ORAL READING: The Silent Debate

Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between the practice of reading out-loud and the teaching and learning of reading in the primary school. It argues that oral reading is a different practice from reading silently and that it contributes to the construction of a school reader in particular terms. Specifically it contributes to students' understanding of what it is to read and what it is to become a reader in school.

The study adopts a sociocultural view of reading (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Many past studies of oral reading used psychological approaches that ignored the historical, social, communicative and interactive contexts of oral reading practices. This thesis investigates oral reading from the perspectives of students, teachers and the researcher', using three different types of data gathering procedures: questionnaires, interviews and observations. It describes oral reading practices in terms of the pedagogies they maintain, the activities they build and the identities they construct.

The study found that many oral reading activities were not an effective means for either the teaching or assessment of reading. Rather, oral reading activities were characterised by limited explicit instruction, which served to maintain the controlled nature of schooling. The rules, procedures and interactions preceding, surrounding and subsuming the various activities served to construct students' views of themselves as readers and what it means to read in school in restricted terms.

The thesis has implications for reading pedagogy in that it presents a case for the reconsideration of these practices when teaching learner readers in schools.

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ETHICS DECLARATION

This research was conducted within the guidelines of the "National Health and Medical Research Council Statement on Human Experimentation and supplementary notes."

The research received ethical clearance from the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee (Human Ethics Sub-committee) Approval Number H883.

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CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction: Setting the scene

Interest in this study stemmed from my previous work where nine middle primary children defined reading in school (Rennie, 1994). The data collected during my honours suggested that reading in school was something different from reading at home or out of school. Students defined school reading as accountable, constrained, oral and shared, boring, open to criticism and graded. The data also suggested that some of the practices used, particularly those of an oral and shared nature were questionable in terms of the negative effects they had on some learner readers. These findings fuelled my interest in this study, which presents empirical evidence that suggests that many oral reading practices in schools are not an effective means by which to teach learner readers. This argument strengthens when one theorises about reading in a social, cultural and historical sense (Baker, 1991; Bloome, 1985; Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997; Cairney, 2000; Freebody, Luke, & Gilbert, 1991; Gee, 2000; Green, Dixon, Lin, Floriani, & Bradley, 1992; Heap, 1991a, 1991b; Luke, 1995; McHoul, 1996).

A preliminary review of the literature revealed that psychology and to a lesser extent ethnography, had characterised the nature of research conducted on oral reading to date. Studies investigated isolated aspects of oral reading such as reading rate, effects on comprehension, effectiveness of particular strategies or instructional routines such as readers' theatre and repeated readings, and patterns of student/teacher interactions within reading groups. There was little work on the historical significance of oral reading events, why it is used by teachers as a pedagogical tool, the incidence of oral reading instruction and its worth as an instructional tool. Further, researchers tended to ignore the social, communicative and interactive contexts of oral reading practices along with the distinct differences between oral and silent reading practices (Allington, 1984). This thesis conceptualises oral reading as a network

of socially and historically constructed practices that have specific pedagogical effects and in doing so, it attempts to address many of these unanswered questions.

The following two chapters present a review of the literature. Chapter Two focuses on reading research more generally and Chapter Three on research specific to oral reading. This resulted in a rather extensive literature review that drew on work undertaken from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. While the thesis is informed by social, cultural and historical theories of reading, (Baker, 1991; Bloome, 1985; Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997; Cairney, 2000; Freebody et al., 1991; Gee, 2000; J Green et al., 1992; Heap, 1991a, 1991b; Luke, 1995; McHoul, 1996), it was important to include research positioned by a different school of thought. Cognitive and behaviourist work continues to influence reading research and inform practice, although, this thesis argues that this is no longer the preferred paradigm in Australia.

Although this thesis focuses on the practice of oral reading, I found it necessary to include both the research specific to oral reading and the research that focussed on reading more generally. The central question underpinning this thesis relates to how oral reading functions as part of learning to read in the primary school. To be adequately informed it was necessary for me to have knowledge about research specific to oral reading and knowledge about the various theoretical perspectives that inform reading pedagogy in schools.

My previous work sought students' perceptions of reading in school. Whilst researchers have tended to dismiss children as "out of scope" particularly in large qualitative studies (Scott, 2000), I found talking with students provided a different perspective not often captured during reading research. In this study, I wanted to present a balanced view of oral reading in the classroom and so decided to explore the views of all those parties who had an interest in the practice. This study explored the students', teachers' and researchers' perspectives.

Due to the scope and breadth of data needed, I used a number of different ethnographic data collection tools including questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. Initially I surveyed 100 teachers across 24 different

schools as a means to determine the extent and nature of the use of oral reading practices in classrooms. After this survey, data collection was concentrated in two different school sites. In depth teacher and student interviews, student surveys and classroom observations occurred in one early childhood, middle primary and upper primary classroom in each of the schools. This resulted in a very large and interesting set of data that had implications for the analysis.

The analysis comprised two distinct phases. The first involved identification of themes and key issues by constant and comparative analysis of the data (Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe, & Munsie, 1995; Cairney & Ruge, 1997). The second involved mapping the data using a framework developed by Gee and Green (1997). Within this framework four dimensions of social activity are identified- World building, Activity building, Identity building and Connection building. This framework facilitated the comparative analysis of the data. Mapping the oral reading events observed using this framework, allowed the comparison of the different perceptions and understandings of the various activities from the students', teachers' and researcher's perspectives and served to highlight any matches or mismatches between the data.

Due to the large amount of data collected, I made the decision not to use close textual analysis and so this work lacks the depth of analysis characteristic of the Santa Barbara Group (Gee & Green, 1997; Green, Bradley, & Lichu, 1992; Rex & McEachen, 1999). However, this work is rich in the sense that it used a variety of different data collection methods to explore a number of different perspectives of the same event. Chapter Four reports on the methodology employed during this work. It situates the study and gives a detailed account of the data collection methods and analytical approach used.

Chapters Five through to Chapter 10 analyse and discuss the data collected during the questionnaires, interviews and observations. Chapters Five and Six focus on the teachers' perspective and present data collected during the teacher questionnaires and interviews while Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine represent the students' perspectives and present data collected during the student questionnaires and interviews. Chapter Ten represents the researcher's

perspective and presents data collected during my observations of classroom oral reading events. Chapters Five through to Chapter 10 provide the first phase of the analysis that involved the identification of themes and key issues by constant and comparative analysis of the data (Cairney et al., 1995; Cairney & Ruge, 1997).

Chapter Five is titled "A Teacher Perspective: Teachers write". It presents data collected from 100 teacher questionnaires from a sample comprising 38 Preparatory to Year 3 teachers, thirty-one middle primary teachers and thirty-one upper primary teachers. The chapter reports on the frequency, nature and use of oral reading activities in the classroom. It also compares the data collected from early childhood, middle primary and upper primary teachers. This was an interesting exercise as the data suggest teachers tended to adopt a developmental position when discussing why, how and when students should engage in oral reading practices. The questionnaire data clearly showed that oral reading was a valued and frequent activity according to the teachers surveyed. Teachers claimed it was useful in the teaching and assessment of reading, and also developed confidence and fostered a love of reading. Both teachers and students frequently referred to such things as "confidence", "enjoyment" and "perseverance" throughout the questionnaires and interviews. I have collectively termed these 'dispositions' and question, whether oral reading practices do serve to develop or foster them.

Chapter Six is titled "A Teacher Perspective: Teachers speak". It presents the data collected during the teacher interviews. I conducted interviews with six teachers across two school sites. The first school was an urban primary school called "Farrer"[1] and the second an urban primary school named "Gunn". I interviewed an early childhood, middle primary and upper primary teacher in each school. Teachers answered questions similar to those included in the questionnaire. They also spoke at length about specific oral reading practices used in their respective classrooms. Their responses did not differ greatly from those given by teachers during the questionnaires.

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[1] The names given to schools are pseudonyms

Chapter Seven is titled "A Student Perspective: Students write". It reports on the data collected from 122 student questionnaires. The sample comprised those students belonging to the classes where I interviewed teachers. Similar to the teacher questionnaires, students also answered questions relating to the frequency, nature and use of oral reading practices in their classrooms. In addition, they reported on the differences between oral and silent reading, their perceptions of themselves as readers, their preferred ways of reading and on what they thought constituted a 'good' reader in their teachers' eyes. There were some marked differences between the student and teacher responses. Students tended to under-represent the frequency of oral reading activities in the classroom compared to their teachers. Similar to their teachers, many students reported teachers using oral reading as a means to provide reading instruction and to assess reading. Students however, found it difficult to identify what was being taught, or assessed during oral reading activities. Many of the students surveyed did not identify oral reading as their preferred way of reading; they said it was more difficult than silent reading and that it often created anxiety for them.

Chapter Eight is titled "Students speak: Farrer Primary" and reports on interviews conducted with ten students from the three classes where I administered student questionnaires. Similarly, Chapter Nine is titled "Students speak: Gunn Primary". It reports on interviews conducted with nine students from the classes where I administered student questionnaires in that school.

In addition to speaking generally about reading in the classroom students spoke specifically about the various oral reading activities in which they participated in their respective classrooms. Similar to the questionnaires students reported that teachers used oral reading activities to teach and assess reading although they too found it difficult to articulate what was actually taught or assessed during these activities.

The majority of students interviewed voiced a preference for reading silently. Many said the activity was stressful and the better readers reported the activity as frustrating particularly when listening to readers who struggled with the task. Students' descriptions of 'good' readers tended to mirror the areas

identified by their teachers as needing improvement in their own reading. This suggested teachers' feedback focussed on areas of need rather than on what students did well.

All of the students interviewed said that oral reading was more difficult than reading silently. They attributed this difficulty to the fact that it was often more stressful and that they had to concentrate on other skills such as using correct pronunciation, speaking loudly and clearly, and using expression. Further, they reported that it was more difficult to understand what they were reading. This is contrary to what some teachers said as they indicated that oral reading served to improve comprehension. Students were very knowledgeable about the procedural aspects of the various activities and understood the rules associated with them.

Chapter Ten represents the researchers' perspective and reports on video data collected from the six classrooms where I interviewed teachers and students. Both my observations of classrooms where oral-reading activities occurred and the video recordings inform the discussion. Amongst other things, these observations served to confirm what students and teachers had reported during the interviews and to highlight potential mismatches in the data. It also allowed me to present a third perspective on the various oral reading events discussed.

Chapter Eleven comprises the second phase of the analysis. It attempts to bring all the different perspectives together to help piece together a comprehensive picture of how oral reading functions in the classroom. The MASS (material, activity, semiotic and sociocultural) framework, facilitated this (Gee & Green, 1997). Mismatches are highlighted and oral reading is discussed in terms of the kind of world it maintains, the activities that are built, the identities that are constructed and the connections that are made to past, present and future activities.

Chapter Twelve concludes the work. It discusses the implications of the research, areas needing further exploration and highlights the limitations associated with the study. Amongst other things it points out that oral reading, when enacted in particular ways, is not conducive to effective reading

pedagogy. In fact, the practice is highly questionable particularly when used with those readers who lack in confidence or who struggle with the task of reading. In addition, contrary to the beliefs of many practitioners in this study, it is a counterproductive exercise when used as a means to improve self-confidence. It also highlights the fact that it is not an effective means to assess students' reading as the data clearly show that 'oral reading' and 'silent reading' are two very distinct practices.

CHAPTER TWO

Reading: A look at the research

In recent times, sociologists and linguists have referred to reading as "variable forms of social practice," which are constructed in various sites (Freebody et al., 1991; Heap, 1991b; Luke & Freebody, 1997b; McHoul, 1996). It is argued also that there is not one universal "thing" or "practice," which counts always and only as reading (Barton, 1994; McHoul, 1996). School reading is a particular type of reading, constructed in schools by parents, teachers and students (Freebody et al., 1991; McHoul, 1996). Students learn about what constitutes and counts as school reading by participating in various events, conversations and activities with others in school (Heap, 1991b). The problem investigated in this thesis concerns the practice of reading aloud. What is it, when, where and how does it occur. How do the various parties involved construct it and how does it function as part of learning to read?

The following review of research draws on work undertaken from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. While the thesis is informed by social, cultural and historical theories of reading, (Baker, 1991; Bloome, 1985; Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997; Cairney, 2000; Freebody et al., 1991; Gee, 2000; J Green et al., 1992; Heap, 1991a, 1991b; Luke, 1995; McHoul, 1996), it is important, nevertheless, to include research that is positioned by a different school of thought. Cognitive and behaviourist work continues to influence reading research and inform practice, although, this thesis argues this is no longer the preferred paradigm in Australia.

The review of literature that follows looks historically at reading research from the late nineteenth century and progresses through the period when psychological theories tended to dominate the field up until the late 1960's. It treats the last decades of the twentieth century as primarily located by

social and cultural concerns. The importance of the latter work for the thesis will become apparent during the data analysis and discussion chapters.

Reading: Research and practice

Since the turn of the twentieth century, there has been an ongoing debate, referred to by some as the Great Debate (Chall, 1967) and others as the Reading Wars (Flippo, 1999; Oakhill & Beard, 1999) concerning what reading is, why it should be valued, and how best to teach it. This has resulted in a number of different theories of reading each influencing the perceptions and teaching of reading in classrooms today.

Venezky described reading research as synonymous with "Joseph's coat" comprising many different colours and independent threads. Some of these threads included basic research on reading, research on methods of instruction, research to generate a theory of reading, research to validate a model of reading, research on testing and research on the role of literacy in history (1984, p.3). The first of these has probably been the most visible but least influential in terms of practice.

This section divides into four main areas: Psychological, Sociological, Sociolinguistic and Sociocultural and Critical approaches. Each of these four areas, divide into two distinct sections. The first section, 'Research' reviews research methodology and research interests particular to reading during this time and the second section, 'Pedagogy' discusses how these various theoretical positions have informed reading instruction. This is necessary since not all research efforts have resulted in a direct and visible impact on reading instruction.

Psychological Approaches

Behaviourism, cognitive psychology and to a lesser degree humanism are all schools of thought that have influenced reading research and reading instruction at different times. Psychological approaches to reading research have tended to be piecemeal. The main objective in basic reading was to

enhance understanding about the processes fundamental to reading. Psychology has made significant contributions to this area.

Whilst this thesis does not assume a psychological perspective, it cannot ignore the fact that many of the oral reading practices observed and discussed during the data collection phase originated from a psychological approach to reading research.

Leading up to the Great Debate

Research

Between 1881 and 1939 there were one thousand nine hundred and fifty one scientific studies related to reading research conducted in the United States and England (Gray, 1984, p. 3). Research on the reading process, particularly perceptual processes, began in the late 1800's and continued until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Instructionally defined problems did not characterise reading research during this era and the findings rarely informed practice. Often psychologists found reading processes a "convenient vehicle" to explore traditional psychological problems (Venezky, 1984, p. 5). Much of the research conducted was neither thorough nor reliable and often relied on a small sample (Venezky, 1984, p. 7). Further, the research has been criticised as fragmented, uncoordinated and conducted without adequate controls (Gray, 1984, p. 5).

A comprehensive account of research conducted in the late 1800's and early 1900's is summarised in Quantz (1897), Dearborn (1906) and Huey (1908) (Venezky, 1984, p. 7). The significance of Huey's work tended to be over-looked during his own lifetime. However, Kolers remarked in the introductory section:

> What is amazing to someone reading the book sixty years later is not only the breadth and scope of his vision but also the amount of information in it that is still on the "front lines" of research. Remarkably, little empirical information has been added to what Huey knew, although some of the phenomena have now been measured more precisely (Kolers, 1968, p. xiv).

Huey's work included studies on the perception and rate of reading, sub-vocal speech, the nature of meaning, reading instruction, reading methods and

reading history (Huey, 1968). He conceptualised reading as an "information-processing activity" beginning with the reader's eyes and ending with "higher level" cognitive operations, which translate what is seen to meaning (Kolers, 1968, p.xv). Huey's work was progressive for its time in that he attempted to make connections between research and practice. One of the teachers interviewed in this study, made reference to eye movement when describing a 'good' reader. She claimed that 'good' readers' eye movements are quick and that you often see them dart their eyes back and forth as they read and reread.

Reading research during the early 1920's shifted from a focus on perceptual processes to teaching and testing. This shift towards applied methods in research lasted some forty years. A number of factors including the progressive movement, testing and behaviourism contributed to this. Research contributions connected to the reading process were insignificant during this time compared to the nature of the research output in Huey's time.

During this transition-period, new instruments of investigation evolved. Two-thirds of the studies reported in 1914 and 1915 related to reading tests, in particular their organisation, standardization and implementation. The use of such tests made it possible to use the classroom as a context for research. Scientists were not the sole parties involved in conducting research. School inspectors, administrators and teachers became increasingly involved in the process (Gray, 1984, pp3 - 4). Finally, there was a significant increase in the range of problems studied. Reading habits, beginning reading, instructional methods, reading materials, individual differences and remedial problems were some of the areas explored.

In summary, there were three noteworthy differences in the nature of the research conducted during this period that distinguished it from previous work. First, reading research had moved out of the laboratory into other sites such as homes, classrooms, libraries and schools. Second, there was a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Finally, there was a deliberate attempt to connect research to practice. A good example of these changes is inherent in a study conducted by Gray (1933) where he reported on a multiyear reading improvement plan in a small number of Chicago schools.

In the data collection phase, he used surveys, and assessment of reading scores and reading habits. He then held conferences with school administrators to assist with the data analysis. Finally, staff involved in the study and school staff worked together to develop and implement improvement plans (Venezky, 1984, p. 18).

A final point worth highlighting is that one also gets a sense of reading being something more than an individual psychological process. This period marked a crude beginning to the development of processes about reading as variable forms of social practice. First, it is apparent that the research process had moved from the laboratory to the context where reading occurred. Second, the research interests explored areas, such as reading habits and the evaluation of instructional methods and materials used began to take other contextual factors into consideration as well as the mentalistic states, which in the past tended to constitute the entire reading process. However, researchers continued to ignore the political and social dimensions of reading.

Pedagogy

Linguists, concerned with the intricate sound structures of language (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986) and behaviourism influenced approaches to reading instruction in the first half of last century. It was during this time that the Great Debate (Chall, 1967) that centred on the best method to teach reading began to emerge. There were two opposing camps in this debate: meaning versus code.

Methods used under the umbrella of coding practices included the alphabetic method, systematic phonics, intrinsic phonics and the language experience approach. Meaning-based methods used included, the word method, look and say method, the sentence method and the story method (Chall, 1967; Klapper, 1926). Despite the fact that meaning-based methods characterised some reading instruction, coding practices tended to dominate. In recent times, the literature described these early approaches to reading instruction as "bottom-up", "phonics" or "outside-in" theories. (Anstey & Bull, 1996; Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons, & McKenzie, 2000; Winch, Johnston, Holliday, Ljungdahl, & March, 2001). Two examples of the meaning versus code

debate warrant closer examination as they are in many respects closely linked to present day concerns.

Phonics

Whilst linguists did influence the development of these theories of reading, some were actually opposed to phonics-based instruction. They were similarly opposed to many of the meaning based approaches available at the time (Chall, 1967, p. 24). However, they believed that the learning of the code needed to precede meaning or understanding. The participants in the various oral reading activities investigated in this study reported a reliance on graphophonic information or 'sounding out' strategies when decoding unknown words. Further, many of the teachers and students surveyed did not include comprehension skills in their descriptions of 'good' readers.

Phonics approaches are either "explicit", systematic instruction relating letters to sounds and sounds to words or "implicit", allowing students to make letter-sounds from whole words (Adams, 1990, p. 49). There are many different variations of these approaches. Each of Aukerman's books (1971; 1984) cites over one hundred different approaches. Essentially these approaches were characterised by a hierarchically based analysis of reading, where there is a gradual progression from individual letters through to meaning (Smith, 1983, p. 59).

Flesch (1955), the author of the very popular book "Why Johnny Can't Read" and a very strong advocate of the phonics approach commented:

> Many years ago when I was about fifteen, I took a semester's course in Czech; I have since forgotten everything about the language itself but I can still remember how the letters are pronounced, plus the simple rule that all words have the accent on the first syllable. Armed with this knowledge I once surprised a native Prague by reading aloud from a Czech newspaper. "Oh you know Czech?" he asked. "No I don't understand a word of it," I answered. "I can only read it"(Cambourne, 1988, p. 160).

