.2ctd

MICHAEL: Compulsory Whole Group: adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Registration and Group Activity	17.11.00	25	10.05-35	music for xmas, inc toilet
	19.01.01	18	10.08-25	doesn't participate in grp game, watching snow fall,
	26.02.01	24	10.02-26	music
	30.03.01	22	10.13-37	story
	23.04.01	30	10.00-29	story
	21.05.01	28	9.58-10.26	story
TOTAL TIME		**147**		
Milk Time	17.11.00	20	10.35-55	
	19.01.01	22	10.25-46	
	26.02.01	13	10.26-39	
	30.03.01	15	10.37-51	
	23.04.01	21	10.30-50	inc. toilet trip
	21.05.01	17	10.26-10.42	inc. toilet trip
TOTAL TIME		**108**		
Outside Play	17.11.00	21	11.32-52	
	19.01.01	15	9.48-10.05	snowing
	26.02.01	14	11.40-53	
	30.03.01	20	11.35-55	
	23.04.01	22	11.28-50	
	21.05.01	21	11.29-50	
TOTAL TIME		**111**		
Showbox	17.11.00	9	11.51-12.00	
	19.01.01	10	11.50-12.00	
	26.02.01	6	11.54-12.00	
	30.03.01	5	11.55-12.00	
	23.04.01	8	11.48-12.00	
	21.05.01	10	11.50-12.00	
TOTAL TIME		**48**		

Appendix 7.2ctd

MICHAEL: Other

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Settle	19.01.01	2	9.35	as Mum chats
	26.02.01	2		
	30.03.01	3		
	23.04.01	2		
	21.05.01	2		
Toilet Trip	17.11.00	6	11.13-19	
	19.01.01	5	11.03-08	
	26.02.01	8	10.53-11.00	
	30.03.01	9	10.51-11.00	
	23.04.01	5	10.50-55	
	21.05.01	6	10.30-36	during milk
		7	10.53-11.00	
Wander	17.11.00	2	10.55-7	craft to paint to sand tray
	19.01.01	4	10.46-49	craft to paint to sand tray
		4	11.28-31	space to H/C to MAT
	26.02.01	5	9.58-10.00	book corner (busy) to MAT
	26.02.01	5	9.37-42	investigates tables
			10.46-50	watches ads set out blocks
	21.05.01	2	9.40-42	investigates tables
Wash Hands	26.02.01	1		
Change clothes	21.05.01	4		wet after water play
Put on/ take off coat	19.01.01	2		due to snow
		3		due to snow
	30.03.01	1		
	23.04.01	1		
TOTAL TIME		**91**		

Appendix 7.3
BREAKDOWN OF TALLULAH'S OBSERVED TIME IN PLAYGROUP

TALLULAH: Free Choice Open Spaces child-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Book Corner	24.11.00 15.06.01	22 9	9.45-10.05 10.00-10.08	with mum with W/Exp student then Rosie
Car				
Climbing Cubes	14.02.01	7	10.53-10.59	NB: no craft activities set up
Creative Space				
Home Corner	21.03.01	10	9.48-9.58	with brother
Mat				
Sand Tray				
TOTAL TIME		**48**		

TALLULAH: Free Choice Tables: child-led adult sometimes present

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Cutting Out	24.11.00	6 5	9.39-9-45 11.26-11.31	 on own, then Mum
Draw/write	21.03.01	25	11.14-11.38	with Mum
Painting Easel	15.11.00	19	11.13-11.31	on own, occasional adult talks to T
Pegboard	14.02.01	29	11.00 –11.34	with older girls (+ toilet trip)
Playdoh	21.03.01 27.04.01	16 32	9.58-10.14 9.37-10.08	with Mum not participating, then with Sarah
Puzzle	14.02.01 21.03.01 15.06.01	36 6 15	9.39-10.15 9.35-41 9.38-9.52	with older girl + adult, T helps girl on own, Sarah joins her, T goes to find Mum on own, Sarah joins her
Tap-a-shape	27.04.01	29	no 11.20-11.49	allowed to finish shape before Outside Play
TOTAL TIME		**218**		

TALLULAH: Free Choice Tables: Games adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Games	15.11.00	30	9.38-10.07	elephant game with Sarah
TOTAL TIME		**30**		

Appendix 7.3ctd

T<small>ALLULAH</small>: Guided Choice Tables: Craft and paint adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Craft Table	24.11.00 21.03.01 15.06.01	7 11 40	11.18-11.25 no 11.39-11.50 10.53-11.31	paper snowman with Jemima, then on own
Paint table	15.11.00 24.11.00 27.04.01 15.06.01	13 19 24 3	10.56 –11.09 10.52-11.11 no 10.57-11.20 10.50-10.52	with adult doesn't respond to ad, but talks to Gary (brother) repeats activity several times 'new experience' tapioca in slime on table
TOTAL TIME		**117**		

T<small>ALLULAH</small>: Compulsory Whole Group: adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Registration and Group Activity	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 27.04.01 15.06.01	27 22 19 16 28 25	10.07-10.32 10.08-10.30 10.15-10.35 10.15-10.31 10.09-10.36 10.06-10.32	 inc. xmas songs small group literacy activity games and songs
TOTAL TIME		**137**		
Milk Time	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 27.04.01 15.06.01	16 22 17 13 20 19	10.33-55 10.30-10.51 10.36-10.53 10.32-10.45 10.37-10.56 10.32-10.50	(+ toilet trip 7 min)
TOTAL TIME		**107**		
Outside Play	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 27.04.01 15.06.01	22 19 20 27 4 18	11.31-11.52 11.31-11.50 11.35-11.54 10.45-11.12 11.49-11.52 11.33-11.56	 stays at tap-a-shape to finish design
TOTAL TIME		**110**		
Show Box	15.11.00 24.11.00 14.02.01 21.03.01 27.04.01 15.06.01	8 7 5 10 7 5	11.52-12.00 11.53-12.00 11.55-12.00 11.50-12.00 11.53-12.00 11.56-12.00	
TOTAL TIME		**42**		

Appendix 7.3ctd

TALLULAH: Other

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Settle	15.11.00	4	9.35-38	with Mum
	24.11.00	4	9.35-38	with Mum
	14.02.01	2	9.37-39	with Mum
	21.03.01	-		mum helping
	27.04.01	2	9.36-37	
	15.06.01	3	9.36-9.38	
Change clothes	21.03.01	1	11.13	
Cling Mum	21.03.01	7	9.41-9.48	mum helping
Toilet Trip	15.11.00	7	10.45-10.52	during milk time
	24.11.00	7	11.11-11.18	
	14.02.01	5	11.01-11.06	
Wash Hands	15.11.00	3	11.09-11.12	
	24.11.00	1	11.25	
Wandering	15.06.01	9	9.52-10.00	watches animated game, invited by ad to join, remains standing, invited by ad to join playdoh, eventually, Sarah talks to T, who goes to Book Corner
TOTAL TIME		**55**		

Appendix 7.4
BREAKDOWN OF ZARA'S OBSERVED TIME IN PLAYGROUP

ZARA: Free Choice Open Spaces child led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Book Corner				
Car	2.02.01	6	9.40-9.45	with Helen
		9	9.56-10.04	with Helen and boys
Climbing Cubes	20.03.01	2	11.08-11.10	approaches with doll, watches, leaves
		6	11.15-11.20	watches/imitates boys
	4.04.01	21	10.48-11.09	fantasy: dolls and Helen
	18.05.01	1	11.07	approaches, leaves
		9	11.31-11.40	on then in cubes with Helen and dolls
Creative Space	2.02.01	5	11.00-11.04	solitary play in 'shop', phone talk
	18.05.01	3	9.57-10.00	dispute with boys over H/C items
		2	10.05-10.06	boys have taken
Home Corner	1.12.00	6	11.00-11.05	dressing up
	2.02.01	7	9.50-9.56	ongoing Fantasy with Helen
		4	11.13-11.16	dressing up
	20.03.01	1	10.03	needs toilet
		2	11.26-11.27	needs toilet
		14	11.36-11.50	dressing up, play in H/C, talk to me
	4.04.01	8	9.59-10.06	dressing up, with Helen in house=role play
		2	10.46-10.47	on own, bars entry, leaves
	18.05.01	21	9.35-57	inc 3 min dressing up, solitary play, other ch also in H/C
		1	10.04	collects doll from cot, leaves
	12.06.01	4	11.13-11.16	play doctors on own=ongoing
Mat	2.02.01	6	9.45-9.50	ongoing fantasy game with Helen
		10	11.16-11.25	dressed up, starts kicking bricks on mat, others join in, adult stops them
Sand Tray				
Selecting toy from shelf	1.12.00	4	11.10-11.15	dolls and covers
	12.06.01	1	11.18	dolls
TOTAL TIME		**155**		

Appendix 7.4ctd

ZARA: Free Choice Tables: child-led adult sometimes present

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Computer	18.05.01	4	10.00-10.04	game not working, asks for help, broken, leaves
Construct-o-Straws	12.06.01	1	11.00	Zara dressed as doctor, leaves to 'examine' adult at Write table nearby
Cutting Out	2.02.01	2	11.11-11.13	joins Helen, starts to cut, leaves for H/C
Draw/write	12.06.01	5 6	10.47-10.52 11.01-11.12	with adult, Paula not drawing, playing doctors
Painting/Chalk Easel	20.03.01	3	10.53-10.56	paints as waits for space at Paint Table
Playdoh	1.12.00 20.03.01 4.04.01 12.06.01	31 17 4 9	9.37-10.08 9.45-10.02 9.54-9.58 9.45-9.54	some time at nature table with Faith with Helen, leave as doh 'too sticky', start fantasy on own, then tidies away all table with older boy
Puzzle				
Tap-a-shape	12.06.01	7	10.52-10.59	quietly makes shape, other ch at table
TOTAL TIME		**89**		

ZARA: Free Choice Tables: Games adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Games	4.04.01	8	9.46-9.53	with Helen
TOTAL TIME		**8**		