According to Flesch, reading was the ability to articulate words. Understanding was not a pre-requisite for reading to occur. Reading was outside the readers' head and required engagement with text. Teachers who used this method focussed on sounds and words and the text was the "main

controlling factor" (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p.5). Discussion on reading was in terms of something that was 'done' rather than what it might be. Some students in this study spoke about how oral reading made it difficult for them to comprehend text. Others talked about the difficulty associated with pronunciation. Further, some students suggested if they expressed difficulty with pronunciation, this did not necessarily mean a lack of understanding.

Flesch commented in a reprinted version of his book:

> What I suggested was very simple. Go back to the ABC's. Teach children the 44 sounds of English and how they are spelled. They can sound out each word from left to right and read it off the page....

> Independent studies have proved that the average child comes to school with a speaking and listening vocabulary of about 24,000 words. Learning to read is simply learning a system of notation for the language the child already knows (Adams, 1990, p. 238).

This approach tended to oversimplify the complex nature of reading instruction. Teach students their letters and sounds and they would be able to read thousands of words and ultimately string together countless sentences and ideas.

Advocates of this approach saw reading as explicit instruction. Students needed mastery of a hierarchy of skills: each skill learned independently and successively. Students needed to break the code before any reading occurred. Meaning and understanding were complex skills that one learned after mastery of the code.

An author of a basal reader series illustrated the hierarchical nature of reading instruction reflected in this approach:

> Beginning reading is different from later reading. Later reading is done for different purposes. Also in later reading, the emphasis changes in terms of the different strands (word recognition, comprehension and interpretation, appreciation and use). In grades 1 to 4 word perception is emphasized; in later stages, comprehension and interpretation are emphasized. (Chall, 1967, p. 53).

Teaching material used in these approaches reflected the hierarchical nature of the instruction. The popularity of this approach, which escalated after the release of the "Great Debate"(1967) by Jean Chall, saw publishers pouring out numerous graded reading schemes designed to give teachers the "total

reading program". These comprised carefully graded sets of books, teaching manuals and student workbooks. Data from this study suggest that some teachers continue to group students according to ability and that they continue to use levelled reading texts.

Drill type activities were prevalent in these classrooms, charts displaying letter-sound relationships and groups of words adorned the walls and graded books were often organised in a systematic way. Teachers and students and parents and students read together frequently and in the earlier grades, silent reading was uncommon. Teachers kept detailed records of what books students had read in each set, students had their oral slippages corrected and they were encouraged to 'sound out' unknown words.

In these approaches, teachers used oral reading primarily to teach but also to assess and entertain. The data suggest that oral reading practices used today share many similarities with these earlier phonic-based pedagogies.

This thesis highlights the fact that many oral reading practices used in the observed classrooms tended to focus on decoding rather than meaning-based practices. Teachers favoured grouping students according to ability and they assigned each group a different suitably levelled text. Students often read out-loud to others in whole class, small group and paired reading situations. Teachers and peers corrected their oral slippages and accuracy was emphasised with students relying on sounding out strategies to figure out unknown words.

The Story or McCloskey Method

This meaning-based method prevalent in the early part of last century shares similarities with the whole language movement (Cambourne, 1988), which gained popularity in classrooms in the 1980's. A discussion of this occurs later in this chapter. The Story or McCloskey method evolved out of a plea for an appreciation of literature and disappointment with the meaningless primers often used in coding methods (Klapper, 1926, p. 53). Like the whole language movement, it focused on readers obtaining meaning from the whole text rather than its individual parts. Work on vocabulary, grammar and phonics occurred with the context of the story rather than in isolation.

A lesson based on this method began with a cumulative tale. Several readings of the text then occurred until the students could recite it. Drama and recitation assisted in heightening the child's interest. Once learned the teacher wrote sentences from the story on the board and students were encouraged to recognise words within the context of the sentence. This resulted in students gradually building up a vocabulary of sight words that they were able to recognise and use in other contexts.

The method essentially saw reading as a process of thinking, emphasising the relationship between symbol and thought. It was criticised because it spent too much time on memorisation of a story potentially mutilating it and destroying the very thing, it initially set out to do that was to encourage an appreciation of literature (Klapper, 1926, pp 53-58).

Some of the basal reading schemes in the decades to follow utilised a similar teaching procedure to the storybook method. Two series commonly used in schools, "The New Basic Reading Program" (1956) and "Ginn Basic Readers" (1961), were examples of this. Each lesson began by preparing the students for a reading of the story. Questions posed helped to arouse motivation and interest for the story that followed. The teacher then highlighted any new words introduced in the story. Students then practiced these in preparation for the guided reading session that followed. During this session, meaning and interpretation of the story were emphasised. The students then completed a series of activities centred on the story in a student workbook (Chall, 1967, pp. 187-262). This procedure was similar to one of the reading group activities observed in a Year 3 classroom in this study.

Surveys of reading practices were not a major concern until the late 1950's, when the Carnegie Corporation funded a series of survey studies. "Learning to Read: The Great Debate" is a notable text which reported on one of these studies (Chall, 1967). This was a useful study since it reported on and assessed the debate that began to emerge at the beginning of the century. It evaluated the merits of the various approaches to reading instruction, discussed the various sites in which students learned to read, examined the various materials which were used to teach students to read and it gave voice to the

various stakeholders in the process such as parents, educators and publishers. One of the major conclusions of the study was that code-based practices produced better results in terms of the mechanical aspects of literacy, comprehension and reading speed than did its rival meaning-based methods. However, the study did not identify any code-based method that was superior to another. The First Grade Studies (1967) coordinated by Bond that compared several beginning reading programs produced similar results (Dank, 1977; Searfoss, 1997).

Despite these conclusions, this remains a contentious issue and the meaning versus code debate is no more resolved today (Morrow & Tracey, 1997; Oakhill & Beard, 1999). Today it is recognised that effective reading pedagogy combines both methods. Proponents of social critical reading theories recognise this (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Data collected in this study suggest that in some instances, an over-reliance on coding practices can be detrimental to some learner readers, as it becomes their only available source to figure out unknown words. There was no evidence to suggest that code based methods improved comprehension although some teachers believed this to be the case. Many of the students reported that comprehension was more difficult during oral reading activities.

Beyond the Great Debate

Research

During the first decade of the twentieth century "reading" usually meant oral reading and understanding was generally assumed when pronunciation was correct and eloquent oral reading was achieved. Research interests in the 1950's and 60's included work on letter recognition, letter-sound correspondences, breaking words into sounds, comprehension, oral reading errors and eye-voice span (Venezky, 1984, p. 26). The work on comprehension was probably the most interesting considering the minimal work conducted in this area before 1940. The terminology occurred occasionally in relation to instructional methods or testing. W.S Gray (1938) when summarising the scientific contributions to reading said:

> As to comprehension, the problems have proven even more challenging. The varied nature of comprehension has been emphasized by the wide variety of objective tests that have been used in measuring it; in fact, there is ample evidence now that the term is too loosely used (Venezky, 1984, p. 13).

In 1944, Davis conducted a study that helped to identify the unique components of reading comprehension. He found that a relatively large number of presumably isolated skills could be categorised into three factors - a word meaning factor, a gist factor and a reasoning factor (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992, p. 147).

Research continued over the next three decades with researchers trying to learn more about the skills involved in the comprehension process, in particular the higher cognitive skills. This resulted in a skills based comprehension curriculum. An interesting facet to this research is that unlike much of the research conducted in previous years this research did find its way into classrooms. Authors of basal reader series used the research to inform their programs with their basal readers containing specific information about how to develop the different skills and sub-skills (Pearson et al., 1992, p. 147).

A group of theories influenced by both cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics often referred to as "top-down" or "inside-out" theories began to emerge. Reading, viewed as an active process that began in the reader's head, required readers to draw from a whole range of different strategies to make meaning from text. Readers usually began with their own prior knowledge making predictions about meanings and language patterns via a range of different cueing systems, including graphophonic, syntactic and semantic (Winch et al., 2001, pp. 37-42). Readers looked for information in the text that was relevant and ignored that which was redundant. The meaning was located directly in the text and was necessary before reading aloud in a comprehensible manner could occur (Smith, 1983, p. 61). This contradicted Flesch's position when he spoke about his experience as a fifteen-year old boy reading Czech. It also begs the question whether we can consider reading out loud 'reading' if there is no understanding of what has been read. This is a significant point explored in the data analysis chapters.

Smith and Goodman who were strong advocates of psycholinguistic approaches to reading claimed that fluent readers made meaning from text with a minimum amount of effort by selectively using cueing strategies, which were available to them (Goodman, 1982; Smith, 1983). Goodman noted that reading was a "receptive language process" that started with a text and ended with meaning constructed by the reader. It involved a relationship between language and thought, the writer encoding language as thought and the reader decoding language to thought (Goodman, 1982, pp. 5-6). Smith argued that there was no simple definition of reading as it carried with it a "multiplicity of meanings", meaning being dependent on contextual factors (Smith, 1978, p. 102). This marked a shift in the word 'meaning' as it was not solely located within the text but something that was also in the reader's head. I like to term these as 'crossover theorists' as they recognise that readers use both "bottom up" and "top down" approaches.

Information about the reading process became increasingly more complex and researchers such as Ruddell (1969), Smith (1971), Gough (1972) and Goodman (1965, 1966, 1967/1976), La Berge and Samuels (1974), Rumelhart (1977), Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) developed reading models as a means to explain the process (Samuels & Kamil, 1984). Goodman's work is particularly pertinent to discussion in this thesis. His approach to reading was often described as "reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game". He used an extensive array of oral reading data to support his model. Miscue analysis was a technique used by Goodman to establish the nature of oral reading errors made by students. Oral reading is this sense was used as a diagnostic tool. The data in this study suggest that students in some oral reading events were not afforded the opportunity to explore cueing systems other than the graphophonic system and that teachers rarely used student's miscues in a diagnostic sense. In the questionnaires, only 6% of the 222 responses given concerning the use of oral reading indicated teachers used it in a diagnostic way. Teachers gave 270 responses when they described their reading assessment methods. Fourteen teachers identified miscue analysis or running records as a feature of their assessment program.

In the 1970's, the view of comprehension as a process comprising a number of discrete skills began to change. A shift occurred when researchers looked for ways to explain the social and contextual factors of text and comprehension. These approaches questioned the boundaries of texts, language, context and reading processes extending the paradigm of context with links established between the psychological and sociocultural processes of reading. This resulted in the emergence of schema theories.

Schema theories

According to Bartlett (1932), who was the first psychologist to use this term in the sense we understand it today, schema referred to an "active organization of past reactions, or past experience" (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 257). Some schemata were small while others were large bodies of knowledge, resulting from personal experiences and interactions with others. Early research in this area centred on the readers' use of prior knowledge in processing information. In the early 1980's, the focus of research changed and schema theorists explored the relationship between schema theory and comprehension (Anstey & Bull, 1996, p. 89). Schema theories often known as "interactive theories" tended to look at comprehension in terms of a readers' "prior knowledge" and "expectations". Proponents of this approach accepted that readers used both "bottom-up" and "top-down" processes when reading. Rumelhart (1977) described reading as an "interactive process" involving a combination of "visually derived" and "expectation derived" information (Smith, 1983, p. 66).

During reading, the text activated schemata relevant to the text in question. The reader then actively selected what was necessary in order to achieve meaning (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p. 7). Schema theorists also investigated links between the social and psychological experiences of readers. They argued that differences in readers' social and cultural background experiences accounted for differing interpretations of text. In one paired-reading activity observed it was evident that the reader's prior experiences made it difficult for him to associate the word "chewing" with "gum". The

analysis of the transcript in Chapter 10 shows how knowledge of this would have helped the teacher to assist the child in decoding the word.

Schema theories marked another shift in the word 'meaning'. It was not only recognised as being located in the text and the reader but other factors outside of the reader and text also contributed. These theories opened the way for multiple possibilities of readings of text. The exploration of this idea occurred later within sociolinguistic and cultural critical theories. Cultural critical theorists however believed that these theories stopped short of recognising how texts, the knowledge inherent in, and the knowledge brought to the text can be ideological (Luke, 1992, p. 5).

There was also a growing interest in the child's meta-cognitive states in line with the work conducted on comprehension. Researchers pursued three distinct areas under the umbrella of meta-cognition. First, the knowledge that learners had about their own resources; second, the self-regulatory mechanisms used by learners when problem solving and third, the development and use of compensatory strategies (Baker & Brown, 1984, pp. 353-354). Whilst the terminology here was new, the ideas were not. Researchers in Huey's time were also aware that reading involved planning, evaluating and checking activities now referred to as meta-cognitive skills. Data from this study suggest that meta-cognition or a self-awareness of the reading process is an area needing attention when teaching learner readers.

Researchers have identified significant differences between good, poor and younger readers. Carney and Winograd (1979) noted that younger and poorer readers were not aware that reading involved making meaning. They tended to focus on reading as a decoding process rather than a meaning-making process. Markman (1977) found that younger readers failed to monitor their comprehension. On a different level, a study conducted by Forrest and Waller (1979) concluded that older and good readers evaluated their reading performance better than younger and poorer readers' do. Isakson and Miller (1976, 1978) also found that better fourth grade readers were more likely to detect semantic and syntactic errors in passages read. There were also significant differences found in the self-monitoring strategies of good and

poorer readers. In a study conducted by Clay (1973), readers in the upper part of the class corrected 33% of their errors whereas the readers in the lower half of the class only corrected 5% of errors. Similarly, Neville and Pugh (1976/77) found that good readers made better use of contextual information. Finally, Smith (1969) found differences in the way good and poor readers described the reading process. Good readers were able to describe their method of reading a short story whereas the poorer readers appeared completely unaware of the process (Baker & Brown, 1984, pp.358-365).

Some of these claims have recently been refuted particularly those that suggested younger and poorer readers relied more on decoding skills than other contextual information. Studies that are more recent have shown that not only did poorer readers use context but also that they utilised it more than better readers did (Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999, p. 16). Further, Stanovich claimed that reading skills of good readers were so "rapid", "automatic" and "efficient" that the skilled reader did not need to rely on contextual information. Poorer readers on the other hand made guesses using contextual clues because their coding skills were so poor (1999, p. 19). Perfetti (1995) supported this view and added further that skilled readers read words rather than skip them and that they did rely on phonological skills. This completely contradicts Smith (1983) and Goodman's (1982) conclusions about skilled readers who in their eyes selectively used cueing strategies with a minimum amount of effort as they read paying attention to that which is important and ignoring that which was redundant. It was not the intention of this study to investigate the nature of students' reading errors and their self-monitoring strategies, however the data highlight a number of issues relating to this. All readers interviewed had difficulty evaluating their reading abilities. They were able to articulate areas needing improvement but had difficulty identifying the things they did well. The public nature of some oral reading activities made it difficult for some readers to monitor their reading errors as others often supplied unknown words or corrected their oral slippages before they had an opportunity to do this themselves. Further, the data suggest that there was an over-reliance on sounding out strategies although many of the older readers felt it was a "shame job" for others to hear them sounding out and so preferred others to supply

them with the unknown word. A discussion of this follows in the data analysis chapters.

Pedagogy

A significant movement that developed from these interactive theories of reading, was the whole language movement (Cambourne, 1988). It clearly related to "top-down" and interactive theories of reading because of its reliance on "meaning" and "wholeness". It warrants some discussion here since many of the oral reading practices identified by teachers in the data such as shared reading, reader's theatre and reading conferences are practices endorsed within this approach.

The whole-language movement found its way into classrooms in the mid eighties. It rested on two premises. First, that there were only superficial differences in the oral and written modes of language and second, that the written modes of language were successfully taught by reproducing the natural conditions in which students learned oral language (Anstey & Bull, 1996, p. 134). Whilst it may appear this theory informed the development of oral and written language only, it also influenced reading instruction. Advocates of this approach believed that a child learned to read simply by reading. They considered the bedtime reading scenario a successful strategy for teaching beginning readers. (Meek, 1982).

Cambourne proposed eight natural conditions for learning that could be set up in the classroom. These were: immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation and response (1988, pp. 45-80). These conditions informed the teaching of oral language, writing and reading. In relation to reading, it meant that students easily accessed a variety of print based resources in the classroom. Meaningful demonstrations of reading occurred by knowledgeable others. Readers willingly engaged in the reading process. Teachers expected that their students would learn to read. The student took responsibility for his or her own learning. Mistakes were a positive part of the learning process and students willingly had a go. Students had plenty of opportunities to read and evaluation was a positive process.

The whole language classroom contained a huge array of different reading material, housed in a comfortable corner of the room decorated with signs encouraging students to read. A variety of reading activities filled the day with language integrated meaningfully across the curriculum. . Reading was silent and shared. Teachers read frequently to their students and students read frequently to others. Students chose the material they read and parental involvement was encouraged in the child's reading development. Teachers encouraged self-evaluation and the entire evaluation process was ongoing and diagnostic in nature.

Many of the oral reading activities observed through this study did not mirror the characteristics of a whole language approach. During oral reading activities, students were encouraged to read in some of the classrooms whereas in others they had no choice. Teachers participated in the reading activities in only two of the six activities observed. Students were rarely provided with good models to follow and generally students were not willing participants in the activities. In most of the activities, students' choice of reading material was limited. Students did not view mistakes as a positive aspect of oral reading activities with both teachers and students claiming that accuracy and correct pronunciation were important aspects of the various oral reading activities. Finally, students were rarely provided with good models to follow and generally students were not willing participants in the activities. Further, teachers rarely modelled silent reading practices during the silent reading activities observed in this study.

The introduction of the whole language reactivated the divide between "bottom up" and "top down" approaches. Disagreement tended to be focussed around three major points. First, whether learning to read and write could be considered a natural act in the same way one learns to speak, second, how the whole language theory was translated into classroom practice and third, the importance of phonics during reading instruction (Anstey & Bull, 1996; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999).

Some claimed that the assumption about the natural conditions in which children acquire language was flawed since it assumed that all children had

similar home experiences (Luke, Baty, & Stehbens, 1989; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999). Linguists were still far from reaching consensus concerning oral language acquisition and many did not support the assumption that the development of reading and writing were similar to the development of oral language. Moorman et al. (1994) claimed that, "reading and writing are cultural artefacts" and were thus far from natural since their meaning and development were specific to particular cultural codes (Anstey & Bull, 1996, p. 139).

In terms of translating the whole language theory into practice, there were a number of concerns raised. Some theorists believed that misinterpretation of the theory led to poor teaching in some instances. For example, Unsworth (1988) and Baker (1989) raised concerns about the "shared book experience", Unsworth (1988) and Gray (1987) criticised the read and retell strategy, and Gray (1986) and Church (1994) had concerns about the "responsibility" and "response" conditions for learning (Anstey & Bull, 1996, pp. 139-141). Many who criticised the whole language movement claimed there was sufficient empirical evidence to favour bottom-up models over top-down models in terms of producing better, early success in reading acquisition. Further, they claimed that the greater use of context clues did not necessarily characterise a 'good' reader (Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999).

Despite the debate surrounding the pedagogy, it continues to be an approach embraced in many classrooms today. More recently, researchers noted that we should consider what whole language has to offer in light of how previous research and future knowledge might address possible problems with the whole language theory (Church, 1994; Spiegel, 1992; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999).

Sociological Approaches

Theory

Kuhn (1962) claimed that reading research experienced a paradigm shift in the 1960's. Theorists viewed the reader as an active information processor, they applied discourse analysis to reading research and closing the divide between research and practice was important. At this time, cognitive and

physiological psychology, linguistics, anthropology, computer sciences, social psychology, learning theory and educational practice influenced research (Kamil, 1984, p. 39). Researchers began to develop techniques compatible with sociological concerns about young readers. There were two main areas of interest. First, a further understanding of the reading process and second an interest in developing better teaching methods to address educational standards and prevent failure in students identified at risk. Ethnography, traditionally an apparatus of anthropology became a popular way to study schools and educational processes. (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000).

Experimental research carried out in laboratory conditions that used relatively small samples was increasingly criticised. First, this type of research had little ecological validity and second, it often used a small non-representative sample (Kamil, 1984). Freebody argued that sociological approaches had far more to offer the field than the traditional paradigm of reading research based on psychology which failed to detail the "fluid patterns of social construction that go on around reading events in common educational settings" (Freebody, 1991, p. 252).