Appendix 7.4ctd

Zara: Guided Choice Tables: Craft and Painting adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Craft Table	1.12.00	3	10.51-10.53	runny nose
		13	11.16-11.29	no video
	2.02.01	12	10.47-10.59	2 dimensional doctor's surgery
	20.03.01	8	11.01-11.08	making flower, adult attention mostly to rough boy game nearby
	4.04.01	1	10.40	table full
		19	11.11-11.29	first 7 mins waiting for ad help = baking cakes
	18.05.01	5	11.01-11.06	very busy table, writing
		1	11.30	name in glue and sticking on glitter, adult help
	12.06.01	15	11.18-11.32	making salad/ small group
Paint table	1.12.00	5	10.53-10.58	completes activity, keeps sneezing
	20.03.01	1	10.53	watching only – no space,
		3	10.56-10.58	goes to Ch/E and returns
	4.04.01	4	10.40-10.45	marbles in canister
	18.05.01	21	11.18-11.29	outside, 'painting' playground with rollers
	12.06.01	5	10.41-10.45	sponge prints, but Zara asks to do it with hands
Silhouette	20.03.01	5	11.21-11.25	adult help, silhouette with lamp
TOTAL TIME		**121**		

Appendix 7.4ctd

ZARA: Compulsory Whole Group: adult-led

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Registration and Group Activity	1.12.00	19	10.08-10.22	(inc. toilet trip)
	2.02.01	26	10.04-10.30	story
	20.03.01	28	10.09-10.37	story
	4.04.01	19	10.07-10.26	story
	18.05.01	28	10.06-10.34	story (older ch do umeracy)
	12.06.01	24	9.54-10.19	story
TOTAL TIME		**144**		
Milk Time	1.12.00	24	10.27-10.51	
	2.02.01	16	10.30-10.46	
	20.03.01	15	10.38-10.53	
	4.04.01	14	10.26-10.40	
	18.05.01	25	10.35-11.00	
	12.06.01	11	10.19-10.40	noisy so children (and adults!) sent to run round outside
TOTAL TIME		**105**		
Outside Play	1.12.00	19	11.30-11.49	
	2.02.01	25	11.25-11.50	
	20.03.01	-		raining
	4.04.01	20	11.30-11.50	
	18.05.01	14	11.40-11.54	
	12.06.01	23	11.33-11.55	
TOTAL TIME		**101**		
Show Box	1.12.00	10	11.49-12.00	
	2.02.01	8	11.51-12.00	
	20.03.01	10	11.50-12.00	
	4.04.01	10	11.50-12.00	
	18.05.01	5	11.55-12.00	
	12.06.01	5	11.56-12.00	
TOTAL TIME		**48**		

Appendix 7.4ctd

ZARA: Other

ACTIVITY	DATE	MINS	RECORDED	COMMENTS
Settle	1.12.00	2	9.35-36	
	2.02.01	5	9.35-40	chatting with H1
	20.03.01	3	9.43-45	covered in snow as walked
	4.04.01	6	9.40-9.45	looking for H1
	12.06.01	7	9.38-9.54	wandering round
Talk to staff re what to do	4.04.01	2	11.09-11.10	
	18.05.01	1	11.17	
Toilet Trip	1.12.00	5	10.22-10.26	during registration
	2.02.01	7	11.04-11.10	
	20.03.01	6	10.09-10.37	
		8	11.28-11.36	
	18.05.01	7	11.08-11.15	
Wash Hands	1.12.00	2	10.58-10.59	
	20.03.01	2	10.58-11.01	
	4.04.01	1	9.58	
		1	10.45	
	12.06.01	1	10.46	
Wandering	2.02.01	2	10.57-59	
	18.05.01	2	11.15-11.16	
	12.06.01	1	11.17	also in 'settle' above
Video: interest in	20.03.01	5	11.10-11.15	I rewind and Z comments
TOTAL TIME		**76**		

Appendix 7.5
BAR CHARTS OF JAKE OBSERVED SESSIONS

KEY TO BAR CHARTS

Activity categories and abbreviations: See Appendix 5.3

Vertical axis: Time in minutes
Horizontal axis: 2 ½ hour playgroup session from beginning (far left) to end (far right)

All Free and Guided Choice activities

Compulsory Whole Group activities

Jake Time on Activity: 05.03.01
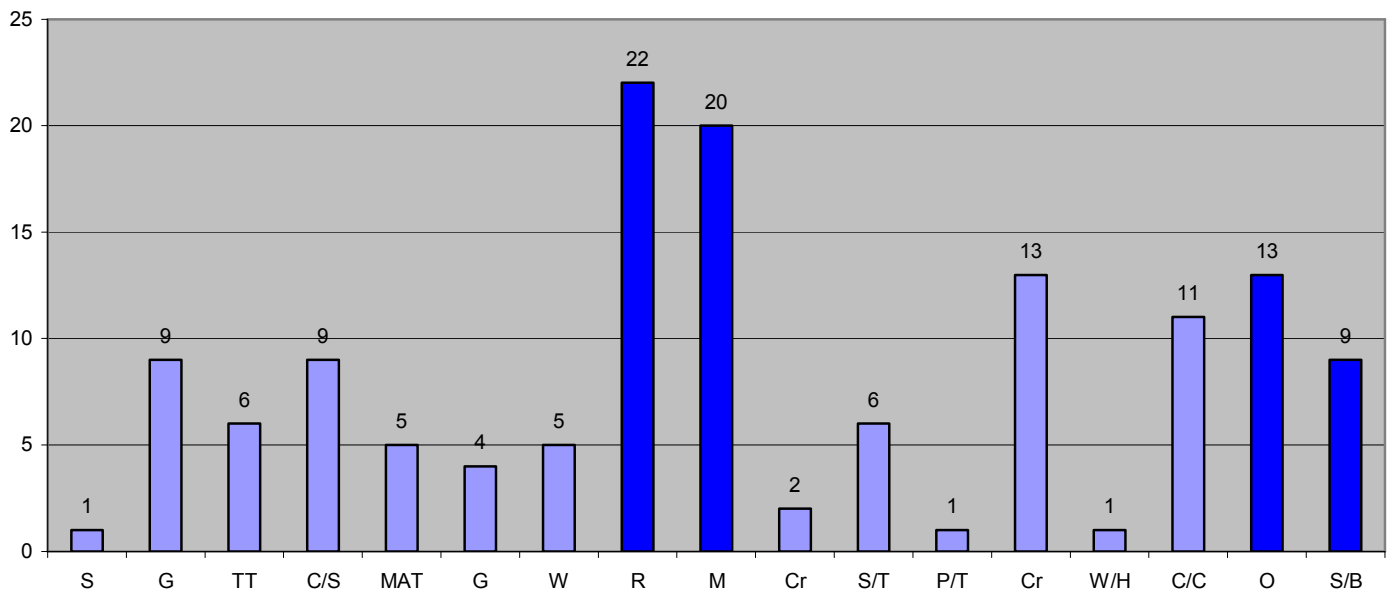
Jake Time on Activity: 04.04.01
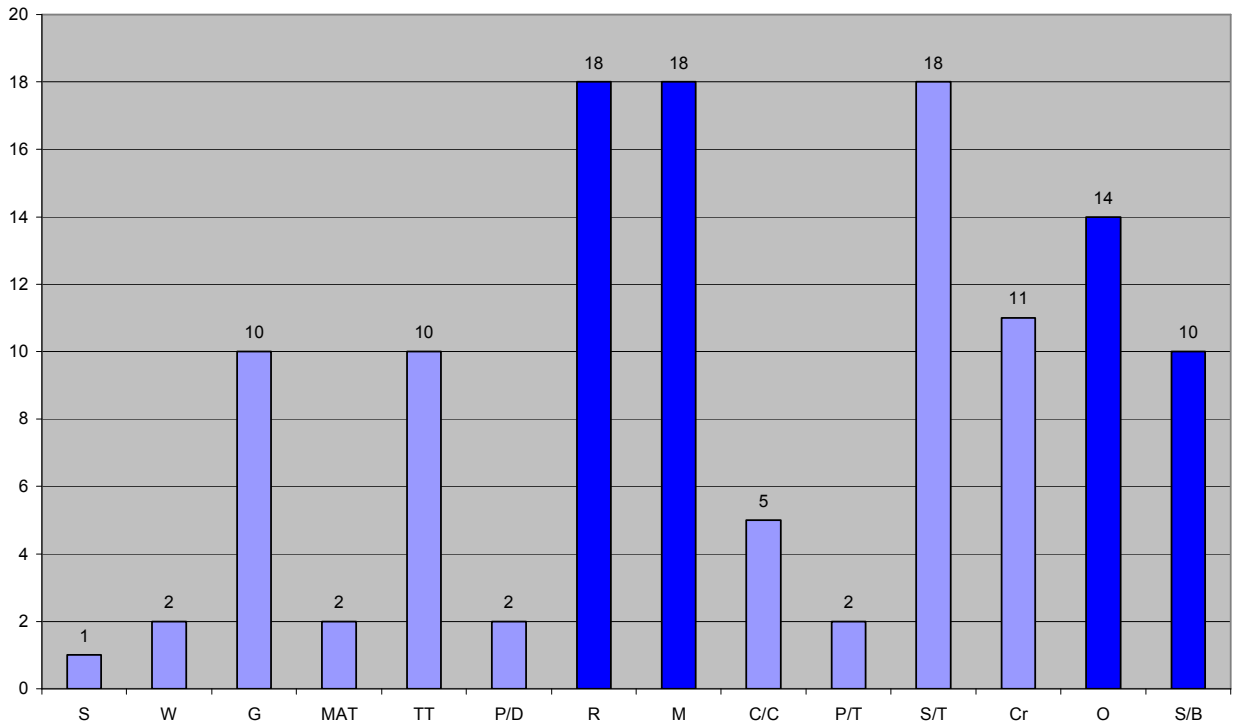
Jake Time on Activity: 09.05.01
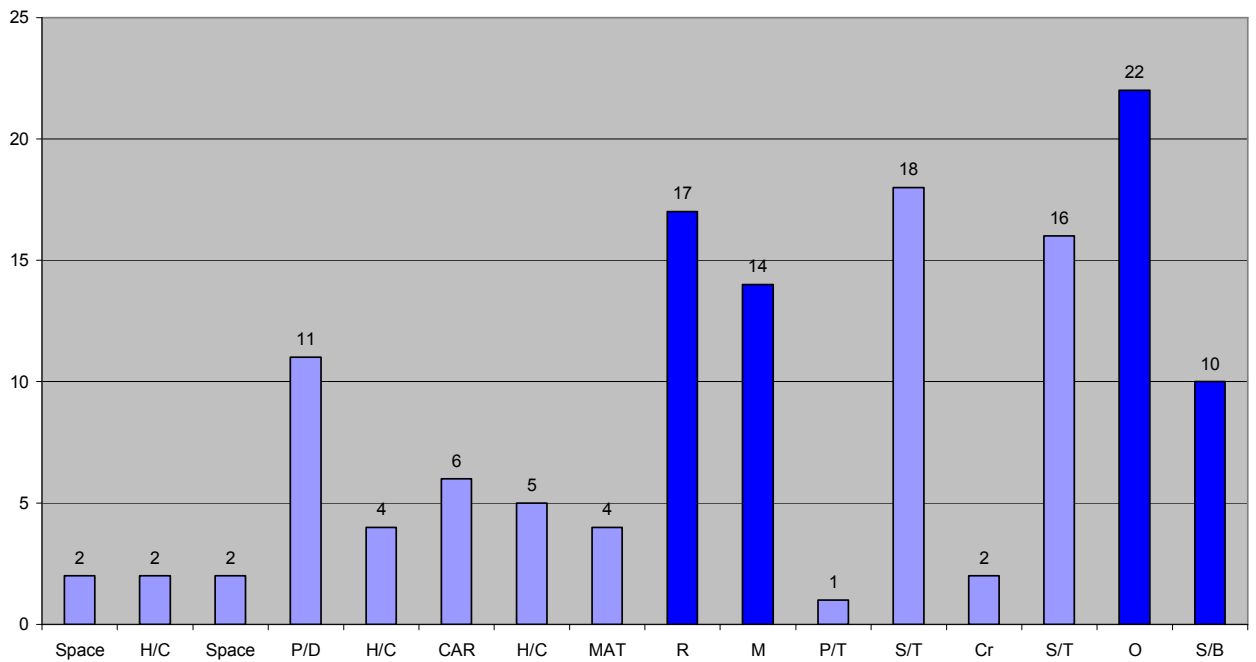
Jake Time on Activity: 06.06.01
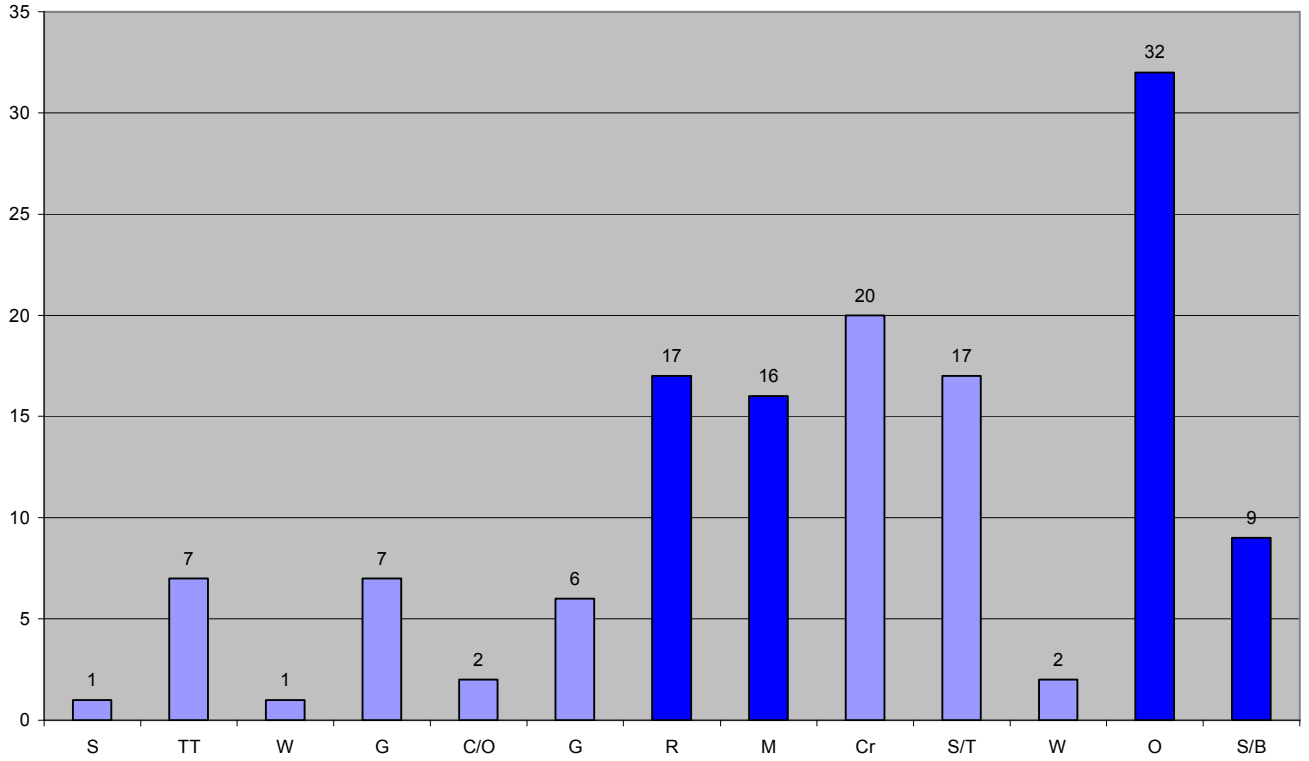
Jake Time on Activity: 11.07.01
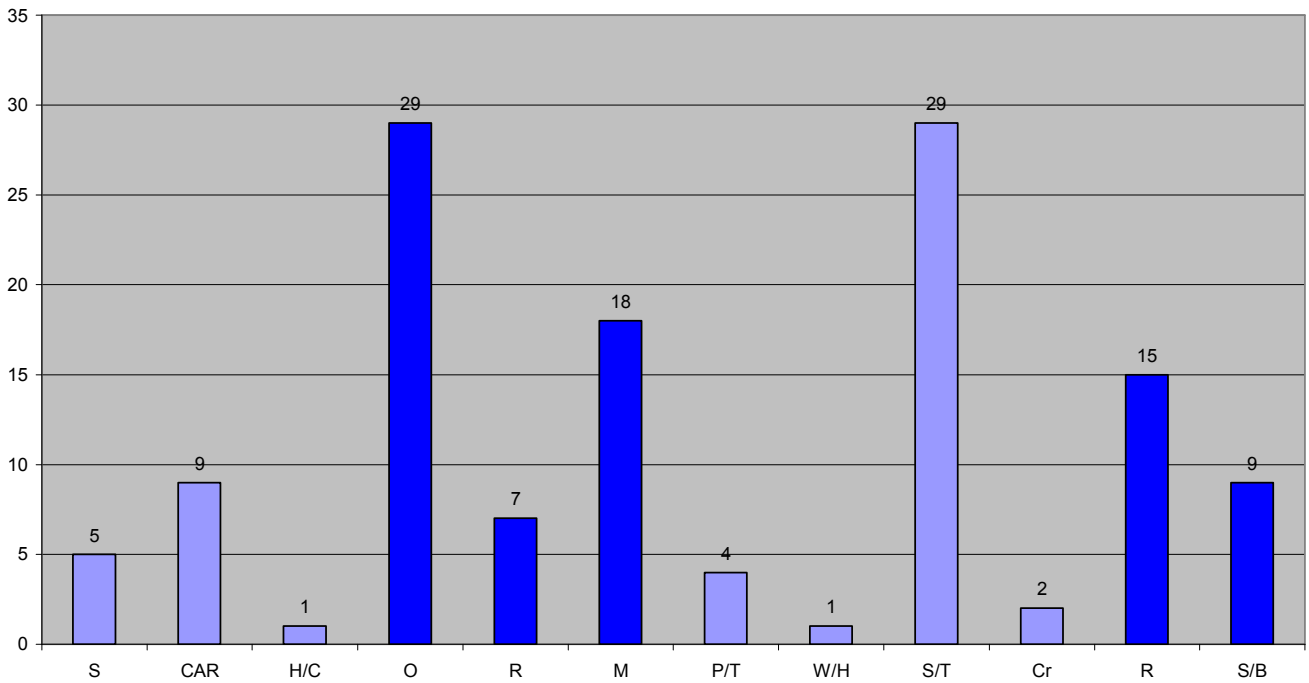
Appendix 7.6
BAR CHARTS OF MICHAEL OBSERVED SESSIONS