Sociological approaches were capable of answering a greater range of questions not previously answered by cognitive approaches to research:

> How people are taught to read, what it conventionally means to read, what and when and where people can and do read, the ways in which they read these things, why they read them, how their readings are used and heard (Baker & Luke, 1991b, p. xiii).

This study that adopted an ethnographically grounded approach to discourse analysis, attempted to answer similar questions in relation to oral reading activities.

Ethnographic studies have tended to adopt a sociocultural approach to reading research. Although sometimes criticised as being "soft research" (Guthrie & Hall, 1984), they did have high ecological validity and they often uncovered new variables such as relationships and social dynamics not found in psychological experimental research (Kamil, 1984, pp. 50-51). This study uncovered a number of issues relating to the construction of the readers' identity through students' participation in oral reading activities. The

understanding that reading was more than a solitary cognitive process paved the way for increased ethnographic studies in reading. Proponents of these research methods viewed the process of learning to read as a social, interactional activity embedded in the interactions that took place between teachers, students and others. It often occurred in groups and how students and teachers conducted themselves in these situations effected whether or not a child learned to read (Cazden, 1979). This point has significance to the work of this thesis since there was an attempt to gain an understanding of the teacher, student and the researcher in relation to the ways in which various oral-reading activities used in the classroom functioned as part of "learning to read". This study drew on a limited range of ethnographic techniques through the methods employed. Further, the ethnographically grounded approach to discourse analysis used endorses the "cultural perspective guiding ethnography" (Gee & Green, 1997). This approach is useful in unveiling what "members of a social group need to know, produce, predict, interpret and evaluate in any given setting" (Gee & Green, 1997).

Research on the perceptions of readers was also important since how students construct reading and understand it can have a very real effect on their learning and attitudes. Children often have their own view of reality and interviews conducted with children have uncovered differing perceptions of various classroom practices (Cairney, 2000; Cicourel et al., 1974; Elbaum, Moody, & Achumm, 1999; Mehan & Wood, 1975). Spindler (1982) claimed that, by treating the child as the expert on their culture we can learn more about their reading and associated problems (Guthrie & Hall, 1984, p. 101). There were mismatches identified in this thesis between the different perspectives sought. The data suggest that often we do not achieve "common ground" resulting in differing perceptions of events and at times inequitable educational outcomes for some learner readers.

Earlier ethnographic work tended to view cultures studied as "static". The 1980's witnessed a shift in thinking with researchers acknowledging that any particular culture was not static but constantly transformed by those interacting within it. Anthropologists addressed education as a process that both transmitted and transformed culture. Reading, writing and oral language were

seen as communicative tools and practices essential to this process (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000, p. 155). This shift in thinking enabled literacy not only to be thought of as a "constellation of school subjects" or as "private intellectual achievement" but as "observable practices, learned and used within communities and constituent of social and cultural identity"(Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000, p. 156).

Much of Au's work has been influential in the field of educational ethnography (1995; 1998; 1997; 1981). It is essentially a mix of social historical theory with educational anthropology. Literacy then becomes both a cultural tool and cultural practice influenced not only by the interactions in classrooms but by social and historical factors as well. In one of the studies, Au looked at the points of contact between teachers and young readers and writers. These interactions viewed not only as between people from differing cultural experiences but as cultural experiences in there own right (Au & Carroll, 1997). Au states that when researching in educational settings we must not only make contextual considerations such as "language use" and " cultural practices" but also that we must examine instruction (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000, p. 158). Au also acknowledges the divide that exists between research and practice, particularly how research on cultural differences has had little impact on the situation for minority students in the classroom (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000).

Pedagogy

Intervention approaches that sought to identify students at risk with a view to reducing the rate of reading failure grew from some of the findings from sociological reading research. The reading recovery program developed in New Zealand by Marie Clay (1976) is a well-known example. A study conducted with Maori, Samoan and Pakeha children found amongst other things that students' social backgrounds affected their early literacy development in school (Clay, 1982, pp. 94-102). This program based on the idea that social disadvantage also contributed to failure in progress in early literacy was essentially a mix of sociological and psychological approaches. Psychological derived methods such as achievement testing helped to identify the students at risk. The program was widely implemented in New Zealand,

USA, Canada, UK and Australia as an effective means to address problems of reading failure. Some of the students interviewed in this study participated in reading intervention programs where they were withdrawn from their classes and the data suggest that intervention approaches had varying benefits for these learner readers. In some cases, the interruption from the normal classroom routines only served to hamper student progress and reinforce the negative attitudes they had of themselves as readers. An evaluation of the reading recovery program (Clay, 1981) in New South Wales found amongst other things that reading recovery was not beneficial for all students (Center, Wheldhall, Freeman, Outhred, & McNaught, 1995). Hiebert and Taylor (2000) reviewed the research conducted since the 1980's on the effectiveness of intervention approaches. They concluded that intervention in the early grades led to higher reading achievement for some students, that the gains were necessary but not sufficient to sustain progress in the middle grades and that when intervention approaches began early and were developmentally appropriate they were more effective.

Since the 1980's, a focus on the social aspect of literacy continued to grow. New forms of research such as critical sociology emerged with Baker and Luke (1991) and others claiming that many literacy practices, including the "school books" used by students helped to define readers and approaches to reading text and classroom order (Baker, 1997; Baker & Freebody, 1989; Baker & Luke, 1991a).

The next section discusses sociolinguistic studies of reading, grounded in the theory of sociolinguistics and the ethnography of education. These theories have their roots in anthropology, linguistics and to a lesser degree literary theory.

Sociolinguistics

Research

During the 1980's, models of language, like models of the reading process, grew increasingly sophisticated. Researchers became interested in the ways in which social life and language interacted with and influenced each

other. A sociolinguistic perspective of reading explored how reading established a social context and at the same time, how that context influenced reading practice and the communication of meaning. The argument advanced by some was that reading established structure and helped to maintain social relationships. It was seen both as a cognitive activity which was embedded in social and linguistic contexts and as a social and linguistic process (Bloome & Green, 1984, pp. 395-396).

Sociolinguistics viewed language in terms of its social functions. It was essentially a tool, defined in terms of its use. Halliday suggested that adopting a research approach that focussed on language functions and its use could help to understand the ways in which students view their world (Halliday, 1978).

The genre theorists in Australia, particularly in the area of writing, applied Halliday's work on the different functions of language to literacy pedagogies (Christie, 1990; Martin, 1984; Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987). This work has been influential in the teaching of writing and it has some application to reading.

Sociolinguistic studies grounded in literary theory have been concerned with the location of meaning in text. Researchers claimed that meaning was neither located in the text or the reader but in the interaction between text and reader. Further, that interpretation of particular reading events needed to consider both the "social and communicative acts" that made up the event and the social and cultural meaning of the event in question (Bloome & Green, 1984, p. 401).

Being in any classroom involves participation in a number of different reading events, many of which involve oral reading. "Reading groups", one of these activities, is a practice used widely in classrooms. There have been a number of sociolinguistic studies conducted on reading groups. McDermott (1976) found that students in higher reading groups had more instructional time due to their turn-taking procedures not interfering with their instructional tasks. Collins (1981) similarly found differences in the treatment of high and low ability reading groups. The high group was afforded less instructional time according to Collins because of the students' prosodic behaviour during oral

reading. The low group had more time spent on prosodic behaviour linked to correcting errors rather than on comprehension strategies. Whilst instructional time may not have been different, the nature of the instruction was. Data gathered from observations of reading groups in this study provide support for these findings (Barr & Dreeben, 1991).

Pedagogy

Genre theory (Christie, 1990; Martin, 1984; Martin et al., 1987) stemming from the work of Halliday was the most influential pedagogy to emerge from sociolinguistic studies of reading in Australia. Genre theorists argued that language structured meaning. Reading not only required word recognition and meaning but an understanding of how language operates in ones' culture.

Reading was not conceptualised as something that was individual or private but rather as a learned cultural practice, which was open to examination and critique (Gilbert, 1990).

Proponents of this approach did not belie the findings of psychological theories of reading but rather drew on the assumption that these psychological factors were common to all human beings in all cultures (Kress & Hodge, 1993, p. 23). They believed that reading encompassed more than individualistic and psychological accounts. In addition to decoding and comprehending readers should know, understand, use and control the very nature of the text in question.

Genre approaches came as a welcome relief to many teachers who had become disillusioned with "whole language" pedagogy and its lack of direction (Cope & Kalantis, 1993, p. 1). However, some claimed that pedagogy informed by genre theories should not conflict with, but rather contribute to, the whole language movement (Collerson, 1986, p.4). This potentially filled a perceived gap in the whole language pedagogy of failing to attend to the living social reality of texts-in-use by devoting more attention to "learning about language" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 13). Genre theorists also claimed that neglecting to teach specific skills severely disadvantaged different groups of students because their social class, ethnicity and/or gender did not equip them to know intuitively

about the processes of reading in schools. They viewed helping students to make the connections between the social purposes of a text and its language and structure as potentially empowering. Whilst genre theory and cultural critical theory were generally discussed as two distinct fields they did share a common concern with the role language played in disadvantaging particular groups in society. Both attempted to use linguistic methods as analytical tools.

Initially most of the research in this area applied to the teaching of writing (Christie, 1990; Collerson, 1986; King, 1980; Martin, 1984). Later however, the value in applying the pedagogy to the teaching of reading was realised.

A classroom characterised by this approach was not much different from the whole language scenario discussed previously however it included explicit teaching about the nature of texts and their social functions with teachers ensuring students exposure to a wide variety of different text forms.

Oral reading activities investigated did not reflect these approaches although one teacher did insist that students chose a variety of different narrative genres for their independent novel studies. The oral reading activities investigated in this study involved the reading of narratives and I did not observe any instruction related to investigating the structure of different text types.

Sociocultural and Critical Approaches

Contemporary theories of reading share some commonalities and many differences. They have often overlapped and at times borrowed from each other. They also share some similarities with sociological and psycholinguistic theories. Sociocultural and critical approaches to reading research viewed 'reading' as variable forms of social practice and recognised the value in analysing text and discourse as a means to further conceptualise our understandings.

In order to participate and identify as an accomplished member in the various oral reading activities observed students needed to use appropriate language and act, and perform in particular ways.

Theory

More recently, a variety of "formerly discrete areas" have clustered around some central themes that tended to "undermine long-standing dichotomies" in reading research. These included "cognition and context, skills and meaning, formal structures and communicational functions, and the individual and the social" (Gee, 2000, p. 195). These different areas, including ethnomethodology, cognitive linguistics, modern sociology and postmodernism that have converged, each argued their own case for the importance of the social. Whilst these movements stemmed from different disciplines, they all tended to react against behaviourist and cognitive psychology, which focussed on the individual, viewing reading as a set of mentalistic states. Some of these studies defined reading as social and cultural processes (Bloome, 1985), some as social and cultural events (Heath, 1983) and others as social and cultural practices (Baker & Luke, 1991b). Whilst the definitions of these studies shared some commonalities, they placed different emphases on different aspects of their work. First, how people interacted and engaged within and across different social settings, second, how events were socially and culturally constructed and finally, in the "continuity and change in cultural and social systems and institutions" (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997).

A sociocultural view of reading demanded that we saw reading as "different socioculturally situated reading practices" (Gee, 2000, p. 204). The word situated has been conceptualised in different ways. Heap talked about the notion of a situated perspective. This was essentially an epistemological, methodological position developed in ethnomethodology that allowed one to gain an understanding of what counts as reading in settings where persons are understood to be reading (1991b, p. 122). Gee's notion of situated meanings stemmed from schema theory. He referred to situated meanings as "images or patterns" constructed "on the spot" during interactions with others. Meaning negotiated in and through social action does not reside in the individual. (Gee & Green, 1997, p. 122). Lee and Poynton (2000) discussed "situated knowledges" that allow us to think about how texts come into being, how texts are used and how they mean. The notion of text used here is in the broader semiotic sense.

Sociocultural studies of reading, through the analysis of discourse in educational settings, have uncovered how interactions in literacy events contributed to the ways in which students' positioned themselves as learners and constructed their identities. (Cairney, 2000; Green & Harker, 1988; Rex & McEachen, 1999; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs, & McEachen, 2002). Studies have also shown how pedagogical, institutional and sociological work can be unveiled through discourse analysis of the talk in literacy events (Baker, 1991, 1997, 2000; Gee & Green, 1997). This is important to this thesis since transcripts from interviews and observations were analysed to determine how teachers and students constructed oral reading activities. The data not only provided useful information about aspects of the activities such as rules and procedure but also provided evidence to suggest that oral reading activities contributed to the construction of a readers' identity. Further, the nature of the activities investigated in this study privileged some learner readers over others affording some learner readers, greater opportunities for learning. Other studies have shown how classrooms offer many and varied opportunities for learning and how literacy practices empower some whilst disempowering others (Cairney, 2000; Gutierrez, 1993; Tuyay, Jennings, & Dixon, 1995).

Since the 1970's, critical approaches have criticised the functionalist view of the roles of schooling in society and challenged the view that schooling is a neutral activity but rather that teaching and curriculum are political practices, which serve to regulate, control and maintain the status quo (Siegel & Fernandez, 2000, p. 141).

Critical studies on reading are relatively few. One area of interest included examining the political economy of reading instruction in order to highlight the ideologies at play in technologies presented as neutral. Shannon (1989) examined the way that basal reading materials deskill teachers. Luke looked at the ways in which particular literacy practices became authorised and how the school textbook has a unique and significant social function (de Castell, Luke, & Luke, 1989; Luke, 1988).

In another area critical theory, poststructuralist theory and sociocultural theories combined to critique contemporary progressive pedagogies such as

the whole language movement in an attempt to show that these were not "empowering" but rather served to reinforce the status quo. The selection of literacy practices in schools is not "accidental, random or idiosyncratic" but is supportive of the "organizational needs of the institutions of schooling and the stratified interests within social organizations" (Luke & Freebody, 1997b, p. 191).

Critical theorists conceptualised reading as a social and political process. They looked beyond the "taken-for-granted" explanations of practices in an attempt to understand their history, and further they sought "to challenge and transform the status quo" (Siegel & Fernandez, 2000, p. 149).

Pedagogy

Critical literacy is an emerging pedagogy, reflected in newly designed curriculum materials such as the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework and The New Basics in Queensland.

Based on the premise that reading referred to variable forms of social practices constructed in classrooms and other sites by its members, critical theorists claimed that reading involved the ability to resist, question and interrogate texts in terms of the apparent unity in order to see whose and what interests they best served. Readers needed to be aware of how texts were constructed and to understand that they were "crafted" objects written by people with particular interests. A person who is able to read in this way becomes conscious of the various "ideologies" and "language systems" which come into play when a text is used (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Freebody et al., 1991; Luke, 1995; Luke & Freebody, 1997b). This opened up the possibility for multiple readings of the same text, which are often in conflict with the dominant or most obvious reading (Mellor & Patterson, 2001).

Over the past decade, Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a social model of reading, which encompassed four components. They claimed that successful readers operated effectively in each of the four related roles. The first role of code breaker involved the reader in figuring out how to "crack the code" by using both visual and non-visual information. The second role of "text

participant" involved the reader understanding the meaning or meanings of the text. The third role "text user" involved the reader knowing about how texts are constructed, their use and purposes and the fourth role, "text analyst" involved the reader seeking out the ideological meanings in texts (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003; Luke, 1995; Luke & Freebody, 1997b, 1999). These roles whilst acknowledging some of the earlier theories of reading, for example, the role of code breaker relates to bottom up theories of reading, the role of text participant relates to top-down theories and the role of text user relates to genre theories, they offered something further, a critical edge. The other point worth noting about this model is that it is not hierarchical. Students did not have to learn to crack the code before they became text participants, text users or text analysts but rather students learned to read by being exposed to all of the four roles right at the beginning of their journey toward learning to read (Luke, 1995, p. 2221).

More recently, these roles are referred to as a set of practices that readers are able to draw from as a "resource" (Freebody & Luke, 2003). Moreover the 'four resources model' is presented as a means to 'interrogate practice'. It provides a "systematic way" to examine literacy programs and ask whether they present a "balanced" set of programs that "adequately prepare students for the complex everyday demands of text-based societies and economies" (Freebody & Luke, 2003).

The data in this study suggest that the oral reading practices investigated involved reading practices associated with the practice of "code breaker" and to a lesser extent "text participant", however the data provided little evidence to suggest that oral reading activities developed "text user" or "text analyst" practices. In this way oral reading as an instructional tool did not present learner readers with a balanced view of the resources available to them as 'readers'.

This study aimed to provide a "thick description" of oral reading events, defining them as different reading practices and highlighting the ways in which they functioned as part of learning to read (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 15).

Further, it did this by affording the various stakeholders in the process, the teachers, students and researcher the opportunity to present their views.

A discussion of oral reading events, as a distinctive practice are virtually non-existent in contemporary texts on reading pedagogy although oral reading strategies are deeply embedded in the various ways of learning to read in Australian classrooms (Worthy, 1996). The next chapter explores the various reading research and theory previously discussed foregrounding research efforts directly related to oral reading. Further, it discusses the various oral-reading activities promoted as successful strategies for learner readers and teachers of reading.

CHAPTER 3

Oral Reading: What does the research tell us?

This thesis argues that oral reading practices contribute to the construction of a particular kind of literate person. It also argues that various oral reading activities contribute to the ways in which students understand what it means to read and to be considered a 'reader' in the classroom and that this at times conflicts with the perceptions of what it means to read and be considered 'a reader' outside of the classroom. Further, the particular teaching and learning approaches used by teachers afford some students the opportunity to become 'readers in the classroom' whilst limiting those opportunities for other students.

Similar to the reading theories discussed in the previous chapter, psychological approaches have tended to dominate research efforts in oral reading. There have been some studies, particularly those on comprehension and reading groups that were a mix of both psychological and sociological approaches (Salasoo, 1986; Wilkinson & Anderson, 1995). Other research, particularly on the interactions and instructional routines in different oral reading activities tends to be a combination of both ethnographic and psychological approaches (Au & Mason, 1981). The results from many of these studies have served to fuel and maintain the "best method" debates surrounding reading instruction. In this study oral reading is treated as a specialised subset of the debates surrounding learning to read and reading pedagogies although its purpose is not to actively engage in these debates.

This thesis adopts the sociocultural view that reading is a social practice and that as such readers draw on a repertoire of resources including cultural, social and cognitive practices to construct and reconstruct meanings from texts. Studies on oral reading, like many other studies in reading more generally,

tended to examine isolated aspects of oral reading such as reading rate, comprehension and interactions in reading groups. In this way, these studies ignored many of the cultural, social and cognitive resources that readers draw from to make meaning from text. This thesis explores many of these historical, social, cognitive, communicative and interactive aspects of oral reading in an attempt to examine the role it plays in learning to read.

This chapter comprises three main parts. The first provides a brief historical account of events leading up to the oral versus silent debate and traces the development of the debate to date. The second section reviews research findings connected to the four different purposes of oral reading - instruction, assessment, diagnosis and entertainment. Allington (1984) used a similar structure in his account of the research conducted on oral reading although oral reading as a means to entertain was not included. The third and final section discusses different oral reading practices used in classrooms, both past and present and makes connections to their theoretical origins.

The Oral versus Silent Debate: A brief historical encounter

Historical texts suggest that the practice of reading orally was a widely used method of instruction in early education. This was not simply because books were scarce but because it was believed to be the best way to learn. There is also evidence from the Greek era through to the early Christian period to suggest that reading silently was considered inferior to the practice of reading aloud and that it was approached with caution and in some circumstances feared.

In addition to being a method of instruction, reading aloud was a form of entertainment, particularly in the homes of the wealthy. Emperors, Kings, Saints and Monks all enjoyed lengthy recitations, carried out with great precision. The rule of St Benedict stated:

> If anyone, whilst reciting a psalm, responsory, antiphon or lesson, make any mistake and do not at once make humble satisfaction for it before all, let him be subjected to greater punishment, as being one who is unwilling to correct humility what he has done amiss through negligence. For such a fault let the children be whipped" (Davies, 1973, p. 79).

The birth of the printing press marked the transition from oral to book culture but did not cause a decline in the oral culture. Cole claimed that "the combination of oral methods with printed materials as sources of information created a "cultural mix" that was essentially a new force in the sixteenth century" (Luke, 1989, p. 71).