Michael Time on Activity: 17.11.00
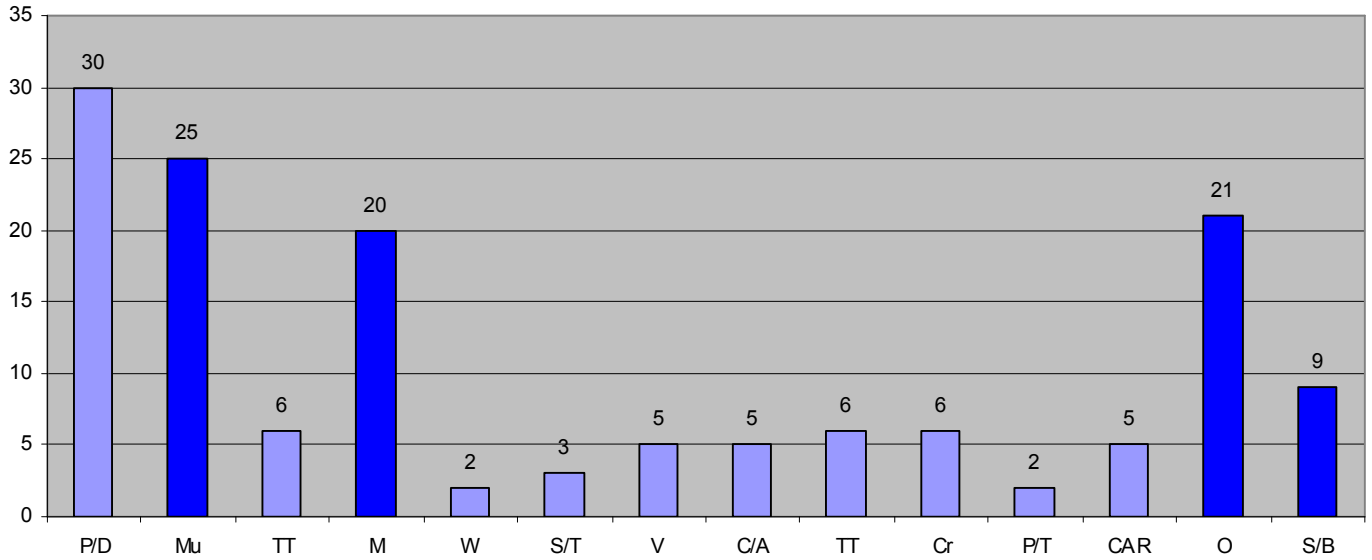
Michael Time on Activity: 19.01.01
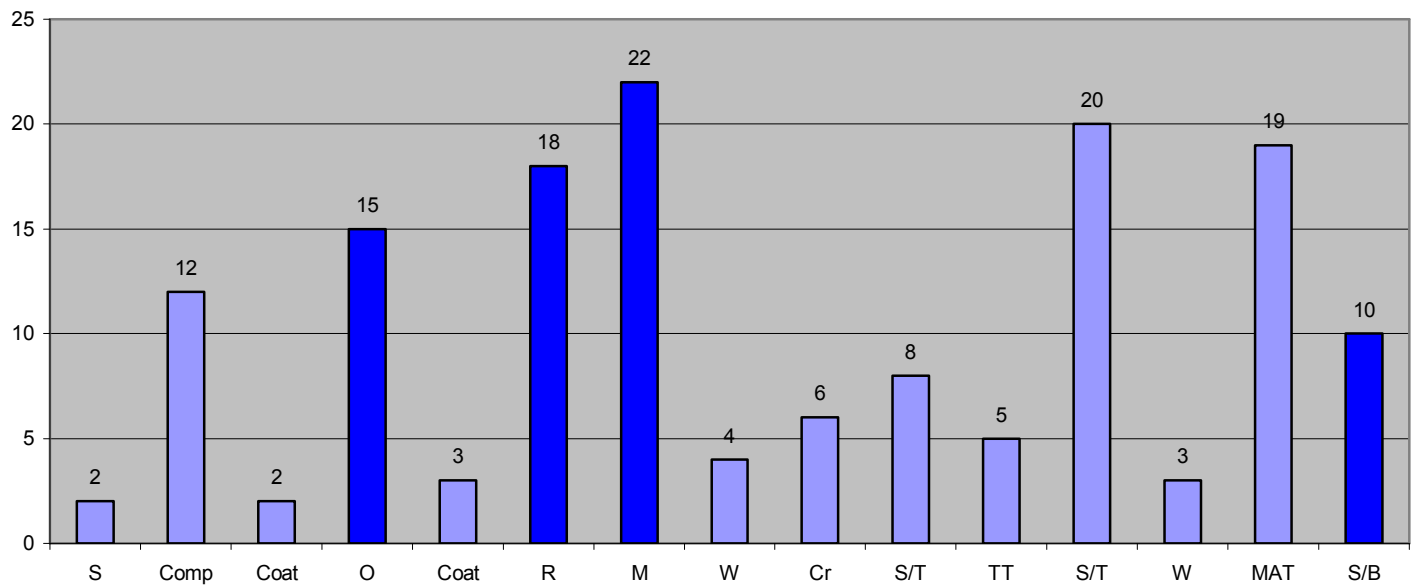
Michael Time on Activity: 26.02.01
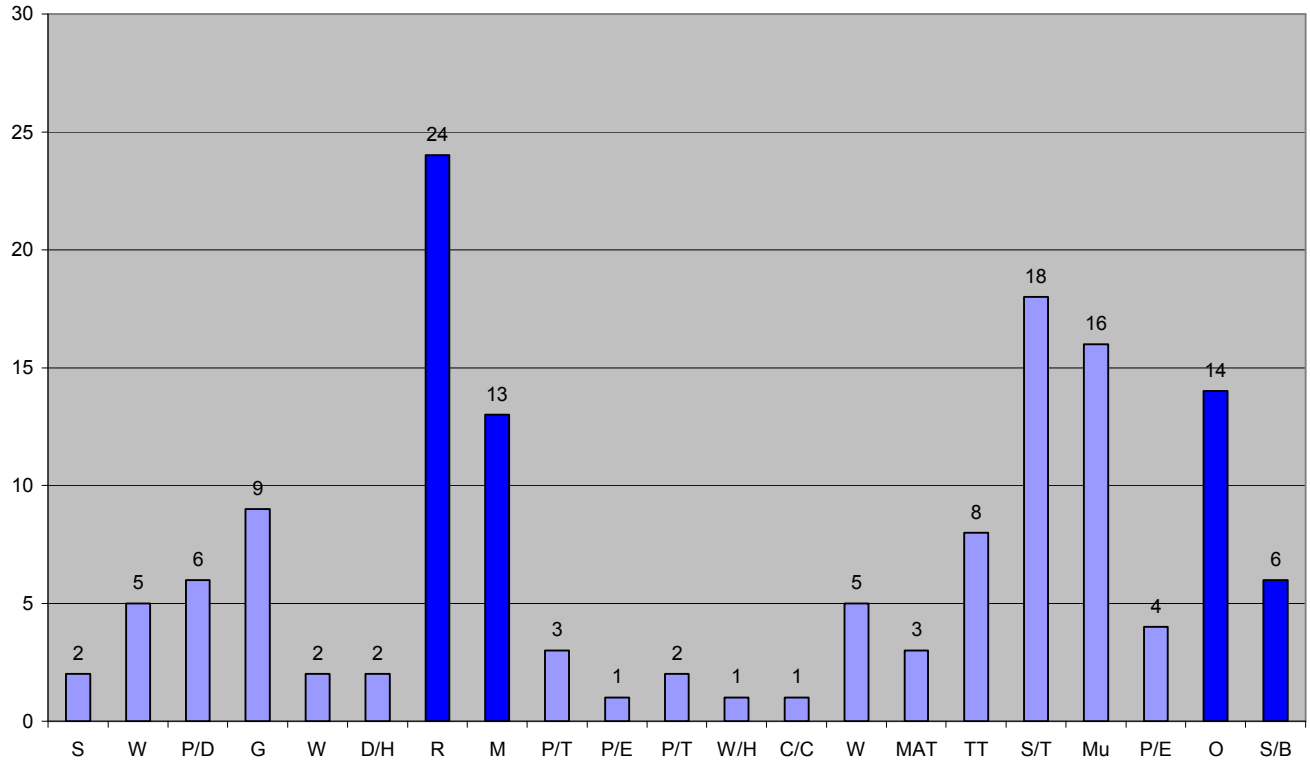
Michael Time on Activity: 30.03.01
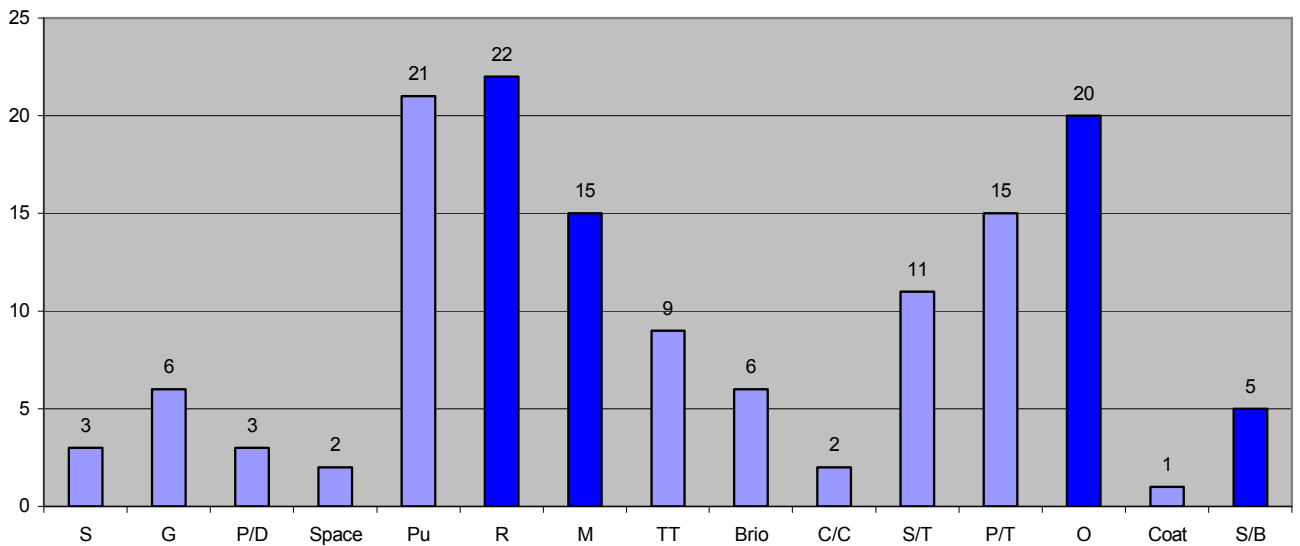
Michael Time on Activity: 23.04.01
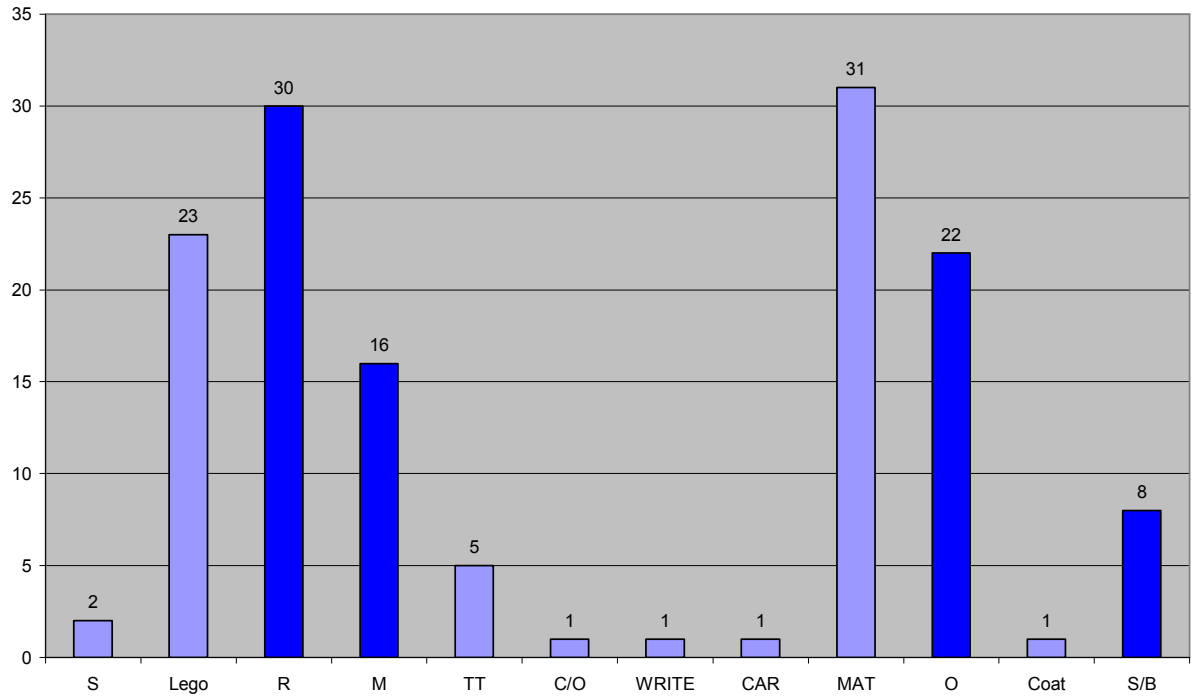
Michael Time on Activity: 21.05.01
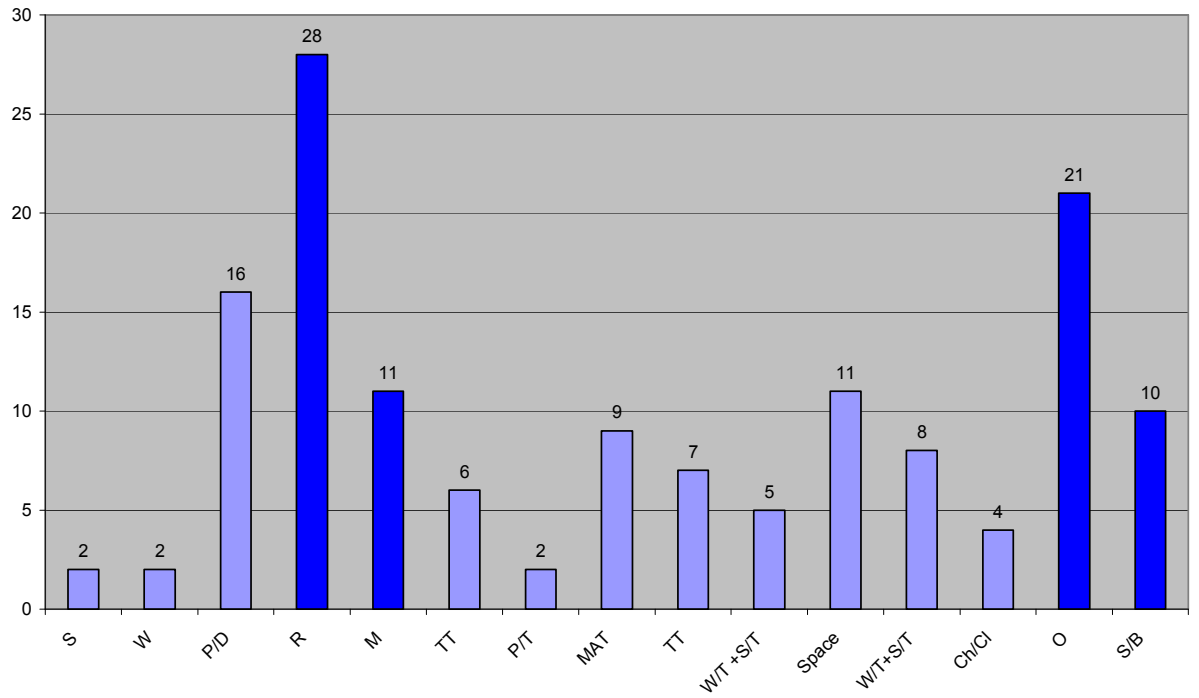
Appendix 7.7
BAR CHARTS OF TALLULAH OBSERVED SESSIONS

Talullah Time on Activity 15.11.00
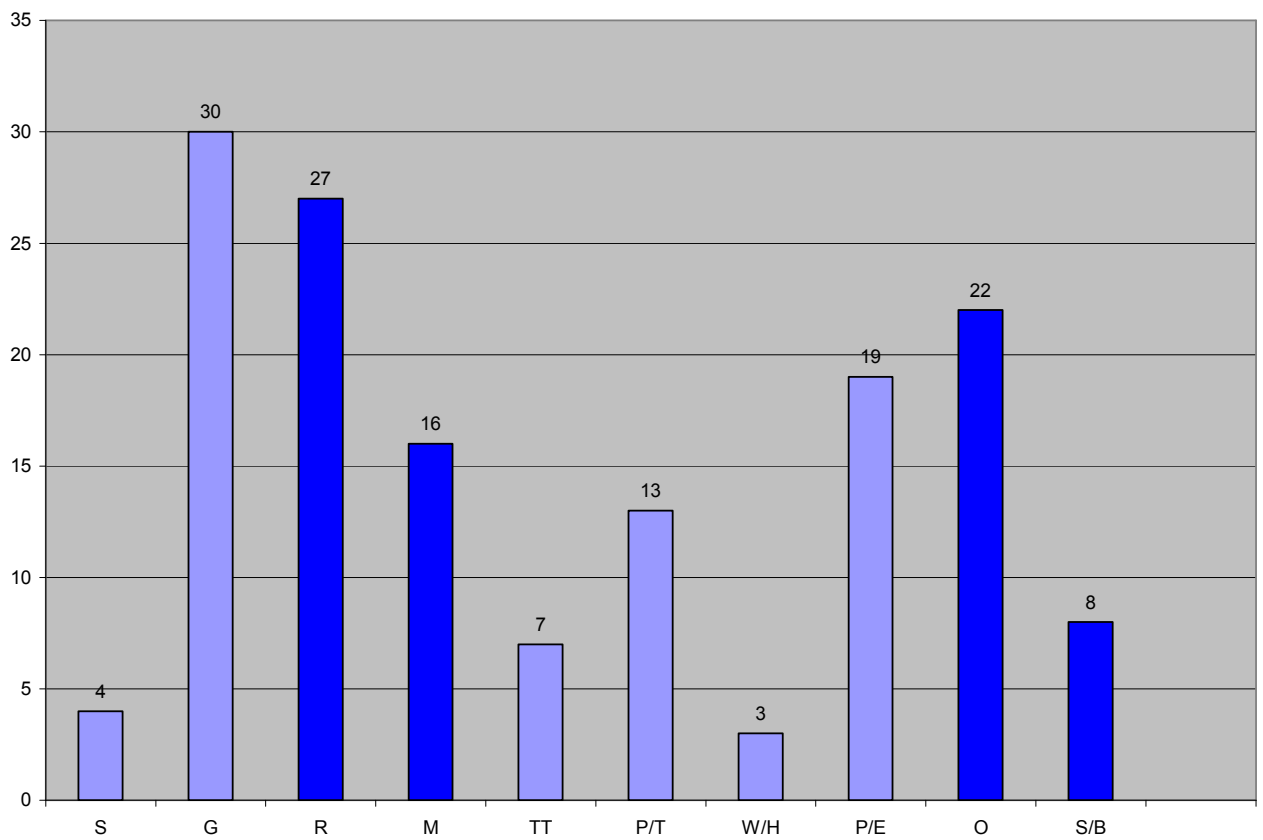
Talullah Time on Activity 24.11.00
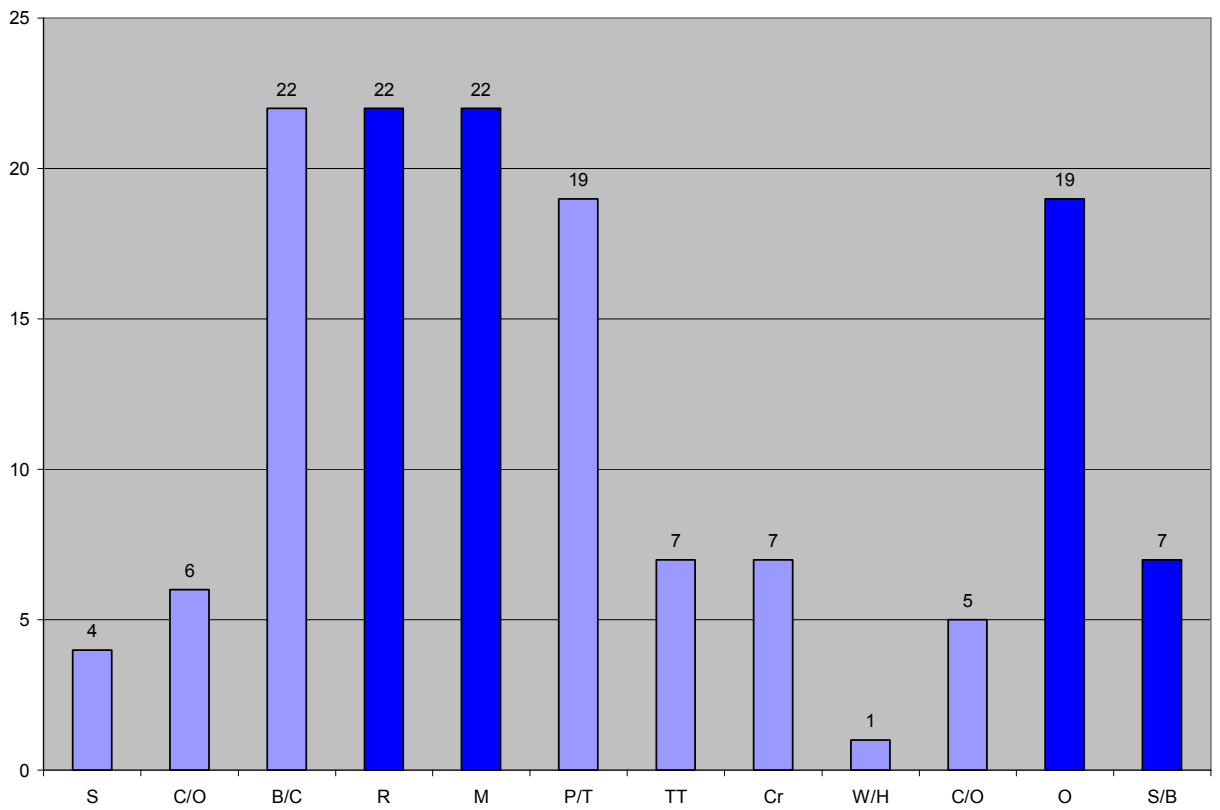
Talullah Time on Activity 14.02.01
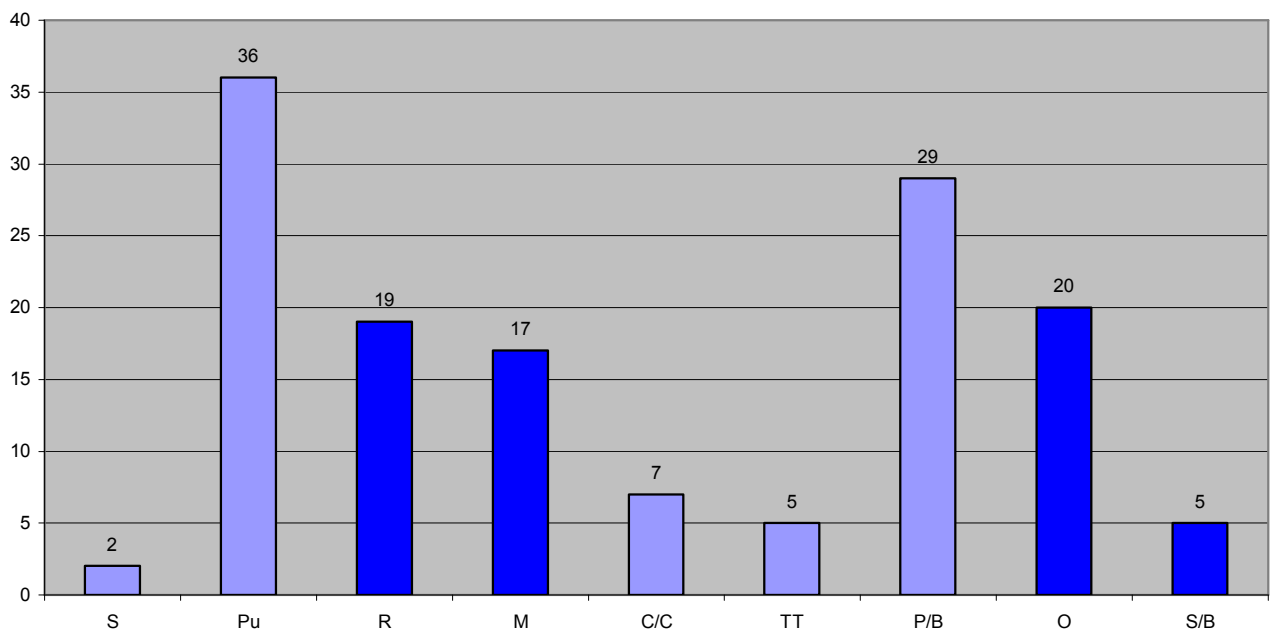
Talullah Time on Activity 21.03.01