Reading remained largely oral, reading aloud to oneself or an audience. It was common for large groups or people to gather in churches or town halls to listen to texts read by those who had "mastered the art of oral reading" (Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Eldredge, 1994, p. 41). Print provided the means to promote "collective learning" or a "brotherhood of oral readers" (Luke, 1989, p. 77).

During this period, the learning process was also largely oral with students learning via recitation, repetition and drill. The ultimate goal in reading instruction for most students was to achieve "eloquent" oral reading and to memorise the scriptures (Reutzel et al., 1994; Shannon, 1989). The following is an excerpt from a student's reflective journal in a "loud school":

> 'The class, composed of eight of ten scholars, takes its place on the floor, each one toeing the mark. The master commands "attention" then "obedience", the boys bow their heads and the girls courtsey......One end is called the head, the other the foot, of the class.......The teacher opens the book, which is of course Webster's *Elementary*, and turning to lessons, pronounces the words, beginning at the head..........If a scholar misspells a word it is given to the next one (Shannon, 1989, p. 6).

This is a description of an instructional routine known as the spelling method. In the nineteenth century, the phonics method replaced this, however it also attracted a similar set of oral drills like its predecessors. An "Overseer" Alfred Holbrook (1872) documented the guidelines he gave to students before they read to him:

You must not read so fast.

You must not skip your words.

You must pronounce every word distinctly.

You must mind your stops.

> If you don't do better I will count for you at every stop: one for every comma, two for every semi-colon, three for every colon, and six for every period (Shannon, 1990, p. 4).

Teachers and students in this study identified reading speed, accuracy, pronunciation and paying attention to punctuation as important characteristics of a 'good' reader. Mastery of these skills were essential in order for students to position themselves as a successful reader during oral reading activities.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries critics of these instrumental methods became quite vocal claiming that they afforded "scope for little more than passive imitation" (Patterson, 1997, p. 87). By the beginning of the twentieth century criticism continued to mount. Another debate over oral versus silent reading, which received less attention than the Great Debate surfaced at this time. This prompted a number of research studies, spanning the next two decades that resulted in an expansion of silent reading instruction and a decline in oral methods. In fact, some reported that its use in schools should cease altogether (Reutzel et al., 1994, p. 41). Klapper reported:

> not only do we place too much emphasis on oral reading but we begin it too early in the school life of the child. The popular superstition is that plenty of drill in oral reading in the classroom prepares for effective silent reading in the post school days (1926, pp. 25-26).

Early studies comparing oral and silent reading suggest that silent reading was superior to oral reading in a number of ways. Silent reading aided in comprehension, reduced sub-vocalization, and improved reading rate (Allington, 1984; Stone, 1922). In addition, it increased motivation levels in the middle grades and as generally more efficient (Stone, 1922). Despite these claims surveys conducted in the 1920's and 30's showed that oral reading practices tended to dominate and accounted for nearly two-thirds of the sessions that were studied. However, teachers were beginning to integrate silent reading into their instructional routines (Allington, 1984). Students in this study claimed that it was easier for them to comprehend what they had read when reading silently as opposed to oral reading. Some teachers on the other hand claimed that oral reading enhanced comprehension skills.

By the end of the 1930's, there was a general shift away from oral reading with an almost exclusive emphasis on silent reading. Russell reported

that in parts of Chicago and other places there was a system of reading called "non-oral" which gave no place to oral reading even in the early stages of the child's reading development (1949, p. 87). This not only meant no oral reading but also that there was no connection made between the oral and print symbols (Allington, 1984, p. 831).

By the middle of the twentieth century, the debate subsided but was by no means resolved. Most agreed that both oral and silent reading activities were necessary to develop a balanced reading program (Anderson & Dearborn, 1952; Betts, 1946).

In the late 1950's and 60's, oral reading re-established itself as a common practice in primary schools. Austin and Morrison (1963) reported that over two-thirds of classrooms emphasised oral reading over silent reading in the lower grades. By the middle primary grades, silent reading received more attention but oral reading practices remained popular. Further, he noted that the oral reading instructional routines were often unplanned, without purpose and similar to the oral recitation scenarios in the previous century emphasising accuracy over communication (Allington, 1984, p. 832). A more recent study by Howlett and Weintraub (1979) found that 85% of primary teachers reported that their students read orally every day although only 44% of the teachers rated the activity as important (Allington, 1984, P. 832). The data from this study suggest that oral reading was a frequent activity, that teachers surveyed considered it to be important, that some activities had little purpose and that accuracy was over-emphasised at the expense of other more potentially empowering reading skills.

The debate resurfaced again in the late 1970's and 80's with cries from reading educators about "fluency" being "a neglected goal" in reading instruction (Allington, 1983a; Anderson, 1981; Rasinski, 1989). They claimed that "lack of fluency" was characteristic of poor readers and rarely attended to in the classroom. Zutell and Rasinski put forth four recommendations for improving fluency. First, that teachers exposed students to good models of fluent reading. Second, students read texts that were well within their reading capabilities. Third, that the texts contained language patterns which promoted "fluent" and

"expressive" reading and fourth that students have opportunities to practice by reading the same text several times (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991, p. 216). Many of the oral reading activities observed in this study did not provide students with particularly good models to follow. Often the text was beyond the capabilities of some learner readers and students did not reread the text on subsequent occasions.

Today, fluency remains on the agenda with researchers continuing to describe intervention approaches to improve fluency in at-risk readers (Allinder, 2001; Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Rasinski, 2000; Richards, 2000; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). A number of teachers reported that oral reading assisted in the development of fluency and that fluency was an important characteristic of a 'good' reader. However, there were notable differences in the ways teachers' defined the term.

Research

Oral Reading as Instruction

The instructional setting for oral reading instruction evolved out of the three hundred year old practice of "round robin" reading or barbershop reading (Allington, 1984; Hill, 1983). Essentially, this was an activity where the whole class read a text or part of a text by taking turns at the reading. The turn taking procedure could be orderly by going around the class or circle of readers or it could proceed by the teacher nominating the next reader. Despite its widespread use in classrooms, there is no literature that describes the process as pedagogically sound (Hill, 1983; Lynch, 1987). I observed some small group and whole class oral reading activities that resembled "round robin" reading practices. This was not surprising since 25% of teachers surveyed claimed that they were using the practice frequently and 34% claimed they used it sometimes. A detailed discussion of some of the different oral reading practices featured throughout the data analysis occurs later in this review.

Over the years, there have been a number of studies conducted on reading groups. They included work on the achievement outcomes in homogeneous versus heterogeneous groupings, prevalence of grouping,

group organisation, interaction and instructional routines (Barr & Dreeben, 1991). Homogeneous grouping as a means of instruction became popular after the first quarter of last century. This allowed teachers to teach small groups of students with similar needs and prompted research into the effectiveness of such groupings. Much of the early research conducted produced inconsistent results although it indicated that ability grouping was beneficial for struggling students (Barr & Dreeben, 1991.). The research slowed after the 1930's and regained its popularity in the period between the 1950's and 80's. Reviews of this research still produced inconsistent results between homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings. However there was a tendency for high achieving students to perform better in homogeneous groupings and for low achieving students to perform better in heterogeneous groupings (Barr & Dreeben, 1991, pp. 893-896).

Recent research on the grouping of students has also been inconsistent in its results. A study by Connie (1990) investigating the effect of reading group placement on first and second graders growth in reading found that group placement only adversely affected reading development after the acquisition of basic reading skills. Data from a study investigating the instructional, social and institutional effects of ability grouping in first grade found that ability grouping could have persistent effects on a child's achievement over a long period, although it was not clear through the data whether these effects were instructional, social or institutional (Pallas, Entwisle, Alexander, & Stluka, 1994). Other studies also claimed that ability grouping could have social effects on students. Benn and Chitty (1996) found that heterogeneous grouping had positive social effects on students. A study by Lyle (1999) investigating students' perceptions of mixed ability grouping found that both high and low achieving students, valued working collaboratively in heterogeneous groups. Differently again Wilkinson and Townsend (2000) found that homogeneous groupings provided "positive contexts" for both low and high achieving students. Further, whilst acknowledging that some low ability students may be at risk when placed in homogeneous groups this was dependant on the nature of the instruction that occurred. Differently again Fountas and Pinnell (1996) acknowledged the advantages and disadvantages of both heterogeneous and

homogeneous groupings and suggested the idea of "dynamic grouping". This in a sense means that groups were not static but fluid. The nature of instruction determined the grouping of students. The work on the effects of grouping during oral reading activities is important to this thesis since the data indicate that preferences for either heterogeneous or homogeneous reading groups varied considerably across individuals but that it was a greater issue for struggling readers. The data also indicate ability grouping remained a favourable criteria to group students for reading instruction.

In addition to the research on the formation of groups for instruction there had also been a considerable amount of research on the interaction and instructional routines in reading groups. Research suggests that instruction and interaction differed between high and low ability groups. An ethnographic study conducted by Rist (1970), found that students in the low group communicated less with the teacher, were less involved in activities and received less instruction (Barr & Dreeben, 1991, p. 898). A study by McDermott (1976) also found that low groups spent less time on instruction than students placed in high reading groups. This was supposedly due to their turn taking procedures that constantly diverted students from their instructional tasks and to the interruptions from other class members. McDermott claimed that the low reading group may have had to deal with the "frustration and embarrassment" of getting through the lesson (Barr & Dreeben, 1991, p. 898). Allington noted, whilst he found generally equivalent amounts of time afforded to both high and low groups the "lower learning rate" of readers in the low group meant their reading deficits continued to increase. Further he reported that the low group displayed more off task behaviours, that instruction for the low groups centred around decoding whilst the high groups centred around meaning-based activities, that readers in the low groups read orally more than readers in the high groups and that teachers used different self-correction strategies in the two groups. Teachers tended to interrupt more in the low groups resulting in a lack of development in self-monitoring procedures. Allington also noted a differential treatment of call outs by teachers. They tended to reprimand students for calling out in the high groups whereas students in the low groups often had their call outs acknowledged and praised

(Allington, 1983b). Hoffman et al. (1984) discovered links between "oral reading behaviours" and feedback given. They found that the long-term effects of interactional patterns in reading groups were detrimental to the "low-skilled reader" (1991, p. 937). When students described 'good' readers in the interviews, their descriptions mirrored the kinds of feedback they individually received from teachers. The characteristics of 'good' readers identified by students were those areas that needed improvement in their own reading. This suggested that students received feedback about the areas needing improvement but were not aware of the things they did well.

There is little research evidence about what oral reading lessons actually achieve and about what students learn about reading. This study builds on previous work (Rennie, 1994) to construct an understanding based on ethnographic data about the nature of oral reading activities and how these contribute towards students' understandings about what it means to read and be considered a reader in school.

Instruction during oral reading tends to be in the form of teachers' corrective feedback (Allington, 1984, p. 834). Data from this thesis support this observation. Students talked about having their errors corrected and about being asked to speak louder, more clearly and with greater expression, however they did not talk about other reading strategies or about how they understood what they had read.

Students interviewed in this study reported that they found it much more difficult to understand what they had read when reading orally as compared to reading silently. A number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of the different modes of reading on comprehension. Early studies report that students comprehend text better when reading silently (Smith, 1970; Stone, 1922). Recent studies were inconclusive in their results. Some reported oral reading advantages whilst others found silent reading to be superior (Salasoo, 1986, p. 61). Salasoo's study claimed there were temporal differences in comprehension between oral and silent reading. More recently, research suggested that oral reading fluency has a high correlation with comprehension (Hintze & Conte, 1997).

As was said earlier in the previous section, in the 1970's educators and researchers began to research fluency and its relationship to effective reading. They promoted fluency training as an important aspect of learning to read, particularly in the beginning stages of reading. Various methods such as "repeated reading", "echo reading" and the "neurological impress method" were strategies described as being effective for training fluency (Anderson, 1981). Empirical evidence claimed that fluency was trainable and that it improved reading ability whilst others argued for greater attention to fluency training in instruction (Allington, 1983a).

Whilst many teachers in both this study and other studies conducted, acknowledged that they believed fluency was an important characteristic of good readers they often found it difficult to define the term (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998/99). Definitions of reading fluency also differed in the literature. Schreiber (1980) claimed fluency was achieved when readers recognised that they must "compensate for the absence of graphic signals corresponding to certain prosodic cues by making better use of morphological and syntactic cues that are preserved". Harris and Hodge (1981) defined fluency as "expressing oneself "smoothly easily and readily" having " freedom from word identification problems" and dealing with "words and larger language units with quickness" (Rasinski, 1989). Fourteen years later, Klenk added comprehension to the definition defining fluency as "reading smoothly, without hesitation, and with comprehension" (2000, p. 672). Zutell and Rasinski claimed that during fluent reading readers read with a minimum amount of effort, chunking words into meaningful phrases using pitch, stress and intonation to convey meaning (1991, p. 212). Others offered simpler definitions. Galbraith and Clayton claimed a widely accepted definition was simply "the ability to read easily and smoothly" (1998, p. 99). A more recent definition described fluency as a complex notion consisting not only of "rate, accuracy, and automaticity, but also of phrasing, smoothness, and expressiveness" (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). Some definitions referred to prosodic features, some to speed, some to ease of reading and others to comprehension.

Whilst most agreed that the relationship between fluency and efficient reading was positive, the effect of fluency training on comprehension was

ambiguous in initial research efforts (Allington, 1983a, p. 559). The relationship between fluency training and comprehension has continued on the research agenda over the past twenty years and recent studies claimed the improvement of reading rate does increase accuracy and comprehension (Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Pinnell et al., 1995). Like Allington (1983), Anderson (1981) and Rasinski (1989), educators and researchers are still calling for greater attention to fluency training in the primary school (Allinder, 2001; Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Martinez et al., 1998/99; Richards, 2000; Tyler & Chard, 2000). Whilst teachers in this study did acknowledge that fluency was characteristic of good readers, as was pointed out in the previous section, there was little evidence to suggest that the oral reading instructional routines observed served to improve it. There appears to be a mismatch between teachers' understanding of fluency and how to improve it using oral reading.

This thesis questions what oral reading activities achieve in terms of the development of reading abilities and what students learn about reading through participation in these events. In addition, it questions the effects that oral reading activities have on some learner readers, particularly the social, emotional and motivational effects.

Oral Reading as Assessment

Data collected from observations, teachers and students in this study suggest that reading assessment occurred in a number of ways in the classroom including oral reading, oral comprehension, written comprehension, book reports and cloze activities. Whilst many of the teachers surveyed said that this was only one of many reasons for utilising oral reading, the students identified assessment and assistance with decoding unknown words as the two main purposes

The formal assessment of reading had its origins in the Leipzig psychological laboratory of Wundt in 1880. Cattell, who worked at the laboratory, devised tests that dealt with word and letter perception. In 1895, Binet (1895) began to develop tests in reading comprehension. At the same time, Rice (1894) put forward the idea of relating reading to educational achievement rather than treating it solely as a psychological process. His ideas

although rejected at the time, became widely accepted, driving the testing movement that began around 1914 (Johnston, 1984, pp. 148-150). This period also marked the almost complete transition from oral to silent reading. As a result, many of the tests developed used silent rather than oral reading procedures. Gray's standardised reading tests were an exception to these. They consisted of a number of text passages of varying levels that students read aloud. Test administrators recorded oral reading errors including mispronunciation, omissions, additions and repetition (Allington, 1984, p. 835). These tests were not particularly appealing at the time given the dominance of silent reading methods. However, in the 1930's there was renewed interest with researchers developing ways to classify, describe and interpret oral reading errors. These studies, which spanned over the 1930's and 40's, influenced the perception and treatment of errors. Errors were not thought of as a natural part of the learning process but as something to be "eradicated" and recorded, with most analysis of error types being at the word rather than linguistic level (Allington, 1984pp. 835-836). Word-perfect reading was the ultimate goal. Accuracy rated highly in both teacher and student descriptions of 'good' readers in this study.

In 1946, Betts developed standards for word recognition and comprehension at three different levels - independent, instructional and frustration. The passages given to students were pre-read silently before any testing occurred. A number of researchers challenged Betts saying that his criteria were arbitrary and lacking in empirical evidence and that the pre-reading of the materials advantaged students placing them at least one level above their word recognition and comprehension levels. Others also questioned the placement of students in different text levels. This type of testing is problematic since all errors are treated in a negative way. A survey conducted by Gates in 1937 of reading tests current at the time revealed 27 tests measuring reading speed, 23 tests measuring comprehension and 14 tests measuring word knowledge and vocabulary. (Allington, 1984, pp. 837-838).

There are similar tests in use in classrooms today such as the Waddington diagnostic reading and spelling tests (Waddington). These reading tests have a combination of letter, word, rhyme, phonic, picture to word and

picture to text recognition. The first test consists of four pages. The child is required to identify letters, sounds and words in context and read them to the teacher. The child's reading age is then calculated.

Researchers have highlighted concerns with standardised tests as they often only test isolated skills rather than reading ability, they emphasise lower comprehension skills, rely on multiple choice formats with which many students are unfamiliar, have little use in terms of planning for reading instruction and the students are not involved in the assessment process (Valencia, 1997). Heap problematised the whole notion of reading assessment particularly when conceived as a set of cognitive processes or skills. His argument based on two doctrines of Wittgenstein concerning criteria claimed:

> (1) We cannot know with certainty in any particular case whether a task outcome displays the presence or absence of the task's target skill because (2) we cannot know with certainty whether the conditions are "proper" for claiming that a target reading skill has or has not been displayed. The truth of the second claim guarantees the truth of the first (1980, p. 266).

Cognitive processes and skills are not directly observable. What can be observed are what are taken to be reading behaviours such as eye movements, fixations, turning a page and acting out the text to name but a few. These may be criteria of reading but they do not define it. Put more simply these behaviours may be criteria for judgements about reading but they are not reading. Heap referred to these problems as philosophical issues. He also highlighted three problems under the heading of sociological issues (Heap, 1980). First was the problem of resources, both internal and external. This encompassed the meaning of what constituted a correct performance. He claimed that teachers or assessors could not be certain that students only have one resource for producing the target skill. Target skills could also be the result of the administration and construction of the tasks, which often had the "ideal student in mind" (Heap, 1980).

Heap gave an example of a student who was involved in a reading group activity where students were taking turns at reading. The child involved was not following the text and so could not read when her turn came around. The student missed her turn and the teacher understood this behaviour as

inattentive and not reading. During question time, the child was able to answer questions relating to the text that she had not supposedly been reading with the group. This child had displayed behaviours that showed she had understood the task yet she was not displaying behaviours consistent with a child who was reading (1980, pp. 275-280). In many of the oral reading activities observed, "following the text" was a requirement in order to participate fully in the activity. In some cases, there were consequences for not doing this.

Second was the problem of barriers. What do incorrect performances mean? In a test with high content validity, it could simply mean the absence of the skill targeted. He claimed that it is not this simple for various reasons. First, the child may not understand the task-at-hand. The organisation of the task may be problematic for particular students. Second, incorrect responses traditionally treated as errors could provide teachers with other useful information about the child's reading development. Further, other unobservable factors such as emotional or social factors may affect a child's performance during oral reading. (Heap, 1980, pp. 280-282). Data from this study suggest that emotional and social factors can affect a child's performance during oral reading activities. Many students spoke about how the activity made them anxious.

Finally, Heap (1980) discussed the problem of framing. He claimed that we cannot be sure whether our interpretation of a child's absence of a particular skill is the absence of that skill or whether it results from a differing frame of reference, from which the child is operating. This thesis highlights that fact that students often had different perceptions of particular reading events from their teacher. It is possible these students were working from a different frame of reference.

In recent years, there have been calls for authentic assessment procedures (Scheurman, Geoffrey, & Newman, 1998). These supposedly looked more like real-life literacy tasks found in and out of schools and they involved students in tasks that required them to use a variety of skills and strategies in different contexts. Valencia reported that in authentic reading assessment students were required to "demonstrate reading rather than recognize correct

responses. Students read, respond, and interact with real books; engage in meaningful discussions; write about what they read; and set personal goals" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2).

The notion of "authentic" and "real" are problematic in themselves and the Queensland Education Department has preferred to adopt the terminology of "productive pedagogy" (Queensland, 2000). This thesis argues that "school reading" is a particular type of reading and that oral reading is a feature of "school reading". Presenting reading tasks in school as "authentic" or "real" only mask the features of school practice. Students interviewed in a study where they helped to define the activity of school reading clearly talked about reading in school as being different from reading at home or out of school (Rennie, 1994). Researchers described school reading as a particular type of reading, constructed in schools by parents, teachers and students (Freebody et al., 1991; McHoul, 1996).