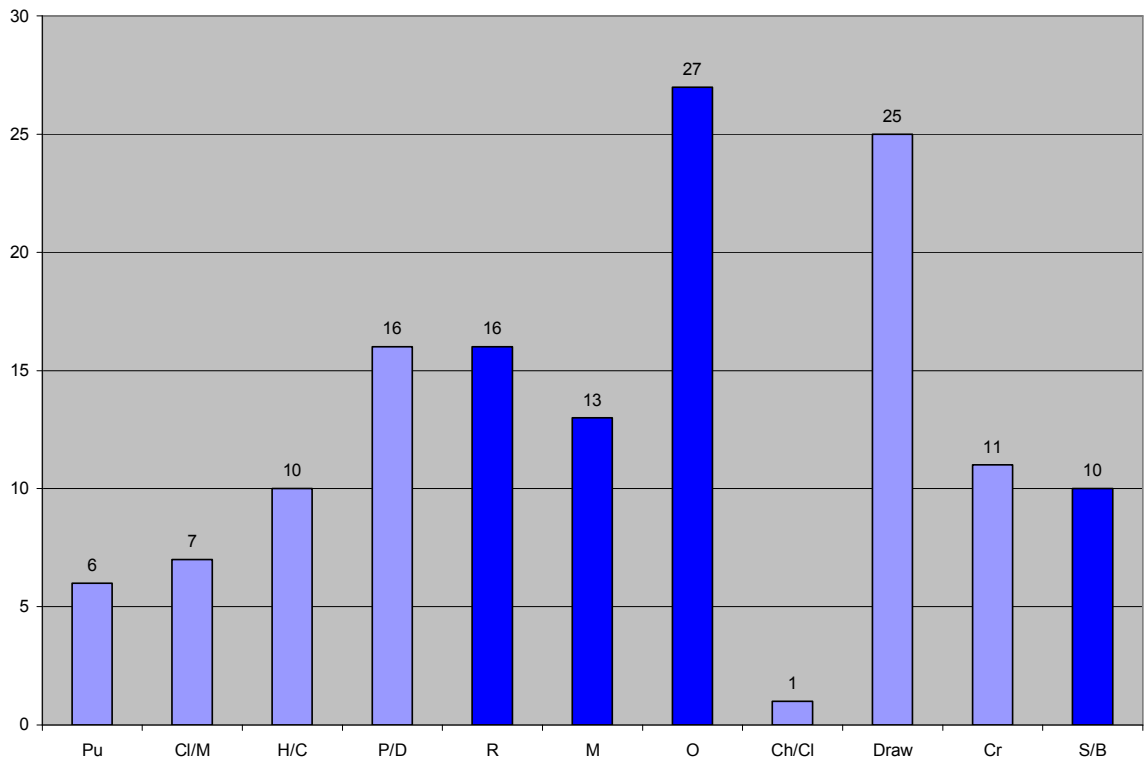
Tallulah Time on Activity: 27.04.01
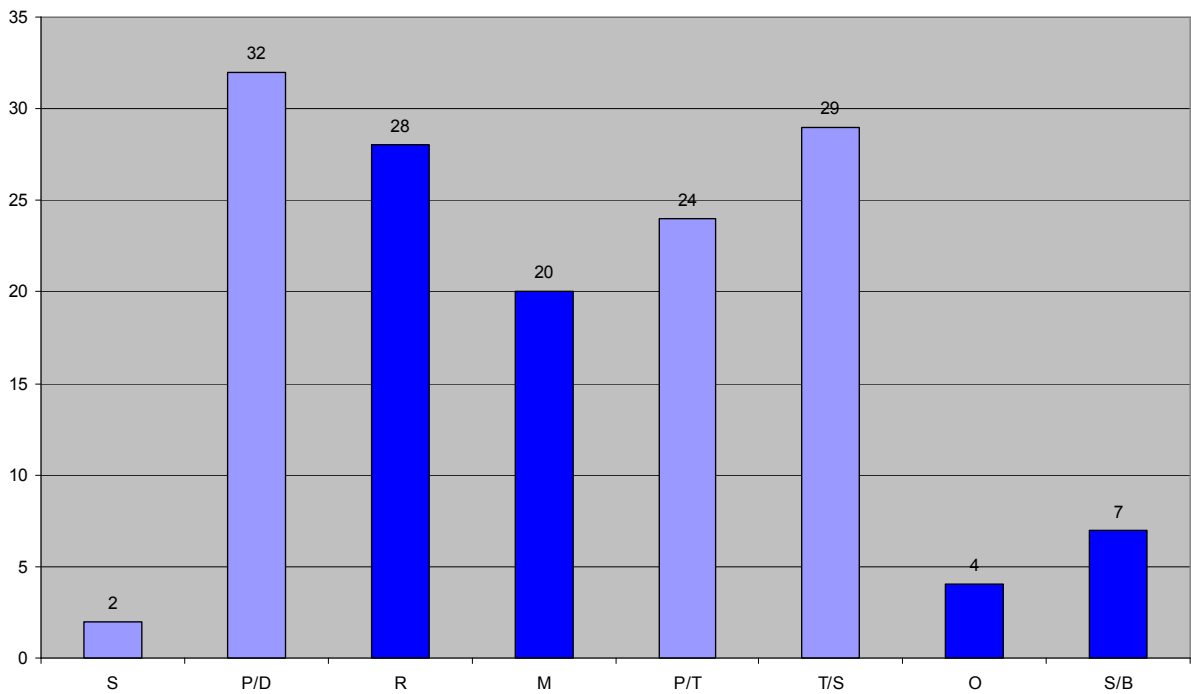
Tallulah Time on Activity: 15.06.01
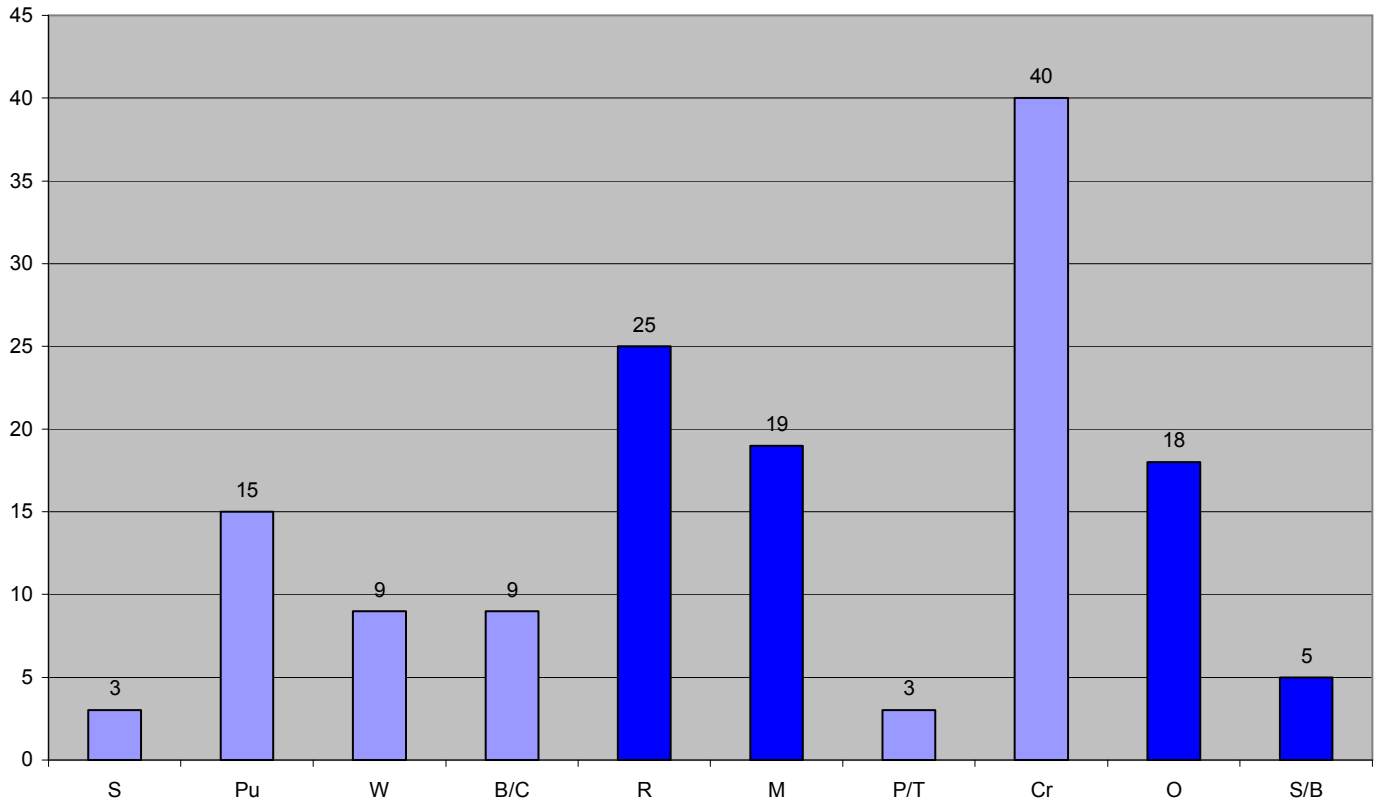
Appendix 7.8
BAR CHARTS OF ZARA OBSERVED SESSIONS

Zara Time on Activity: 01.12.00
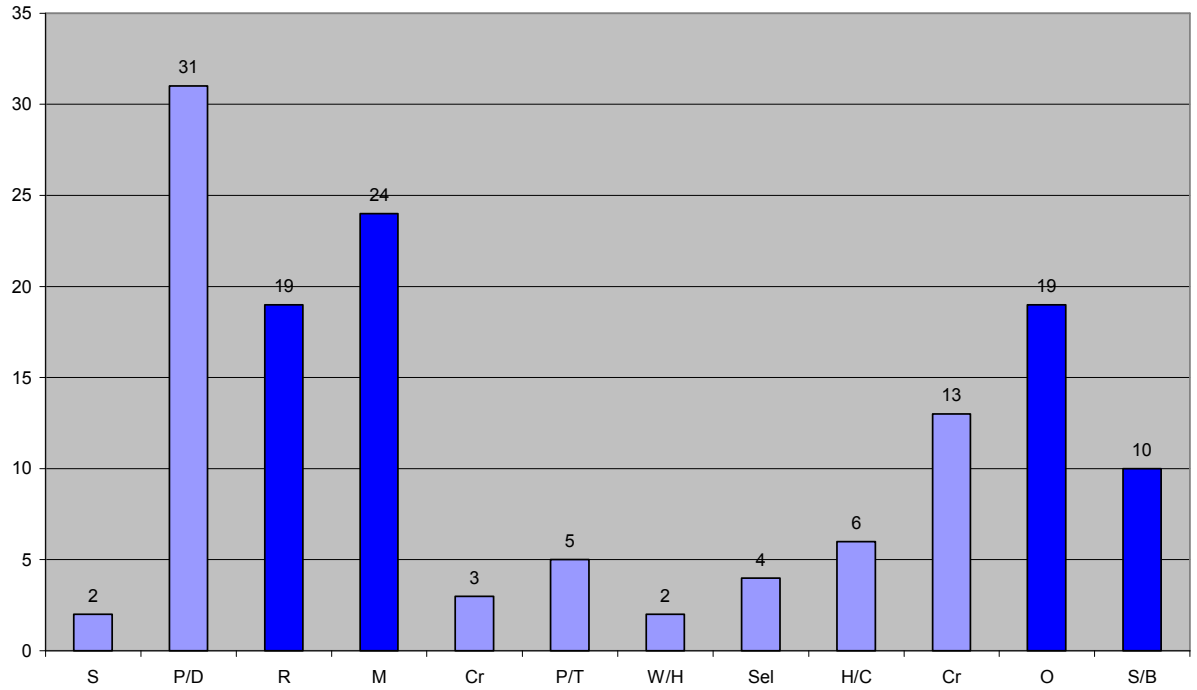
Zara Time on Activity: 02.02.01
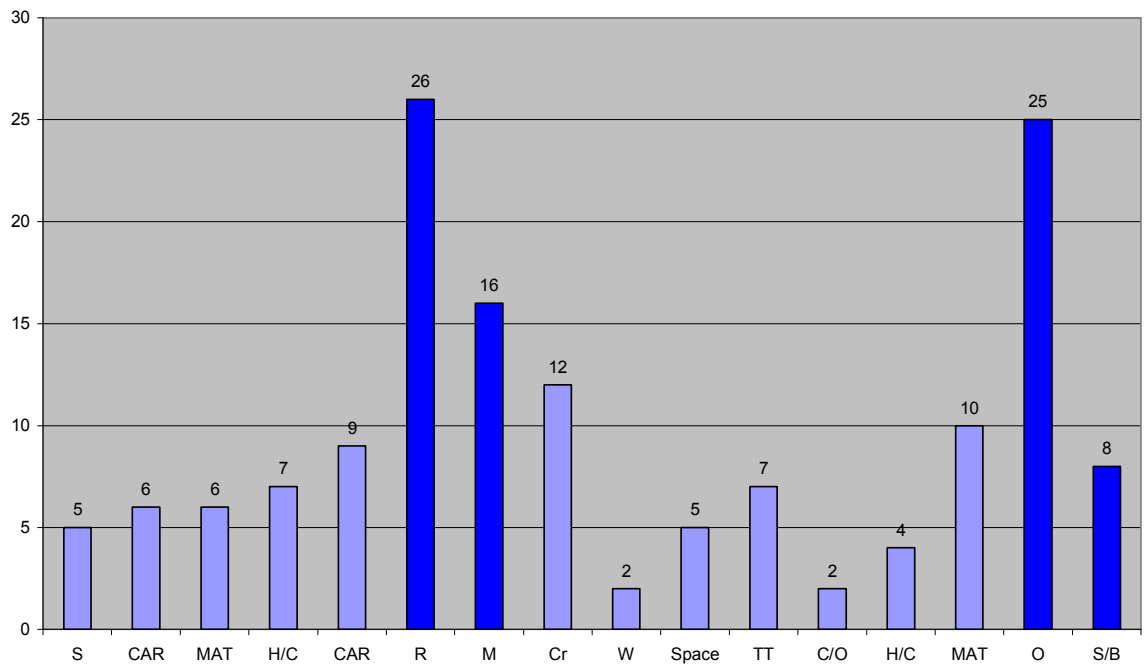
Zara Time on Activity: 20.03.01
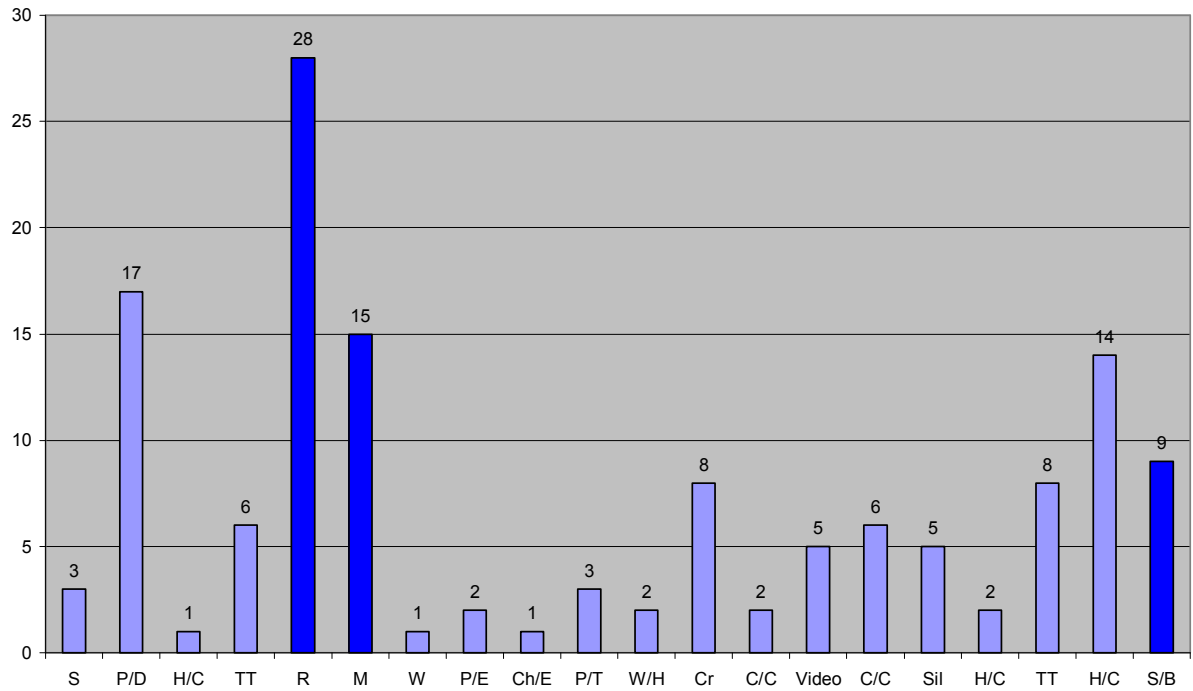
Zara Time on Activity: 04.04.01