The Northern Territory Curriculum lists six pages of various ways a teacher can assess a child's reading. These include oral reading, running records, reading conferences, read and retell, written cloze and reading logs. It also promotes oral reading, the first strategy discussed, as an important strategy to monitor a child's reading and to provide direct instruction on the use of the various cueing systems (Studies, 1998).

The document states that when teachers use oral reading as an assessment strategy that students should read aloud to the teacher or another adult who has an understanding of the reading process. The text should be at a correct level for the student, that is, if there are more than ten errors, the text is too hard and if there are fewer than four errors it is too easy. Throughout the reading, teachers are encouraged to positively reinforce the use of various reading strategies and when a student makes an error the teacher should wait, allowing the child to self-correct, prompt with contextual cues if their attempt does not make sense and ignore miscues which do not change the meaning of the text (Studies, 1998, pp. 18-19). Whilst teachers in this study used oral reading as an assessment method, were less familiar with recommendations suggested in the curriculum document. For example, other teachers and students often

corrected students' errors before they had an opportunity to do this themselves and in some situations, the entire class read the same text irrespective of students' reading levels.

The Northern Territory Curriculum talks about the value of running records as a diagnostic tool. A running record is essentially a record of a student's oral reading behaviour. The errors that are marked can be analysed to provide the teacher with information about the reading strategies used by a student to assist with future planning for that student (Studies, 1998, p. 19). The following section discusses the diagnostic benefits of oral reading activities.

Oral Reading as Diagnosis

Initially tests in reading served to measure reading achievement. Following Gray's standardised tests researchers became interested in devising ways to analyse oral reading errors. Allington reported that the early work in this area took a "primitive view of oral reading errors prevalent half a century ago" (1984, p. 839). Further, he claimed that it did not meet "psychometric" and "theoretical" standards.

Since these initial attempts, others have tried to use the analysis of oral reading errors to inform reading instruction. Goodman (1965) found that readers were able to recognise words in the context of a story that they did not recognise in isolation. Around this time, there was a shift in the research from a focus at the word level to more complex linguistic analysis (Sharpley & Goodall, 1989, 232). Goodman's work was particularly influential. He attempted to describe how syntactic and semantic constraints operated on a child's oral reading behaviour. He developed a taxonomy that detailed twenty-eight different types of miscues (Hempenstall, 1998, p. 32). Following this work, Goodman and Burke (1970) developed a simpler version of Hempenstall's scheme for analysing oral reading behaviours known as the Reading Miscue Inventory. The analysis was essentially qualitative with errors rated rather than counted. Errors rated according to their graphic and sound nature, their grammatical acceptability and whether or not they affected meaning. Further, the text read by the child must ensure enough difficulty to record twenty-five errors. After the reading of the text, the child was also required to retell the

story as a comprehension check. Whilst this work was a huge improvement on earlier attempts, it was still criticised. Wixon, (1979) claimed that it ignored the fact that miscues vary according to the reader's ability, the difficulty of the text and reading purpose (Allington, 1984, p. 841). Further, Wixon (1979) argued that miscue analysis assumed that the child's language skills were fully developed. It also rested on the underlying assumption that both oral and silent reading processes were similar (Allington, 1984, p. 841). Criticisms have also come from others such as Hood (1975/76) and Leu (1982) (Allington, 1984, p. 842). More recently Hempenstall criticised it on the basis that it rested on a "whole language" assumption about reading which he claimed conceptualised reading development as a developmental process of the "gradual integration of three cueing mechanisms", the graphophonic system being the lesser important of the three (1998, p. 33). Reading was perceived as a process whereby students made predictions about words based on syntactic and semantic cues. Recent research demonstrates that this is flawed (Hempenstall, 1998; Perfetti, 1995; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1999). Although good readers are sensitive to context clues, they do not invest as much time as poor readers in using context to make guesses about unknown words. Despite this, its use remains in classrooms, today. The Northern Territory Curriculum promotes Miscue Analysis as an effective means for analysing reading behaviours (Studies, 1998, p.19). This study highlights the fact that oral reading is more difficult than silent reading and that oral reading is a particular type of reading that occurs in school. Further, it raises concerns related to using a students' oral reading performance as an indication of their ability to read.

A recent adaptation of the traditional Reading Miscue Inventory is Retrospective Miscue Analysis. This process although similar to the traditional approach in many ways invited the reader to reflect on their own reading process (Goodman, 1996). This process grew out of Goodman's interest in miscue analysis and what she termed "kidwatching" (Goodman, 1996, p. 601). Whilst both processes involved listening to students reading and analysing their miscues, retrospective miscue analysis added the further dimension of talking to students about their miscues. They defined miscues as "unexpected responses" rather than mistakes. Goodman (1996) believed that this process

helped to reveal the reading process to students and demystified some of their misconceptions about reading such as skipping words when reading is cheating and that slow reading means poor reading and that good readers know every single word and remember everything they have read. Ultimately, students come to revalue themselves as readers and have a more informed understanding of the reading process. In a sense, this method helped students to develop metacognitive skills in reading, encouraging them to talk about what they do when they read. This study also highlighted the fact that the development of metacognitive skills needs to be a priority in reading instruction. It also promoted the value in talking to students about their reading and attempted to demonstrate how information gained from conversations with students is invaluable in helping teachers with future planning for instruction. This also has importance for the education of pre-service teachers. Many teachers complain of a lack of specific instruction about how to translate reading theory into practice. Pre-service teachers also need to develop metacognitive skills so they can better understand how they can assist learner readers. Further, we need to highlight the value in teachers taking the time to talk to their students.

Oral Reading as Entertainment

Reading aloud to others is not a recent occurrence. It has been a practice since "man has been literate" (Parrish, Wayland, & Maxfield, 1966, p.3). As was said in the previous section outlining the oral versus silent debate, oral reading was a form of entertainment in the homes of the wealthy from the Greek era through to the early Christian period. Parrish reported that Herodotus published his history by first reading it aloud (Parrish et al., 1966, p. 3).

With the birth of the printing press, it was common for large groups of people to gather and listen to those who had mastered oral reading, which was essentially an art form (Reutzel et al., 1994). Grandfathers often read aloud to their families usually from the King James Version of the bible (Parrish et al., 1966, p. 3). More recently, Briggs also discussed reading as an art form:

> The reader who correctly applies reading skills can give the listener a feeling for language. Just as an artist can paint a picture using oils and

a brush, an author can create characters, scenes, and plots through lines of print: and a good reader can bring these lines to life (1978, p. 258).

In the nineteenth century, lessons in elocution became popular with many books including the McGuffey readers giving instruction in the art (Parrish et al., 1966). Data collected in this thesis suggest that teachers value oral reading as a means to develop attributes such as expression, volume, intonation, pitch, punctuation and confidence in the reader. All of these are characteristic of a reader who gives an entertaining rendition of a text.

Today, preachers give sermons, politicians make speeches, students listen to lectures, chairs present minutes at meetings, delegates deliver papers at conferences and parents read bedtime stories to their children. Book clubs where members read and share literature also remain popular (Parrish et al., 1966).

Many still acknowledged that one of the purposes of oral reading was to entertain others (Barrentine, 1996; Dwyer & Bain, 1999; Giorgis & Johnson, 1999; Palardy, 1990; Person & Burke, 1985). Others claimed that it was a means for sharing with others (Briggs, 1978; Palardy, 1990).

Some, however, felt that oral reading that was neither entertaining nor eloquent, was an unpleasant experience for those subjected to it:

> dreadful oral reading is a plague on the literary landscape. Clumsy and awkward oral reading is heard in schools at every grade level as well at religious services, board meetings, and a variety of other situations. A high level of competence in oral reading is rarely a gift and usually must be gained through guidance and practice (Dwyer & Bain, 1999).

Thirty-three years earlier Parrish held similar views:

> We should also note that public recitations of small children instigated by their doting mothers, the prevalence or recitations on all kinds of school programs, and the widespread speech contests in which oral reading is a regular feature. Although these performances are generally wholesome and valuable, there are similar times when they are marred by bad taste, both in the choice of selections read and in their renditions (1966, pp. 4-5).

Students interviewed in this study also highlighted the fact that they did not enjoy listening to poor readers. Many also talked about the difficulties they had expressing themselves when they read out-loud. Some said that it was

much easier for them to make the text meaningful for themselves when they read silently. A discussion of these and other factors related to oral reading as entertainment occurs in the data analysis chapters.

Despite these misgivings oral reading was said to have a positive contribution to make to a child's growth including the development of poise, status, confidence, belonging, speaking skills and a positive self-image (Briggs, 1978). However, data from this study suggest that oral reading does little to contribute to the development of these attributes particularly the less able readers. Kos (1991) noted that struggling readers experienced anxiety, which only served to hamper reading performance and development depending on the instructional contexts and routines used. Gentile and McMillan claimed that poor readers perceived reading in a negative way and they "exhibit fight or flight stress reactions when they read" (1987, p. 170).

Reading aloud to students as opposed to reading aloud by students is a different experience and one that does appear to have many positive outcomes for the learner reader. A full discussion of this and many of the other oral reading activities referred to in this thesis occurs in the next section 'Oral reading practices'

Oral Reading Practices

This section describes oral reading practices, described in the literature and makes links with research and theory. Practices discussed include, reading groups, paired reading, "round robin" reading, comprehension, cloze, shared reading, reading conferences and guided reading. These activities are important to this thesis as many are included as part of the general classroom routines of the observed classes.

Reading Groups

The data from teacher and student questionnaires and observations suggest that reading groups occurred regularly in classrooms. The first documentation of grouping occurred in 1862 in the St Louis schools (Barr & Dreeben, 1991, p. 887). With widespread attendance in schools and schools

increasingly seen as institutions to promote "an intelligent citizenry", quality assurance in education became an important issue, which included amongst other things better ways to organise and carry out instruction in the classroom. During the 1920's and 30's, reading groups became more popular along with the development of numerous basal reading schemes (Barr & Dreeben, 1991, p. 888). Activities in groups varied, as did their composition. Usually students in the same group read the same text. The reading of the text often proceeded in a round robin fashion where the teacher may or may not be present. Following the reading, students were usually involved in a number of activities related to the text read.

It is not apparent through the literature that reading groups stemmed from any particular theory of reading. Evidence of discussion on the use of reading groups in many texts on reading pedagogy from the beginning of the twentieth century to date indicated that advocates of reading groups drew dialectically on a range of different theories (Cambourne, 1988; Harris, 1962; Klapper, 1926; Russell, 1949; Winch et al., 2001)

Paired Reading

Teachers surveyed reported using paired reading as an instructional regime in their classrooms. Paired reading involves using peers, parents or other adults to read with and to other students. The literature suggests it is a valuable instructional regime as it is a practical way to give students the support not otherwise afforded in the classroom (Harrison, 2000; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Plackett, 1990). The notion of reading one to one reading may have stemmed from the numerous intervention approaches to reading which were prevalent in classrooms since the 1970's. Topping claimed that teachers often used the term "paired reading" loosely to refer to anything that "two people do together with a book" (2001, p. 2). He defined peer assisted learning "as the acquisition of knowledge through active helping and supporting among companions who are matched or equal in status" (2001, p. 1). Hannon (1995) reported that many who use Topping's approach used the terms "paired reading, shared reading, home reading, and parent listening interchangeably" (Harrison, 2000, p. 21).

Researchers have claimed that one-to-one tutoring is an effective means of instruction (Bloom, 1981; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Juel, 1996; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Topping, 1998; Wasik, 1998a, 1998b; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Intervention programs using tutors became a popular way to help struggling readers. It was commonly recognised that students who started in first grade, as poor readers tended to continue to be poor readers in later grades unless some form of intervention occurred (Juel, 1996, p. 271). Poor readers also experienced what Stanovich (1986) has termed the "Matthew effect", which means that they tended to grow to dislike reading and read less than their peers (Juel, 1996, p. 271). Juel (1996) conducted a study to minimise the Matthew effect and determined the factors that contributed to the success of one-to-one tutoring. The findings suggest that amongst other things whilst tutoring was not effective for all it did have positive effects for some. Successful dyads showed a "bonding" between tutor and tutee and frequent episodes of explicit teaching (1996, p. 282).

Wasik's (1998b) review of seventeen intervention programs using volunteer tutors, however, revealed a lack of evidence about how the programs affected achievement. Wasik found that programs generally had a designated coordinator, that the structure of the programs were similar, that the amount of training provided to tutors varied in quantity and quality and that there was a lack of coordination between the programs and what was actually happening in the classroom.

Whilst some of the research showed that one-to-one tutoring could have positive outcomes for students, there were also disadvantages noted. First, it was often costly in terms of the resources required. Second, the child often missed the other activities happening in the classroom. Third, there was often a great deal of time spent walking between tutoring sessions and the classroom. Fourth, the reading materials and strategies used were usually different to those used in the classroom and finally, the child often had to contend with conflicting methodologies (Juel, 1996). Another major concern was the sustainment of the gains of these programs over subsequent years. Recent research (Hiebert, 1994; Shanahan & Barr, 1995) on the Reading Recovery

program indicated that the gains made through this program did not transfer to subsequent years (Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson, & Watts, 1997, p. 197).

Data in this study suggest that teachers used paired reading, buddy reading and parents in the classroom to read to and with other students. Thirty-nine percent of teachers surveyed claimed to use paired reading with an adult frequently and 35% of teachers claimed to use paired reading with peers frequently. The data from the interviews and observations suggest that the use of paired reading was not in an intervention sense, although some of the students interviewed did talk about reading to others out of the classroom and these seemed to fit the intervention scenarios previously discussed. The sessions of paired reading observed tended to occur for all of the students. Many had an evaluative nature rather than an instructional one and others appeared to be a sharing time.

In contexts where students are reading to others, there is some disagreement in the literature about whether the parent or other support should immediately supply an unknown word to the student. Plackett claimed that the success in the program lay in the parent immediately supplying the words that the parent "senses the child cannot be reasonably expected to know" (1990, p. 41). Smith on the other hand claimed that we should not jump on errors the moment they occur and that this is a "certain way to make children anxious" and "hesitant" (1978, p. 141). Heap noted that if we do not correct errors then we are running the risk of presenting culturally incorrect versions of reading. He claimed that by correcting errors we "reinforce procedural definitions of adequate reading which are criterially correct " (1991b, pp. 132-133). Others argued for the "Pause, Prompt and Praise" procedure based on the earlier work of Marie Clay (1979) (Wheldall & Colmar, 1992). The Northern Territory Curriculum endorses the "Pause, Prompt and Praise" approach however, in this study, there was little evidence of its occurrence during the oral reading activities observed.

Round Robin Reading

Throughout history, there has been evidence of "round robin" or "barbershop reading". It is an activity where the whole class reads a text or part

of a text by individual students taking turns at the reading. Turn taking can proceed in an orderly fashion or by the teacher nominating the next reader. Occasionally the teacher asks volunteers to read but there is an implicit assumption that all students will eventually have a turn at the reading (Rennie, 2000).

It appears from this thesis and from work cited above that oral reading continues to be popular in classrooms, however, there is little research evidence to suggest that it has positive outcomes for students' learning. Most commonly, the research literature reported it as boring, purposeless and often accompanied by disruptive behaviours. Further, it encouraged subvocalization and excessive eye regressions and fixation durations and created anxiety for less able readers (Hill, 1983; Lynch, 1987). Teachers rarely provided feedback during these sessions other than supplying unknown words and correcting errors. Further there was a great deal of time wasted whilst students waited for their turn, better readers became frustrated due to the "slow pace" and poorer readers became frustrated because of the difficulty they experienced with reading the material (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002).

It is difficult to ascertain a time when this practice assumed its prominence in classrooms. Hoffman claimed that it originated from reading practices in American schools in the 1800's where the teacher would orally read a text to students, the students would then rehearse this in preparation for their turn at recitation and finally the students would recite the text and be judged on their performance (1987, p. 369). A study conducted by (Hill, 1983) which researched the use of "round robin" reading as a teaching method in social studies found that when researchers asked for schools to participate in the study many principals declined saying that they had not witnessed this method being used by their teachers. Contrary to this one of these same schools inadvertently received copies of the questionnaires and all fourth and fifth grade teachers reported extensive use of "round robin" reading in their classrooms. More recently, (Worthy, 1996) reported it as a practice thriving in elementary and middle school classrooms. Davies and Hunt described the formulation of a reading group that resembled "round robin" reading. The teacher called volunteer readers but each student knew that at some point in

the proceedings they all must have a turn. Leigh was the last child to read and he had his turn somewhat reluctantly. Jamie, another child whispered each word to him before he said it thus helping Leigh achieve a task he knew he could not accomplish alone (1994, p. 395).

Some teachers surveyed acknowledged the use of this strategy in the classroom and I observed three classrooms using a variation of the traditional "round robin" routine. Students interviewed were almost unanimous in expressing their dislike for the activity both when it was their turn to read and when they had to listen to other readers who were struggling with the task.

Comprehension

In this thesis, comprehension referred to activities, where students were required to give written or oral answers to questions about a text they had read. Oral comprehension occurred in individual conferences with students, small group reading activities or in a whole class situation. Students gave oral answers to questions about texts read and teachers used it to monitor students' understandings as they were reading.

The written form of comprehension has been widely criticised. Moy and Raleigh (1984) rejected this timeless model of comprehension where students read a passage alone and then supplied answers which are either right or wrong claiming that students found this procedure to be "quietly and acceptably" boring (, p. 149). Instead, they proposed a collaborative model where comprehension was "an ever-sharpening process of emergent understanding" (1984, p. 156). In short, students and teachers worked together to establish these skills and it was not something done in isolation that only had right or wrong answers. Holdaway stated that "traditional comprehension exercises tend to cripple development in reading by lacking point or relevance" (, p. 53). Cambourne also highlighted concerns with teachers attempting to assess students' comprehension skills. He saw problems in attempting to "quantify" reading comprehension due to problems of "external validity" and with identifying a "unit" of comprehension that could be "identified and applied" (, p. 173).

The oral mode of comprehension appeared less flawed although students interviewed still believed that there were only right or wrong answers to the questions asked. Data from a previous study (Rennie, 1994) suggested that some students would rather wait for others to answer during these sessions and monitor their comprehension privately rather than leave it open to public scrutiny. More recently, some have promoted the idea of teaching effective comprehension strategies during literature sessions (Baumann, Hooten, & White, 1999; Dowhower, 1999). Dowhower proposed a framework that involved three phases - "pre-reading", "active reading" and "post-reading". The "pre-reading phase" involved the elicitation of prior knowledge, the building of a background for the reading experience to come and explicit instruction about a specific comprehension strategy. The "active reading phase" involved three parts. First students read a specific part of a text with a specific purpose in mind. Second, students read the text silently and they self-monitored. Finally, the story was "worked" which meant there was discussion, not interrogation, about, what the students had read. The post-reading phase involved students working independently or in small groups on activities that required some sort of recall of material read and self-assessment techniques (1999, pp. 673-675). This type of instruction related to schema and interactive theories of the reading process (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1977).

Oral and Written Cloze

Cloze was another assessment strategy used according to the teachers surveyed. Like comprehension, it had both a written and oral format. It involved the deletion of words at a "predetermined rate", usually about every fifth word. Students then read the passage and supplied the missing words. The text is too difficult when the child cannot supply at least half of the missing words. This procedure became popular because students who successfully replaced words appeared to simulate behaviours explained as "normal" in psycholinguistic accounts of reading (Unsworth, 1985, p. 188). It was also useful in helping readers develop abilities in using the various cueing systems (Schoenfeld, 1980, p. 147).

In the oral format, teachers often used a big book and covered up particular words or phrases. The group then discussed which phrase or word might be most suitable. This helped to develop grammatical and semantic knowledge in a cooperative way (Winch et al., 2001, p. 120).

The Northern Territory Curriculum promotes this as a successful strategy for assessing and teaching "different aspects of language knowledge". It recommends the deletion of every tenth word with words deleted according to the aspect of language assessed or taught (1998, pp 22-23).

Shared Reading

Shared reading is a term used frequently and loosely in the classroom. Fifty-two percent of teachers surveyed reported using the strategy frequently in their classrooms. The idea of shared reading evolved from whole language beliefs that language developed through interaction with someone else (Davis & Stubbs, 1988, p. vii). Cambourne (1988) discussed sharing time as the final segment of a language session where students shared their responses to material read or written. This time was not compulsory and teachers modelled how questions might be "asked" or "answered". Cambourne claimed that it afforded the opportunity for "learning", "teaching" and "evaluation" (, pp. 96-98).

Winch used shared reading interchangeably with modelled reading. In his version of shared reading, students participated in "structured demonstrations of what effective readers know and can do"(2001, p. 127). Teachers often worked with the same text over a number of sessions, modelling the way effective readers read, teaching various reading strategies and encouraging the students to think critically about the text read (Winch et al., 2001, pp. 127-128).

The literature does not cite the term "sharing" frequently before 1960. "Sharing" of literature in the sense we understand it today largely occurred outside of school. A study conducted by Lyons and Taska (1992) where sixty Australians discussed their memories of reading experiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, revealed memories of reading in

family or religious groups where repeated readings of the Bible or familiar texts occurred (Rennie, 2000, p. 200).

Reading Conference

Thirty-one percent of teachers surveyed reported using reading conferences frequently in the classroom. "Reading conferences" referred to a time spent between individual students and a teacher. They normally occurred at the teacher's desk and teachers used these conferences to discuss reading progress and to listen to students read. Generally, teachers kept records of these meetings.

Many variants of the reading conference are apparent in the literature. In the first half of last century there were a number of standardised tests for reading administered on a one-to-one basis, particularly those which measured oral reading abilities (Klapper, 1926). Around the middle of the century, there was mention of reading cards where teachers kept a record of a child's reading progress. In addition teachers kept anecdotal records, student self-appraisal records and interest inventories, practices that resemble record keeping practices in classrooms today (Hester, 1964, p. 364).

D'Arcy claimed that the reading conference was a teaching and learning strategy developed from the belief of the whole language movement that books needed to be shared by a community of readers (1989, p. 21). Further, they provided a "forum for children's discussion", an opportunity to "model ways of responding orally to literature", and "an informal means for the sharing of enjoyable, sometimes memorable experiences" (D'Arcy, 1989, p. 21).

Whilst many teacher educators acknowledged the value in reading conferences there has been little research conducted on their effectiveness. Gill, a teacher-researcher conducted a case study analysis of reading conferences held with a child called Amy over a period of four months. The study revealed that the teacher took on a number of roles during these events - collaborator, demonstrator, observer and assessor. The study also suggested that reading was not only a psycholinguistic process but also, what Weaver (1984) described as a socio-psycholinguistic process. This acknowledged that other social and

situational factors contributed to students' experiences of learning to read (2000, p. 508).

The Northern Territory Curriculum devotes some two pages to the reading conference. It states that it is an opportunity to "scan the students reading logs" and to check whether students have read the material they have claimed to read. Further, they provide an opportunity for the teacher and student to "make links between the world of the book and the students' world" (Studies, 1998, p. 19). The document describes two types of conferences. First, a "general discussion conference" where the reading log is reviewed, the child discusses a book they have read, the teacher monitors comprehension and finally the child reads a passage orally. Second, a "specific purpose conference" where the teacher gathers information about a students' ability to "interact with the books they have read and the depth of their response, and to encourage them to think a little more analytically about them" (Studies, 1998, pp. 20 -22). It is evident that the Northern Territory Education Department views the reading conference as a necessary and valuable strategy.

Guided Reading

I have included a section on Guided Reading, although at the time of data collection it was not a practice used widely in schools in the Northern Territory. However, since the data collection phase it has become a popular instructional routine in some primary classrooms. In recent years, the term "balance" occurs frequently in literature concerned with developing reading and literacy programs (Aihara et al., 2000; Cooper, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1999; Welna, 1999; Winch et al., 2001) However, there has been much debate about what "balance" actually means (Fitzgerald, 1999; Welna, 1999). In this thesis, I refer to balance in a way that affords all learners the opportunity to learn to read proficiently by accessing all of the resources available to them to become proficient readers of text (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). This does not simply mean providing teaching directed at each of these practices but also providing contexts and instructional routines in which all readers can experience success.

Guided reading formulates part of what Fountas (1996) described as a balanced reading program. Read alouds, shared reading and literature circles

constituted the remainder of the reading instruction. Guided reading that normally occurred in small ability groups, provided a context where teachers supported each reader's development. Texts used needed to be at the right level of difficulty for the group and the teacher focused on teaching only one or two "focus points". The goal in guided reading was to help students become independent readers who utilise reading strategies effectively (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Summary

This thesis argues that oral reading activities contribute to the construction of a "school reader". They also contribute to students' understanding of what it means to "read" and to be considered a "reader" in the classroom. The characteristics of some reading practices, such as their public and graded nature make it difficult for some students when they attempt to position themselves as "successful" readers in the classroom. Further, the nature of the pedagogies used provide opportunities for some students to become "readers in the classroom" whilst others are denied this opportunity.

It is obvious from the review of literature that there is a great deal of research on the teaching of reading and some of this work includes reference to oral reading practices in classrooms. No studies of reading conducted over the past century were devoted to the classroom practice of oral reading as a taken-for-granted aspect of teaching reading in the primary school. This thesis describes the first major study of oral reading practices in classrooms that takes account of oral reading from students, teachers and the researcher's perspectives, using three different types of data gathering procedures. It brings together for the first time a range of factors from current classroom contexts and history and makes a case for the re-consideration of oral reading practices as a means to teach reading.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Situating the Methodology of the Study

Psychology and to a lesser extent ethnography have characterised the nature of research conducted on oral reading to date. Studies investigated isolated aspects of oral reading such as reading rate, effects on comprehension, effectiveness of particular strategies or instructional routines such as readers' theatre and repeated readings, and patterns of student/teacher interactions within reading groups. Allington claimed we had information to suggest that oral reading was a frequent activity in many primary schools, particularly for poorer readers; few descriptions of how reading groups operated, that we had focussed too much on errors and error counts and that fluency was largely ignored. He suggested that amongst other things we needed to know more about the historical significance of oral reading events, why it is used by teachers as a pedagogical tool, that we needed more information on the incidence of oral reading instruction and its worth as an instructional tool. Further that the social, communicative and interactive contexts of oral reading practices had tended to be ignored along with the distinct differences between oral and silent reading practices (Allington, 1984). This thesis conceptualises oral reading as a network of socially and historically constructed practices that have specific pedagogical effects and in doing so, it attempts to address many of these unanswered questions.

Oral reading is a particular type of reading that occurs in school as opposed to other reading events that may occur outside school. It is argued that the practice of oral reading consists of many sub-activities such as "round robin" reading, group reading and paired reading (McHoul, 1996, p. 72). However, although McHoul's work is helpful in providing ways of thinking about the diversity of reading practices, he ignores the complexity of the

discourses informing actual work in classrooms. Further that his work "evinces both a determinism and pessimism" and the "impossibility of a critically progressive pedagogy" (Green, 1991, pp. 231-232). Like Green, I tend to be a little more optimistic about the future of a reading pedagogy that has both critical and progressive dimensions. Institutionalised constraints are operative but change is possible. Unlike McHoul, this thesis sees the interplay of text and context as both unavoidable and necessary when discussing particular events in the classroom. Like Green, I also acknowledge the presence of a "thirdness", the agency which assists in making the connections between the text and the reader "Enlightened reading pedagogy" is about bringing readers and texts together (Green, 1991, p. 216). In the case of reading in school the teacher/and or nature of instruction, create this "thirdness". This thesis in its analysis takes into account the interplay between the reader, the text and the context and brings both the social and historical into the equation. The event and the situation are both so inextricably entwined that we cannot simply say the reading "here" and the context out "there".

Work conducted on the construction of literacy events through talk and interaction around texts also has importance to this thesis. Baker's studies have shown how pedagogical, institutional and sociological work can be unveiled through discourse analysis of talk in early literacy events (Baker, 1991, 1997, 2000; Baker & Freebody, 1989). Through the various events, teachers and students construct what it means to be literate. Teachers and students construct norms, expectations, rules, roles and responsibilities in relation to how they interact in the classroom (J Green et al., 1992). This work acknowledges that reading in school is a particular type of reading and further that learning to read and write is accomplished in particular ways. Baker found the metaphor of ceremony and game useful when talking about particular reading events. She claimed that it is through these ceremonies and games that students learn how to organise the talk in literacy sessions. She claimed that they are central to the "moral order" of the classroom and that they are sites where children learn how to organise talk appropriate to particular literacy events (Baker, 1997, p. 247). Further, she suggested that teachers and students do not simply follow rules but that they construct and reconstruct them in each new literacy event. The

organisational work "preceding, surrounding and subsuming the game" is not only influenced by the here and now but also, by past events. History becomes important, helping to situate and naturalise each new game (Baker, 1997pp. 246-251). Freiberg and Freebody (1997) question the ceremony-game metaphor used by Baker and claims that in the ethnomethodological sense, the processes of reconstruction do not operate and that if they do "they are heavily sanctioned" (, p. 267). Whilst I acknowledge, the criticism of Freiberg and Freebody, I tend to operate from a similar position to Baker. The data here suggest that the rules of play for many of the oral reading events enacted in classrooms today resemble the rules of play of similar oral reading events documented in the past. However, my observations, interview and questionnaire data also show how the enactment of these events or the playing of the game varies according to the participants, time and context. This provides some support for Baker's position on the "reconstruction" of rules of play.

Work conducted by those who espouse critical social theories of literacy is also important to the work of this thesis. In particular the work of Luke and Freebody who stated that literacy is not only "socially constructed" but also "institutionally located" (, p. 3). Further, literacy events in the classroom are not "neutral" and unavoidably connected to issues of "discipline and power" (Luke & Freebody, 1997a, p. 3). This thesis takes a situated perspective and so does not look at notions of power in the wider political sense but does examine how power is enacted in and through the various oral reading events in the classroom. The pedagogies embraced; the texts that are used; the rules and procedures employed either give access to or deny access to particular "literate markets" (Luke & Freebody, 1997a, p. 5). If one embraces one particular literacy program or pedagogy in the classroom there is an assumption that the classroom is "generic" when in fact, classrooms today are characterised by "non-generic, heterogeneous learners, places, conditions and times" (Luke & Freebody, 1997a, p. 4). As pointed out by Luke classrooms are not "level playing fields" (1997a, p. 2). Delpit discussed power as the "Silenced Dialogue" (Delpit, 1995, pp. 21 - 47). She claimed that power is enacted in classrooms via the teacher, the publishers of texts, curriculum developers, the enforcement of

compulsory schooling by the state, the power of individuals to determine ones "normalicy" and the fact that schooling plays a role in preparing children for the workforce (Delpit, 1995, pp. 24 - 25). Further, she claimed that there are rules for the participation in the "culture of power" in the classroom and that these rules usually reflect the "rules of the culture of those who have power" (Delpit, 1995, p. 24). Unlike Delpit, I do not envisage power as residing in an individual neither do I see it reified as an entity, rather power is something enacted in and through the interactions that occur in particular sites. It has the potential for renegotiation. In the classroom, this means that power has the potential to be both productive and unproductive. Unproductive power occurs for example, when teachers use their practices in a way where they do not examine the power relations that are already inherent in classroom organisations. Educators rarely provide students in primary school with a space to express their views on reading instruction and when we do provide that space, it is difficult to gain an accurate view of their perceptions because they are inevitably reporting to adults in an institution with unequal power relations.

Finally, this thesis adopts the sociocultural view that reading is a social practice and that as such readers draw on a repertoire of resources including cultural, social and cognitive practices to construct and reconstruct meanings from texts. Text viewed in the broader sense to include both traditional text based and multimodal texts. Further, the enactment of reading events varies according to the purpose and context in which it occurs. The resources upon which readers draw are acquired through participation in various social contexts with the guidance of significant others such as parents, carers, community members, peers and teachers. This thesis views "The Four Resources Model" as an effective model to conceptualise reading pedagogy, to equip students with the necessary skills to become competent readers and to plan and implement balanced and comprehensive reading programs in schools. This model suggests that effective readers draw on a repertoire of different practices when they read. These include "Code Breaker", "Meaning Maker", "Text User" and "Text Analyst" practices. Whilst the practices are "boxed" in this way, the model recognises that readers often draw upon a number of these practices simultaneously. Further, teachers should expose students to activities

aimed at developing all four practices right from the beginning of a students' journey of learning to read (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Freebody et al., 1991; Luke, 1995; Luke & Freebody, 1997b, 1999).

Data Collection Methods

This thesis comprised three data collection phases. Each phase of the research aimed to gain a different perspective on oral reading. The first phase involved data collected through surveys and reports on what teachers have to say about their use of oral reading practices in schools. The second phase discussed data collected from interviews with students who discussed their experiences with oral reading activities in schools. The third phase involved participant observation of classroom oral reading events. Schedule 1 below provides a summary of the data collection schedule.

Schedule 1 - Data Collection

DATE	WHO/WHAT	PURPOSE
February 1999	Phone contact made with 33 Principals of Darwin schools	Interested schools for distribution of questionnaires sought.
April 1999	297teacher questionnaires sent to 24 interested schools.	Gain general perspective on teachers' use of oral reading activities in the classroom
June 1999	100 questionnaires returned from 24 schools. Two school sites selected on basis of high return rates and willingness to participate.	For the purpose of data analysis For the purpose to select two focus school sites
February 2000	Contact made with principals Gunn and Farrer Primary	To identify possible classrooms where students could be interviewed
March 2000	Meetings set up with 3 teachers from each school site including one Year 3, one Year 4/5 and one Year 7 teacher	Identify 3 students from each class to be interviewed.
March - September 2000	Parents contacted. Permission sought. Interviews conducted with 6 Year 3, 7 year 4/5 and 6 Year 7 students	Gain students' perspective connected to the use of oral reading activities in the classroom
September - December 2000	Interviews held with 6 teachers from the classrooms where students were interviewed	To gain teachers' perspective on the use of oral reading activities in their classroom. To identify matches/mismatches between student and teacher perceptions
September - December 2000	Observations of six different oral reading activities in the classrooms where teachers and students were interviewed	Gain a researchers' perspective on the various oral reading activities. To identify matches/mismatches in the data.
August 2001	Questionnaires administered to 122 students in each of the classes where teachers were interviewed in the previous year. Same teachers. Same year level. Different cohort of students.	Gain students' perspectives generally on the use of oral reading in the classroom. To provide checks against the data gathered in the student interviews.

Following is a more detailed discussion of each of the different data collection phases.

Phase One - The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the research tool chosen for this phase of the data collection because it provided a useful means to gather information from a large sample (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 115). Cohen and Manion stated that amongst other things questionnaires provided the means to "gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, pp. 83 - 104). I designed two questionnaires for the purpose of this study. The first was to elicit information from teachers across the primary school concerning reading activities generally and more specifically about the extent and nature of the use of oral reading activities in the classroom (See Appendix 1). The second was to elicit information from students in Years 3, 5 and 7 about their attitudes and experiences of reading generally and more specifically oral-reading activities (See Appendix 2).

The teacher questionnaire was mailed to the various schools and completed by teachers at their convenience whereas, administration of the student questionnaires occurred in classrooms. Researchers use the mailed questionnaire widely, however this is often criticised due to self-selection of respondents and poor return rates. However, Best and Kahn claimed that when it is properly constructed and administered it can serve as an "appropriate and useful" data collection method in research (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 299). Similarly, Cohen and Manion claimed there are a number of myths about the postal questionnaire. Research has shown that response rates are at times equal and sometimes "surpass" those obtained through interviews (1994, p. 96). A good questionnaire deals with a significant topic and seeks information that is not obtainable from other sources. It needs to be as short as possible but long enough to collect the essential data, presented well, directions should be clear, it should avoid the use of leading questions and the arrangement of questions needs to proceed from general to specific responses. Finally, it should be easy to tabulate and interpret (Best & Kahn, 1998, pp. 307 - 308). Best's advice

appears simplistic and experience indicates that the issues are more complex than is generally acknowledged through the methodological literature.

I distributed 287 questionnaires and received 100 questionnaires back. This represents a return rate of 34.8%. A sample of thirty or more is considered the minimum number of cases if the researcher plans to use any form of statistical analysis.(Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 101). Differently, there was a 100% return rate of the 122 questionnaires administered directly to students. Further, the 100 teachers who responded were self-selected and this resulted in a slightly bigger sample of Early Childhood teachers compared to the Middle and Upper Primary samples. I also had no influence over who decided to participate. In addition, participation rate differed across schools. In some schools, it was a high as 60% whereas overall, participation rate averaged around 30%. Another problem may have occurred due to variable understandings of the questions by participants. I attempted to minimise this by conducting a pilot test of the questionnaire with a small number of teachers from my school after its original design. Anderson claimed that pilot testing is a good way to identify ambiguities in the instructions, to help clarify wording of the questions, and to provide overall feedback on areas such as design and length (Anderson, 1990, p. 217). This feedback assisted me in making final minor changes to the questionnaire before administering it on a wider scale.

In addition to these, special problems arise when children form the response group. In large-scale qualitative research, researchers often dismiss children as "out of scope" with samples usually drawn from the adult population (Scott, 2000, p. 98). Scott argued, that children of 11 and older are fully able to "articulate their perceptions, opinions and beliefs and, with relatively little adaptation, surveys designed for adults can be used with adolescents" (Scott, 2000, p. 102). However, these same surveys need considerable adaptation before using with younger children. The researcher needs to account for " problems of language use, literacy and different stages of cognitive development (Scott, 2000, p. 100). Scott also claimed that students take to a questionnaire with a "test-taking mentality" which whilst it has the benefits of ensuring that children pay greater attention to the questions it also increases the risk of their supplying what they think is the "right" response (Scott, 2000, p.

105). Administering questionnaires on mass in the classroom is also problematic. Although children may have the advice that their answers are confidential, it often does not prevent them from comparing their answers with peers resulting in responses that may not be representative of their own opinions. (Scott, 2000, p. 105).

Despite some of these issues, there are ways, as with other research methods, to assist in improving data quality. As with adults, children need "unambiguous and comprehensible instructions" before administering the questionnaire. The teacher and I administered the questionnaires for this study. I explained each question to the students before they answered it and they had the opportunity to ask questions if they did not understand. In the younger grades, Year 3, I divided the class into two groups and administered the questionnaire to each group separately. This allowed more one to one assistance with completing the questionnaire. In addition, the questions posed need to be relevant to the child's world, experience and knowledge. In this case, students answered a range of questions relevant to their experiences of reading in school. Finally, the interviewer needs to give more "leeway" than normal, allowing extra time for guidance and assistance during the administration of the questionnaire (Scott, 2000, ps.103-106). There were no time limits set for answering the various questions. In all grades, the teacher and I assisted students with writing their responses where necessary and students were free to ask for clarification at any stage of the proceedings. Following is a detailed discussion of each of the questionnaires.

Teacher questionnaire

Broadly, the purpose of this questionnaire was threefold. First, it sought to establish the extent of oral reading use in the classroom. Second, it investigated the nature of the use of oral reading activities in the classroom. Finally, it looked at how teachers described 'good' readers generally and the reading assessment strategies they used. It sought to find answers to the following six central questions. First, whether oral reading was in fact used. Second, when and where teachers used it. Third, the importance placed on its' use. Fourth, the scope and range of the activities used. Fifth, the nature of the

use of these activities and finally, how teachers assessed readers in the classroom generally and the extent of the role played by oral reading in assessment. (See Appendix 1) The survey addressed each of these areas in turn. Three of the items included rating scales, for example, in Question 7 teachers rated the importance placed on oral reading on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Yes/no responses were required in five items; for example, in Question 9 teachers answered yes or no, to whether they felt oral reading was equally important for all students. In four of these five questions, teachers had additional space to clarify their response further. For example, in Question nine after answering yes or no teachers could explain why they had answered this way. In Question 5 teachers ticked boxes to identify what oral reading activities they used and the frequency of their use. There was additional space in the following question to record any other activities not included in this question. Finally, four questions required teachers to provide extended responses. For example, in Question 12 participants detailed activities that they used specifically to enhance the oral reading skills of their students. In short, the questionnaire was composed of a range of different items. The type of item used to gain the information was dependent on the type of information sought. Sommer and Sommer recommended a combination of different question items rather than relying on a single type of item saying, "coupling several types of items provides checks on each" (Sommer & Sommer, 1997, p. 132 - 133).