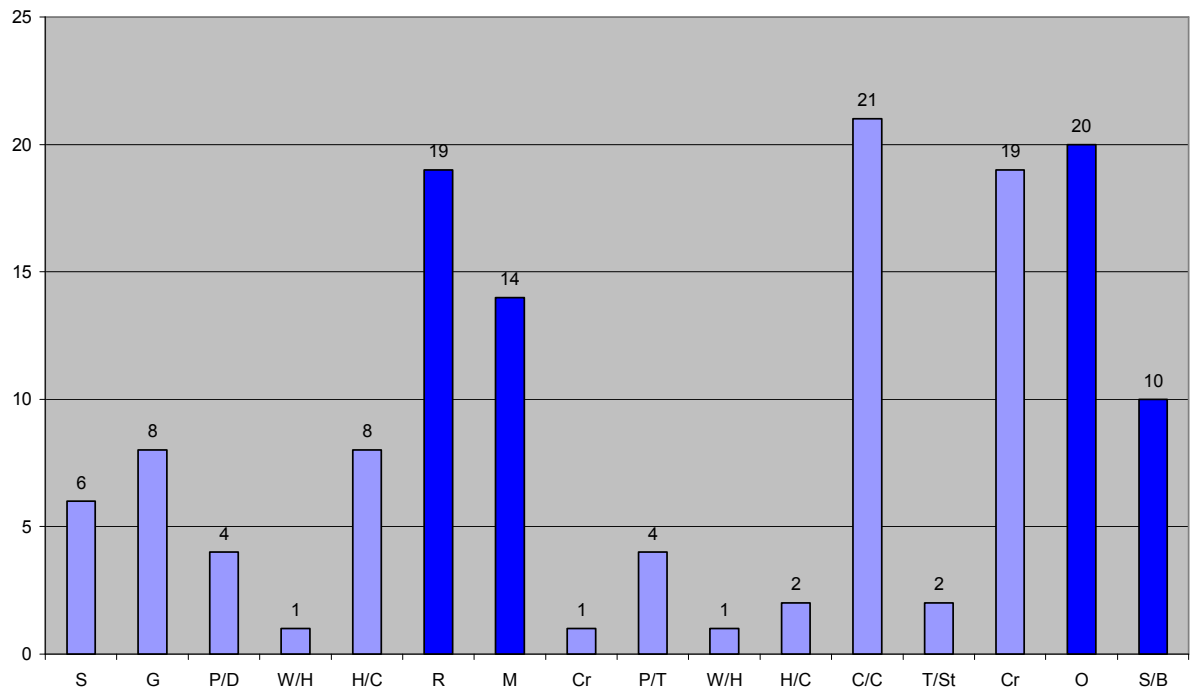
Zara Time on Activity: 18.05.01
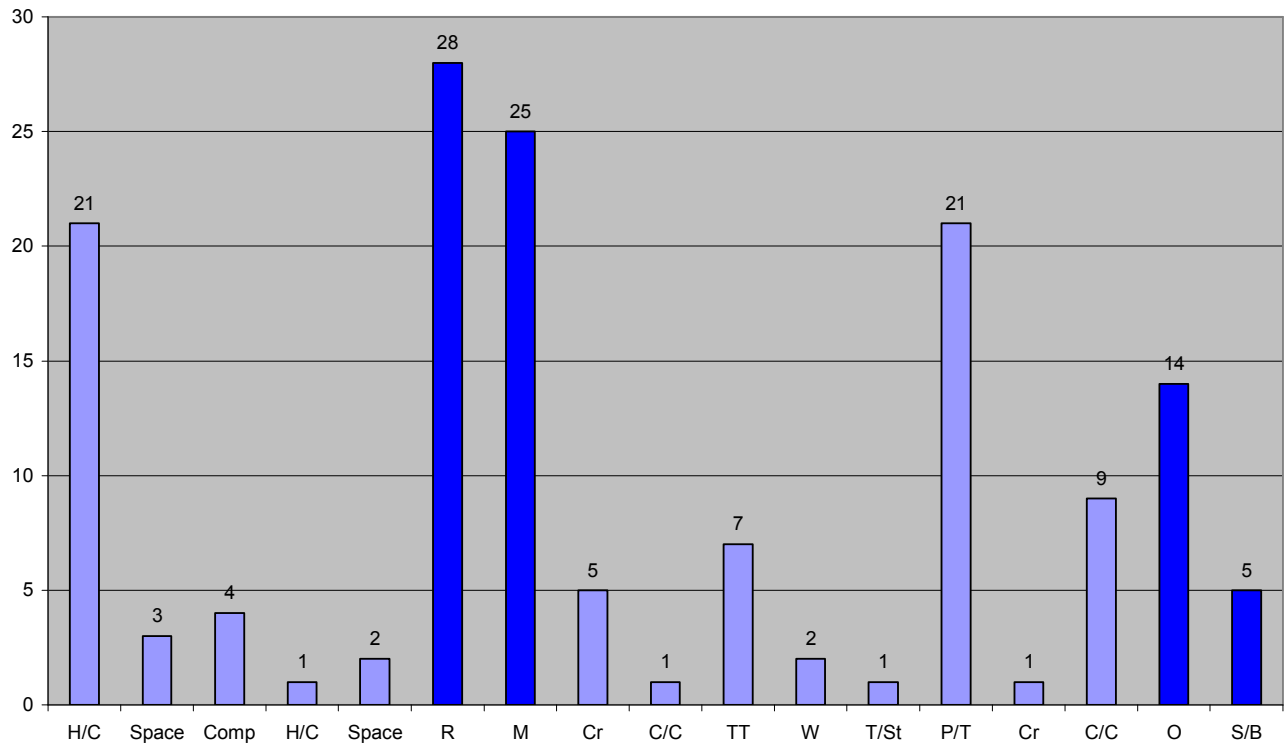
Zara Time on Activity 12.06.01
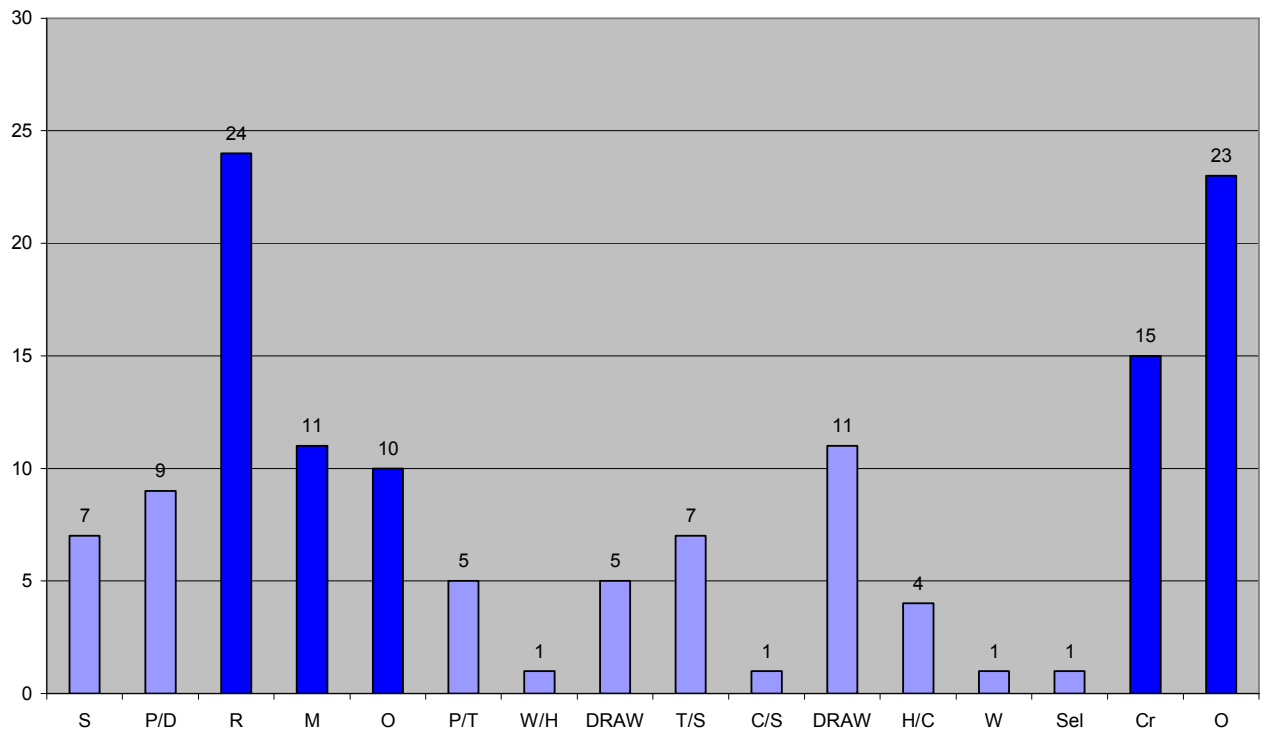
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