I conducted a pilot test of the questionnaire with a small number of teachers from my school after its' original design. Anderson claimed that pilot testing is a good way to identify ambiguities in the instructions, to help clarify wording of the questions, and to provide overall feedback on its design, length etc (Anderson, 1990, p. 217). Feedback assisted me in making final minor changes to the questionnaire before administering it on a wider scale. The final questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions, printed on coloured paper.

Sample and administration of teacher questionnaires

I wanted to survey as many different primary schools as possible with an even representation of teachers across all the primary grades. Convenience sampling, the method used, involves the selection of schools according to

convenience of access. This is considered to be a legitimate sampling method where the "population can be reasonably considered heterogenous in the terms set by the research questions" (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001, p. 156). Firstly, I sought support by telephoning principals in all the public and private schools in the metropolitan area. Thirty-three schools indicated some interest in distributing my questionnaires within their school. I sent a letter detailing the nature of the research, a copy of ethics clearance and a copy of the questionnaire. I invited Principals to respond if they were still interested and to indicate how many copies of the questionnaire they needed. Twenty-four of the 33 schools indicated they would assist with the questionnaires. At the time, this represented 70% of all schools in the region. Eight of these schools were from the non-government sector and sixteen were from the government sector. Schools ranged from a one-teacher private school to schools having over twenty staff. The twenty-four schools had 287 classroom-based teachers. I sent packages of the questionnaires to each of the schools with stamped envelopes for their return in April of 1999. Principals approached individual staff members and distributed the questionnaires to those teachers who said they would participate. Twenty-four of the 33 schools returned 100 questionnaires.

The sample consisted of 38 Preparatory to Year 3 teachers, 31 Year 4/5 teachers and 31 Year 6/7 teachers. Whilst participation rates in some schools was as high as 60%, the average participation rate across all the schools was about 30%. Most teachers completed the questionnaires carefully with many teachers taking the opportunity to respond in the sections where they could choose to write more extended responses.

Student questionnaire

This questionnaire asked a range of questions that addressed student's attitudes toward reading generally and more specifically oral-reading activities. Students also described themselves as readers and indicated words that their teachers might use to describe a student considered a 'good' reader. Finally, students explained how teachers assessed a student's reading ability and the strategies they used when they encountered an unknown word. There were fifteen questions. (See Appendix 2). Some questions required yes/no responses;

for example, in the first question, students indicated whether they enjoyed reading or not. Some items used rating scales; for example, in Question 4 students indicated whether they read out-loud in school everyday, weekly, sometimes or never. In five of the questions, students were required to give more extended responses; for example, in Question 14 students detailed how their teacher found out how well they could read. Before the construction of the final questionnaire, pilot testing with 10 year 3 students, 10 year 5 students and 10 year 7 students helped to identify any problems with it's design. . Scott pointed out that similar to surveying adults that "pre-testing the survey instrument is crucial" when working with children (Scott, 2000, p.102). This resulted in the reduction from eighteen to fifteen questions. I omitted some of the more extended responses and reworded a number of the questions.

Sample and administration of student questionnaires:

One hundred and twenty-two students completed the revised questionnaire in August 2001. The sample consisted of 43 Year 3 students, 45 Year 5 students and 34 Year 7 students. The classes used had the same teachers as the classes where the individual students participated in interviews in the previous year, with the exception of one, where the teacher had left halfway through the year about four weeks before the administration of the questionnaires. These students reflected on both their experiences with their first teacher and new teacher when filling out the questionnaire. Before administering the questionnaires, I circulated letters detailing the research allowing parents the opportunity to afford/not afford consent. Only three parents indicated that they did not want their child to participate. After distribution of the letters, a suitable time was organised with the teacher to conduct the questionnaires. Schools allowed about an hour for students to complete the questionnaire although most students finished in thirty to forty minutes. I gave students information about my research background and why I needed their help.

I conducted the questionnaire sessions in each classroom. After distribution of the questionnaires, I then proceeded by reading and explaining one question at a time. Students had time to ask questions if they did not fully

understand the question. Students did not go ahead and answer the questions independently. This helped to ensure that the students had a good understanding of the questions asked and minimised the risk of questions being missed. Both the teacher and I gave assistance to children who needed help with their written responses by answering their questions and assisting with the writing of their responses. In the third year classrooms, there were three adults, including myself to assist students. We also divided the group into two and administered the questionnaire to only half the group at a time. There were two questions that were problematic for these students. In particular, the one referring to comprehension and book reports. If the students were still confused after my explanation, I told them they should leave their answer blank. This accounted for some discrepancy in the figures recorded on the tables in the Year 3 data. I felt it was better for the students to acknowledge they had not understood by not responding rather than simply responding because they felt they had to. Scott claimed researchers should allow "don't know" responses to "avoid best guesses" (Scott, 2000, p. 106).

Most students completed the questionnaire without any undue difficulties. A small number of students had problems with the rating scale questions despite my explanation of these in a way similar to Scott's suggestion. He claimed that a simple modification of the "Likert type response (agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree strongly) can be unfolded by first asking "Do you agree or disagree?" and then probing for strength of feeling" (Scott, 2000, p. 102). I did this with the questions where they had to determine how often something happened in the classroom. In Question 4 where students were asked how often, oral reading occurs in school I first asked the children to consider whether it happened or not. I then gave examples of what everyday, weekly and sometimes might mean so they could figure out the frequency of its occurrence. Some students in Year 3 still found it difficult to gain a sense of what everyday, weekly, sometimes and never meant. For example, in one of the classrooms where I learned that an oral reading activity happened twice weekly through the teacher interviews and my observations, a number of students indicated that reading aloud happened only sometimes and one student indicated that it never happened. In addition, a

small number of students said that silent reading happened sometimes when in fact it was a daily occurrence in this particular classroom. Nevertheless, most Year 3 students completed the questionnaire consistently.

Phase Two - The Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students for the purpose of this study. Interviews take many different forms which may be categorised under two main headings - standardised and non-standardised (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 153). The standardised interview encompasses all types of interviews which are either structured or semi-structured and the non-standardised interview includes all types of unstructured interviews. Denzin (1978) differentiated three types of interview - scheduled standardised interview, non-scheduled standardised interview and the non-standardised interview (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984, p. 119). The semi-structured interview or what Denzin referred to as the non-scheduled standardised interview is simply a more "flexible" version of the structured interview. As with the structured interview, questions are prepared before the interview with similar questions and probes for all participants. It differed in that the interviewer changes the order of the questions for each participant allowing them to probe more deeply and to overcome the problem of participants anticipating questions. In addition, there was the opportunity for the interviewer to probe and expand on the participant's responses (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). According to Kemp and Ellen interviews varied along continua in terms of the "degree of pre-determination", the "degree of directiveness", "the degree of openness or closedness of questions asked", the "length of the interview", the "degree of prior arrangement" and finally the "interview setting (Ellen, 1984, p. 231). Each of these criteria added, to the formality or informality of the interview held.

The semi-structured interviews conducted in this study tended to sit in the middle of Kemp and Ellen's continua. There were a number of pre-determined questions (See Appendix 3), I wanted answered in relation to reading generally and oral reading more specifically in the classroom. I sought to gain both the students' and teachers' perspective on these. In terms of

directiveness, I allowed students and teachers to speak about issues that were of importance to them, however I would redirect them back to the interview schedule when it was appropriate. The questions were a mix of both open and closed questions. The length of the interview was not predetermined. Participants had the opportunity to speak as long as they needed to answer each of the questions. I finished the interviews after I had obtained the information I sought and when the participants indicated they had nothing further to say. Finally, participants set both the time and place for the interviews.

In addition to the one to one interviews conducted with both teachers and students I conducted group interviews with students. After two individual interviews with each student in each year level, I conducted a group interview with the students in each grade from each school site. Group interviews have gained popularity in recent years. These can assume either a structured or an unstructured format. Lewis (1992) claimed that there are four main reasons why interviewers may resort to the group interview. These are: "to test a specific research question about consensus beliefs; to obtain greater depth and breadth in responses than occurs in individual interviews; to verify research plans or findings; and to enhance the reliability of interviewee responses" (Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 161). When organising groups for interviews both the composition and size of the group are important. Friendship groups of up to six students have proven to be the most productive. It is also important to arrange the seating so that all parties can see and hear each other well and that there is a notion of equality between all parties. Lewis (1992) recommended a circular arrangement. (Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 161). Further interviews with children require careful chairing, as children need to refocus on the main point of discussion occasionally. The recording of these interviews can also be difficult as the discussion can often become "animated" and the researcher needs to keep track of who is responding. Scott suggested that children should be of a similar age and gender and that the group size be no larger that eight (Scott, 2000, p.111). Students interviewed in this study were of similar age, the groups comprised three and in one case four students, students knew each other well

due to their being in the same class, however, the groups apart from one Year 7 group, comprised a combination of girls and boys.

Similar to other forms of data collection techniques, interviews whether they are at the formal or informal end of the continuum are not without criticism and problems. The type of interview one chooses to conduct depends largely on the type of data collected. Those who are in search of qualitative data usually opt for the more informal type of interview whereas those in search of quantitative data would use a more structured or formal interview.

Some researchers claimed that structured interviews help to minimise "interviewer bias" and that they are easier to analyse. This view is grounded in the assumption that structured interviews are "context independent" and free from interviewer influence thus allowing for a more "objective view of the social world of the respondent" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 164). Cicourel (1964) did not share this view, however. He has criticised structured and semi-structured interviews because there were problems surrounding the relationship between what the interviews set out to achieve and how researchers accomplished this (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 164). By trying to sustain an objective approach to the collection of data that supposedly revealed valid and unbiased data the researcher ignored the "socially organised practices" that were inherent in and necessary for the management and completion of the interview itself. Structured interviewing techniques ignored the fact that interviews are "situated activities" and that the data gathered from them are "situated accounts" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 160). Cicourel suggested that the interview needed to be "flexible, unstructured and sensitive to the context of the interaction" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 158). Hitchcock and Hughes cite Cicourel,

> The interviewer cannot check out his [sic] own responses in detail and follow the testing of a hypotheses during an interview; he is forced to make snap judgements, extended inferences, reveal his views, overlook material and the like and may be able to show how they were made or even why they were made only after the fact. The interviewer cannot escape from the difficulties of everyday life interpretations and actions. The common-sense 'rules' comprise literal hypotheses testing, but they are necessary conditions for eliciting the desired information (1995, p.158).

Further, Cicourel claimed that bias is just as much a problem in structured as it is in unstructured interviews and that it could not simply be assumed that the "interviewer-interviewee relationship or the nature of the interview discourse is unproblematic" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 158). He claimed that in any type of interview the fact that "the researcher is directly involved with another individual means, inevitably, that the presence of the researcher will have some kind of influence on the data" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 164).

Oakley (1981) and Wakeford (1981) criticised the structured interview claiming it was a model, which placed "the interviewer in an unnatural relationship with those researched," (Burgess, 1984). The unstructured or informal interview posed a much more relaxed atmosphere. Those who used the unstructured interview emphasised the need for interviewers to develop a good rapport with interviewees. Lofland (1971) claimed that the success of unstructured interviews rested heavily on the relationships developed between interviewer and interviewee (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 160). Corbin (1971), Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) stressed the importance of developing "trust and confidence" with those being interviewed (Burgess, 1984). This is one of the reasons I decided to conduct at least three interviews with each student comprising two individual interviews and one group interview. Students were much more at ease with me during the second and third interviews and they looked forward to my visits.

Similar to structured interviews; unstructured interviews have their share of problems. Question wording, types of questions posed, bias and rapport can all be problematic if not attended to before, after and during the course of the interview. Many of these problems are unavoidable, as Cicourel has pointed out, however, the importance lies in the interviewer being aware of their potential effects on the context of the interview, the data gathered and its ongoing and subsequent analysis.

Bulmer (1977) and Deutscher (1977) detailed other general problems specific to structured and unstructured interviews. These were inherent in first, the requirement of the interviewer to establish equitable grounds between

participants. Second in the need for the interviewer to break down language barriers that may exist between parties and thirdly; in the need for accessing the truth by discouraging the interviewee from responding in ways they think they ought to respond (Bulmer, 1977, pp. 227 - 258). In the first interview with students, I sensed that some of the responses given by students were those they thought I wanted to hear. For example in the first interview, most students told me they enjoyed reading. In the second and third interview, they were more honest in their responses.

During the teacher interviews, I had no way of knowing if the responses teachers gave me were honest. Further, the fact that I was a teacher-researcher may have caused some teachers to respond in a way which reflected the "ideal" curriculum rather than the "pedagogy-in-use". Nevertheless, the five different sets of data, namely the teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, student questionnaires, student interviews and classroom observations helped to minimise this as it often highlighted mismatches between the data.

Interviewing children

Since the nature of this study required the interviewing of children it is worth discussing some of the unique issues associated with these types of participants. One of the aims of this study was to establish how both teachers and students perceived the various oral reading activities used in the classroom and to identify any matches and mismatches between them. Interviewing has become a popular and successful tool for eliciting data from children particularly when researchers seek the feelings, perceptions and thoughts of children (Hughes, 1988, p. 91).

As with other interview situations there are a number of things, warranting consideration before conducting the interview. Place and timing are important. Children need to feel comfortable in the interview site. It is a good idea to give children a choice concerning place. . The home environment, school and researchers work place are all possibilities each with its advantages and disadvantages (2000, pp. 20 -21). The problems associated with interviewing children at school are inherent in the fact that there may not always be a suitably private and comfortable place to conduct the interview. I gave the

parents and caregivers of the students the choice of having their child interviewed at home or school. Two of the 18 students opted to have the interviews conducted in their own homes. I interviewed all other students at a time convenient to them and their teacher at school.

Further, some children do not like being "singled out" or to feel different by withdrawing them from class. (Gollop, 2000, p. 20). This was not a problem in this study as all of the students were excited about the interviews and looked forward to my visits. One also needs to consider the factor of timing. The interviewer should set the interview up so that children are not going to miss anything, for example sport on the school front or their favourite television program, if interviewed at home. Again, this was not a problem as I negotiated a suitable time with all parties involved including the student, teacher and parents. (Gollop, 2000, p. 21).

As with any other interview situation the interviewer needs to build a good rapport with the interviewee. In an ideal situation, several meetings with the interviewer before the interview would be the best scenario, so the child and the interviewer have the time to get to know each other. However, the reality is that this is not always possible so other measures need to be taken to help build up a satisfactory level of rapport. One does not achieve rapport by simply forming a relationship with the child. It is also necessary to engage them in the "research process" (Gollop, 2000, p. 23). There are several ways to achieve this. Children need information about the interviewer, the research and how their contribution is going to assist. It is also a good idea to discuss the research fully with significant others in their lives such as parents, caregivers and teachers before the interview. Taking on the "non-expert role" in the interview and putting the child into the "role of expert" is also a useful strategy. (Gollop, 2000, p. 24). It is not often that young people have a genuine opportunity to give their views on issues in an "open and honest way" so the interview that seeks their perspectives, is often a "novel" event for them. In light of this Hughes (1988) claimed the researcher must ensure they stress the importance of their "point of view" (Gollop, 2000, p. 24). I met with parents when requested to explain the background to my research and did this over the phone with others. I also met with the students before the interviews to explain my

research and help them understand how the knowledge they had to give me was invaluable. Further, students understood that they could be honest with me about their feelings toward the various activities we discussed and they had the opportunity to suggest ways that teachers might improve their practice in order to make the activities more beneficial and enjoyable for them.

Children often perceive interviewers as a "teacher in disguise giving an oral examination" (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 48). Bell et al. (1981) have detailed a number of practical hints for interviewing children which include a need to listen well, clarify points and to avoid being identified with the teacher (Powney & Watts, 1987, pp. 48 - 49). The latter can be very difficult if one has the role of teacher-researcher. I told the students that I was a teacher as I felt it was necessary to be honest with them. However I made it clear to the students I was very interested in improving the ways in which we teach reading in school and was interested to listen to their views and advice on this.

Finally, the sequencing of the interview and the types of questions asked also warrants discussion. I began each interview with some very general questions related to the students' likes and dislikes regarding school. I then asked them whether they enjoyed reading and asked them to tell me about the type of reading material they read both at home and school. They also told me about some of their other hobbies such as swimming and playing Nintendo games. Gollop also claimed that the interview should begin with some "general exploration of the child's world" (Gollop, 2000, p. 26). There was an attempt to give the children some control in the interview process. At times, they could introduce subject areas of interest to them. I often allowed the children to determine the pace of the interview by following their leads and returning to the schedule at appropriate points. Allowing children to set their own "agendas and pace" helps to make the conversation seem more natural and assists in breaking down the power inequalities of the "adult/child" relationship. (Gollop, 2000, p. 27).

The interviews consisted of a variety of open ended and specific questions and I avoided leading questions and "extenders" as much as possible. In some instances, it was necessary to prompt students. For example, in one of

the interviews I asked the student when she did reading in school. She told me that she "didn't do any reading in school." Even although she told me, she did not do any reading in school it was necessary to name some activities that she may or not be familiar with to help her remember. I asked her if the class read when they came in from lunch and she then proceeded to talk about silent reading. Another point worth discussion is that children tend to be more literal and "pay attention to unexpected details, disconcerting the interviewer who is used to different logic or priorities" (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 48). Therefore, it is very important to constantly monitor the child's understanding and avoid asking them about "abstract concepts". Questions need to be simple and the defining of unfamiliar terms is of paramount importance. (Gollop, 2000, p. 31). Throughout the interviews, I summarised students' responses to check I had understood them.

Interviewing like many other research methods is problematic. The importance of being aware and understanding the potential effects on the data collected is crucial. One further point worth mentioning is the need for consistency in this and any other method of data collection. Powney and Watts claimed, "interviewers need to be aware of the kind of research in which they are engaged, its philosophical basis and the kinds of outcomes it is attempting to reach" (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 180). Once this is established only then can one select the type of interviewing method. As a beginning researcher, I attempted to define the anticipated outcomes without directing both the students' and teachers' responses.

Student Interviews

Sample

The interviews took place in two different school sites selected based on rate of response to the teacher questionnaire and a willingness to participate. Nineteen students participated in the interviews. In each of these sites, three children participated from lower primary, three from middle primary and three from upper primary with the exception of the Year 4/5 cohort at Farrer Primary where four students participated. I interviewed students twice

individually and once as part of a group. Forty-two interviews took place over a 12- month period in 2000.

Both of these schools had a high participation rate in the questionnaires. I contacted the principal of the schools and asked them to recommend a teacher from lower, middle and upper primary that would be willing to have me interview some of the students in their class. I then spoke to the teacher about my research and asked if they could select one child who was perceived to be 'slower', one who was an 'average' reader and another who was considered 'fluent'. I also specified that I did not want to include ESL students in the sample, as this would have added another dimension to an already large study. We discussed the categories 'slower', 'average' and 'fluent' so we had a common conceptual understanding. "Slower" readers was a term used by Clay (1981) when discussing those students who had worked their way through the school system reading at a level below the average student. She reported that by the fourth year of school reading ability within the classroom could range over some five years. "Average" denoted readers who were not having any problems considering their age level. "Fluent" described readers who were willing readers able to read efficiently and effectively for a variety of different purposes. Teachers often used "reluctant" to describe some of the participants. This described those readers who had the ability to read yet chose not to do so. Nicoll (1985) claimed that the number of "reluctant" readers who left school far outnumbered those who left being unable to read.

Teachers then contacted the various parents and sent home a consent form. A copy of the types of questions I would be asking was also included. I made contact with the parents after this and gave them the option of my interviewing the children at home or at school. Two of the students took up this option.

Administering the interviews

The children interviewed, in consultation with their parents, chose where the interview would take place. Two students opted for home whilst others were comfortable with interviews taking place at school. Gollop stressed the importance of ensuring that children are comfortable with the interview

situation. (2000, p. 20). The problems associated with interviewing children at school are inherent in the fact that there may not always be a suitably private and comfortable place to conduct the interview. Fortunately, in each of the schools, we were able to use the librarian's office, which was relatively quiet and comfortably furnished.

The first interview lasted from twenty to thirty minutes. It was a structured interview in the sense I had prepared a pre-determined list of questions to ask the students (See Appendix 3). I taped all of the interviews using a micro cassette recorder, which proved invaluable for keeping a full and accurate record of the interviews. After the interview, I asked the students to think further about some of the questions in case there was anything they wanted to add. I then went home, listened to the interview, and constructed another set of questions based on the first set of responses. The second set of questions served as a guide to ensure that I did not leave anything important out. In the second interview, the students were much more at ease and I encouraged them to expand on things they had already said and to raise any other issues they felt important. Burgess (1985) referred to this as "rambling". He saw it important to allow the interviewee to discuss areas that interested them. The interviewer should go along with the "rambling" for a while, but make a note of what has been missed in the interview as a result for follow-up in subsequent interviews (Measor, 1985, p. 67). This also allowed the children some control of the interview situation. Gollop discussed the advantages of allowing children to set their own pace and agenda. (2000, p. 27). The interview time ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes. There were only a couple of instances where I needed to go back and interview the child a third time.

During the group interviews, I used my first set of questions as a guide. These interview situations were invaluable because it allowed the students to really discuss the issues at hand. Lewis (1992) called this "soap box stances". (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 161). They were also a means to check what students had said in the individual interviews. Some students in the individual interviews were often vague about some of the procedural aspects of the activities. During these interviews, others in the group often helped them to clarify their ideas further. By this time, the students were quite comfortable

with both each other and me, and they talked about many of the issues in greater depth.

Teacher interviews

Sample

Interviews occurred with each of the six classroom teachers of the student interviewees. They included Ms D, a Year 3 teacher, Mr W, a Year 4/5 teacher and Ms E, a Year 7 teacher from Farrer Primary. Mrs N, a Year 3 teacher, Mr P, a Year 4/5 teacher and Mrs S a Year 7 teacher from Gunn Primary. The original questionnaire for teachers guided the structure of the interviews. These interviews served a number of purposes. First, teachers talked in detail about their use of and the importance they placed on oral reading in the classroom. Second, they served to validate claims made by the students in the student interviews. Third, they gave voice to the teachers and allowed them to explain their reasons for using particular oral reading events in their classrooms. This then allowed comparison between the teacher's intentions and the student's perceptions of their practice.

Administering the teacher interviews

The interviews took place after the completion of the student interviews. Similar to the students, teachers decided a time and place convenient for them. Most interviews occurred at the end of the school day. The interviews were semi-structured but flexible enough for teachers to discuss their own reading programs in detail. Teachers gave more expanded responses than was possible in the written questionnaire and related what they said to their own practice. Further, I sought clarification on matters raised in the student interviews. This allowed for comparative analysis between the different data sets.

The original questionnaire guided the structure of the interview. There were a number of pre-determined questions (See Appendix 3), I wanted answered in relation to reading generally and oral reading more specifically in the classroom. Teachers had the opportunity to speak about issues that were of importance to them, however I would redirect them back to the interview schedule when it was appropriate. Similar to the student interviews the

questions were a mix of both open and closed questions, and I avoided leading questions and "extenders" where possible. Each participant guided the length of the interview. They had the opportunity to speak as long as they needed to answer each of the questions. I finished the interviews after I had obtained the information I sought and when the participants indicated they had nothing further to say.

As stated earlier the fact that I was a teacher/researcher may have skewed that data, through participants anticipating or guessing the "right" response. Responses given possibly reflected the "ideal" curriculum rather than the "pedagogy-in-use". Again, I believe that the three different sources of data, that is, students, teachers and researcher observations, helped to minimise these potential problems.

Phase Three - Observation of Classroom Oral Reading Events.

I observed six different oral reading activities one in each of the six classrooms where I conducted student and teacher interviews. I observed and participated in these activities while a research assistant videoed the sessions. The level of my participation in each class varied according to the nature of the activity taped. I wanted to avoid being overly intrusive during the video sessions and have the students perceive me as an adult who was not only interested in observing what they did but was available to assist and discuss their work with them when required. The fact I had visited each of these classrooms in an informal sense at least twice before the interviews assisted in students' acceptance of my presence in the room. A discussion of my level of participation in each activity follows.

In the Year 3 class at Farrer Primary, I sat and listened to an oral reading activity where students read their written recounts of the weekend to the whole class. This was the same role enacted by the teacher during this activity. In the Year 4/5 class at Farrer Primary where I taped paired reading situations between teachers and students, I did not participate in these activities. Instead, I talked with other students who had finished their reading with the teacher. These discussions occurred at their desks. Similarly in the group reading activity in Year 7 at Farrer Primary, I did not participate in the reading conferences

between teacher and student but rather talked to other students about their reading contracts. During the reading group activity in Year 3 at Gunn Primary I sat with the various groups and assisted students with their written activities but I did not participate in the small group "round robin" reading activity or in the paired reading activity transcribed from the video data for the purpose of this study. In the whole class, round robin activity taped in the Year 4/5 class at Gunn Primary, I sat on the floor with the students, followed the text and listened to them read in a similar way to their teacher. Finally, in the Year 7 group reading activity at Gunn Primary I sat with the group in the small group "round robin" reading activity and rotated around the groups after the completion of the reading to discuss and assist students with their written activities.

Observation research techniques divide into two principal types - "participant" and "non-participant" observation (Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 122). In participant observation, there is involvement from the researcher in the actual activity they are observing whereas in non-participant observation the researcher is not part of the activity and does not interact with the participants.

Participant observation is one of the primary techniques used by ethnographers and researchers often combine it with other methods of data collection such as surveys, interviews and artefact and document collection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 196). Traditionally participant observation has been a method used by anthropologists and sociologists, however, since the 1970's, educational evaluators have adopted it and used it to study the implementation of innovations in classrooms and schools (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 198).

Non-participant observation differs from participant observation in a number of ways. First, it requires a "detached, neutral and unobtrusive observer". Second, it is a "derivative" technique more appropriate for the refinement and verification stages of the research process. Third, researchers use it when they require "comprehensive, detailed and representative accounts of individuals' behaviours. Finally, the nature of the observations and the

observations methods employed by researchers are determined before the observations occur (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 205 - 206).

In qualitative research, observations usually consist of detailed accounts of "behaviours, events, and the contexts surrounding events and behaviours" (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 253). Patton (1990) detailed five dimensions in which the observer's role may vary (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 254). Firstly, the observer may sit somewhere along a continuum from being a "full participant" to a "complete outsider". In this study, my degree of involvement varied according to the nature of the activity observed. Second, the observer may conduct observations by operating in a covert manner to a situation where others are very aware of their presence. There was a visible presence of both researcher and research assistant in this study and students met both researcher and research assistant before formal observation of the activities. Third, the explanations given to the participants about the purpose of the observations can range from giving participants a "full explanation" to "partial explanation", to "no explanation" to "false explanation". In this study, I gave students a full explanation of the nature of the research. The fourth dimension involves the length of time that the observations occur. They can take place over an entire school year or be as short as an hour. The recorded observations in this study ranged from 10 minutes and 50 seconds to twenty-four minutes and 7 seconds, although I was in each classroom for about an hour. The final dimension is the "breadth of focus" with observations ranging from a broad focus to a very narrow focus (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 254). I instructed my research assistant to capture on video an overview of all the different activities occurring in the room at the time, but to focus also, on any single activity or interaction for at least 5 minutes.

In summary, during the observations of classroom oral reading events for this study, I was not a complete outsider but rather participated in each event to some degree. For example as stated earlier I chose not to make my presence obvious during any of the paired reading or reading conference activities observed whereas in the whole class "round robin" reading activity I assumed a similar role to the teacher by sitting with the students, listening to them read and joining in their discussions about the text where appropriate.

During each event, I carefully considered what impact my involvement may have on the data.

Like all other research methods observation techniques are prone to error. The errors can come from what we select to observe, how we interpret what we see, and from the "act of observation itself" (Dane, 1990, p.28). In this study, it was useful having a research assistant who had no stake in the study. As stated earlier I gave him very simple and clear directions about what to video. We cannot avoid error when making observations but like other research methods, we can take precautions to help minimise this. The fact that we have opted to observe something creates error in that it prevents us from observing other things. However, this does not mean that what we have observed is incorrect but rather, an observation that is not complete (Dane, 1990, p.28). We need to be aware that what we have selected to observe is not representative of the entire activity. This was evident in the whole class "reading recounts" activity taped in the Year 3 class at Farrer Primary. The video data recorded 34 instances of regressive behaviour throughout the session, however the video did not video all of the class all of the time. There were possibly a number of others not captured by the video. Different observers, situations, locations and definitions all help to provide as complete an understanding as possible (Dane, 1990, p.28). Another problem often encountered by researchers is that their reports of activities and beliefs do not always match the behaviour they observe. In this way observation acts as a check which enables the "researcher to verify that individuals are doing what they (and the researcher) believe they are doing" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 197). The different sets of data collected for the purpose of this study allowed me to do this.

There are many different ways of recording data during participant and non-participant observation. Researchers take field notes, photographs, record conversations and videotape events. All of these methods and technologies have their advantages and disadvantages. I chose to video the activities rather than take notes because I wanted the students to view me as someone who was interested in what they were doing and to talk to them and assist them wherever possible. Adams and Biddle claimed there were three major

advantages of video recording. First, it provided a comprehensive account of classroom behaviour that becomes a permanent record for future analysis. Second, the sensitive microphones were able to pick up much of the discourse that was taking place, and third, the stop/rewind feature allowed viewing and reviewing of the events observed (Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 140). Differently, Le Compte and Preissle (1993) claimed that cameras and video cameras preserved data in "uncodified and unclassified form and recorded only that data chosen by the researcher to be preserved" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 232). Similarly, they claimed that field notes and handwritten records also reflected the "interests of the researcher", and represent data that is "pre-selected" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 232). There was no possibility of establishing a "neutral" space for a researcher or for eliminating "bias", nevertheless, it remained possible for researchers to make some modest claims for the reliability of the data by ensuring that events were examined from several different standpoints. This was what I set out to achieve by canvassing a range of views of oral reading practices in the classroom.

Sample

The purpose of my observations was to witness some of the oral reading events discussed by the students and their teachers in the interviews and questionnaires. I conducted observations in each of the six classrooms where I interviewed teachers and students. I observed one oral reading activity in each class. I endeavoured to observe a range of different oral reading activities. For example, in the upper primary class of one school, I observed children involved in various activities associated with their 'novel based reading scheme'; in the middle primary class of the other school, I observed a 'round robin' reading activity and in another class I observed a small reading group activity. In total, I observed six different oral reading activities. The length of recordings varied although I spent approximately one hour in each classroom. I gave teachers, parents and students a detailed account of the nature of my visit before the observations took place.

Conducting the observations

My role as an observer was more towards the participant end of the continuum. My interaction with the teacher and students varied according to the nature of the activities. I gave my video assistant clear instructions about his role before the observations took place. The purpose for the observations was threefold. First, it helped me to conceptualise some of the descriptions of these events given to me by the various interviewees. Second, it served as a means to verify information in the interviews, and finally, it gave me a good idea of the organisation of these activities in terms of space, time and resources. Hitchcock and Hughes claimed that videotape recording could provide "an important moving record from which to consider the spatial ecology and social organisation of space within the classroom" (1989, p. 179) and this proved to be true in the case of this study.

Data Analysis

There were two different phases to the data analysis. In the first phase of the analysis, data collected from the questionnaires, interviews and observations were analysed separately. I coded the different data sets using four broad themes initially (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the second phase, I mapped the field by bringing all of the different data sets together.

Phase 1- Identifying Themes

This stage of the analysis reflected assumptions from interpretive qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Identification of themes and key issues occurred by constant and comparative analysis of the data (Cairney et al., 1995; Cairney & Ruge, 1997).

Questionnaires

The questionnaires were organised to elicit specific information pertaining to the use of oral reading practices in the classroom. Questions sought to explore the nature of the use of oral reading activities by the teachers surveyed. The questionnaire addressed the frequency of its use, where it occurred, how it occurred and why teachers used it. The questionnaire also

investigated the nature of teachers' assessment practices in relation to reading and what characteristics teachers ascribed 'good' readers. The student questionnaires sought similar data. Students surveyed reported on the frequency of oral reading activities, the types of activities used; their perceptions of the various activities, how teachers assessed reading and the characteristics they thought described a ' good' reader.

I used four broad themes to categorise the data initially. These included oral reading as instruction, oral reading as assessment, oral reading as diagnosis and oral reading as entertainment. These categories were the same ones used in the previous chapter where I discussed research pertaining to oral reading in the classroom.

Tables and graphs represent most of the data collected from the questionnaires. In most questions, the data was relatively easy to tabulate. For example, in Question 5, teachers were asked to fill in a table on which was listed a number of oral reading activities. They recorded the frequency of their use of each of these activities as frequent, sometimes, rarely or never.

Extended responses from the questionnaires were analysed at the text level. Question 7 asked teachers to describe if there was a stage of reading development where they thought oral reading was more important. One teacher gave the following response:

> Should occur more frequently in early stages. As students become more confident and independent readers they should be given more time for silent than oral reading. However the different skills involved in oral reading should continue to be nurtured in the upper grades.

I divided this response into three different categories. The first that it "should occur more frequently in early stages" was categorised in 'Early ages and stages'. The second part of this response, "as students become more confident and independent readers they should be given more time for silent than oral reading" was categorised under 'Oral versus silent reading'. The final idea that the "different skills involved in oral reading should continue to be nurtured in the upper grades" was placed in the category 'Upper ages and stages'.

Finally, the questionnaire data were analysed as a whole in the first instance. I then broke the data up into three different sets - early childhood, middle primary and upper primary. This facilitated looking for other trends not apparent in the data set as a whole. The student and teacher questionnaires were analysed in a similar fashion.

Interviews

I transcribed all of the data gathered from the interviews. (See Appendix 4 for transcription notes). Again the four broad categories, oral reading as instruction, oral reading as assessment, oral reading as diagnosis and oral reading as entertainment were used initially to sort the data. As I sorted chunks of text under these four broad categories, different themes began to emerge. For example, I found that oral reading as instruction could be broken down into further categories. These included reading strategies, skills and dispositions. Other points of discussion throughout the interviews included participatory rules, procedural aspects and feelings associated with the activities. Similar to the questionnaires, the student and teacher interviews were analysed separately in this first phase of the analysis.

Observations

I transcribed parts of the video data pertaining to the oral reading events observed. Two criteria guided the selection of the excerpts for transcription. First, they had been identified by teachers and students as being regular and representative oral reading activities in that particular classroom and second, they offered different perspectives on the management of oral reading activities in different classrooms and different year levels.

I transcribed both verbal and non-verbal communication during the various events. The transcripts also noted signs of inattentive behaviour, restlessness and other actions other than reading or discussion (See Appendix 5).

I used a form of discourse analysis similar to that commonly used by the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (Judith Green et al., 1992; Green & Harker, 1988; Rex & McEachen, 1999). I examined the discourse in relation to

how it functioned as part of each event observed. I did not analyse the discourse on multiple levels however, as my aim was to establish whether what teachers and students claimed was happening in these events was in fact the case. I specifically looked for evidence of instruction, assessment and how the activities might contribute to the construction of a school reader. I developed a number of codes to mark the various interactions within the parameter of seven broad themes. These were instruction, assessment, procedure, rules, identity, the reader and others. Originally, there were 63 different types of interaction coded. Evidence of these occurred in the original notes recorded on the transcript. This was a large number of codes, however I found it useful to analyse the data in this detailed manner initially. After this, I reduced the number of codes to a more manageable number (See Appendix 6). For example, initially instruction had fourteen different codes. None of these involved explicit teaching and many involved the teacher correcting students' errors. If I had put these together and simply called them 'instruction' then it would have given an inaccurate picture of the nature of the reading instruction that occurred during the various events. Procedural aspects and rules associated with each of the observed events also had a large number of different codes. During the interviews, students and teachers articulated their knowledge of procedure and rules associated with the activities in detail. The coding helped to confirm, whether or not they were important aspects of the various activities.

Phase 2 - Mapping the Data

The second phase of the data analysis involved bringing all the different data sets together. I compared data from the interview transcripts, questionnaires and observations in order to identify the matches and mismatches between the teacher, students and researcher perspectives of the various oral-reading activities. This assisted in creating a rich and detailed description of oral reading in school.

I used the MASS framework developed by Gee and Green to facilitate the mapping of the data. Gee and Green (1997) claimed it was a useful means to assist in describing and defining classroom literacy events. This framework adopts an ethnographically grounded approach to discourse analysis. It rests on

the assumption that each observation or interview examines a "slice of life" of the various contexts explored. Every literate practice represents a different event or situation. Gee and Green identified four different interrelated aspects of a situation - material, activity, semiotic and sociocultural. The material aspect includes actors, time, place, artefacts and space. The activity aspect refers to the specific social activity or chain of events. The semiotic aspect includes the type of language, gestures and images used and the sociocultural aspect includes personal, social and cultural knowledge, feelings and identities. They also identified four dimensions of social activity - World building, Activity building, Identity building and Connection building (Gee & Green, 1997, p. 139). World building refers to how participants assembled "situated meanings about "reality," present and absent, concrete and abstract" (Gee & Green, 1997,p.139). Activity building describes the construction of situated meanings connected to the activity itself. Identity building concerns situated meanings relevant to the identities in the interaction and includes ways of knowing, believing, acting and interacting. Finally, Connection building relates to how interactions connect to past and future interactions (Gee & Green, 1997, p. 139). This was similar to the ceremony and game metaphor used by Baker (1997). Baker explained that whilst each activity or "game" was "played" differently it "called on a history of other games". This framework facilitated the comparative analysis of the data. Mapping the oral reading events observed, allowed the comparison of the different perceptions and understandings of the various activities from the students', teachers' and researcher's perspectives and highlighted any matches or mismatches between the data. It allowed me to establish the features of an activity that served to identify it as a particular activity as opposed to other similar activities. In this case, it allowed the identification of some of the common features that characterised oral reading activities. Whilst I did not use close textual analysis similar to Gee and Green's work it was a useful framework to assist in understanding the themes that emerged from the data.

This framework also sat well with Baker's work as it recognised that each oral reading activity observed constituted a different event or situation. Baker claimed that the metaphor of "ceremony" and "game" was useful to describe the organisational and procedural aspects of classroom reading events and to

highlight the ways these events became "conventionalised" and "naturalized" within the classroom (1997, p. 246). She explained that the "social and moral space" of the classroom was an effect of both literacy events and pedagogy and that ceremonies and games were sites where students learned how to organise talk in and around the different literacy events (Baker, 1997). Classroom ceremonies serve to situate oral reading activities. Each new oral reading activity or game is played out differently, although the "organisational" work "preceding, surrounding and subsuming the game calls on a history of other games" as each new game becomes situated and naturalized (Baker, 1997). The oral reading events I observed shared many similarities, however the "playing out" of each activity or "game" was unique.

During the analysis, the identification of mismatches was not necessarily an indication that the information given by participants was incorrect. There were a number of common threads identified in relation to the mismatches identified. An example of this occurred in relation to assessment. Teachers discussed their reading assessment practices in detail whereas students did not appear very knowledgeable about these practices. Further, it was difficult for me to ascertain whether assessment was in fact taking place during the observations as many teachers suggested that they made mental notes during the various activities. Instead of disregarding this information because it did not match, I began to ask myself why there was a mismatch. In one class, students articulated their teacher's assessment practices well. I also observed the teacher discussing her assessment of their reading with them during the activity. Other students interviewed reported that their teacher rarely discussed their reading with them and did not share any written records they kept. This led me to the conclusion that it was probably not a case of assessment not occurring, but rather that teachers did not make their assessment practices explicit to students. In this way, the matches and mismatches were equally useful in helping me to create a rich picture of how oral reading functions in school.

Whilst this work lacks the depth of analysis used by the Santa Barbara Group, it was rich in the sense that it explored a number of different perspectives of the same event (Gee & Green, 1997; Judith Green et al., 1992; Rex & McEachen, 1999). Triangulation of the three different data gathering

methods; questionnaires, interviews and observations, from three different perspectives; students, teachers and researcher, did not always lead to convergence about the nature of oral reading events. As stated earlier this did not mean that the findings were any less reliable but rather they were three different constructions of the same event. A similar study using a number of different perspectives on newstime practice from Kindergarten to Year 2 also found that there were different constructions of the event from the key participants involved (Cusworth, 1997). In the following chapter I examine in detail, the data collected from the teacher questionnaires.

CHAPTER 5

A Teacher Perspective: Teachers write

This chapter is the first of five data analysis chapters. It reports on data collected from 100 questionnaires administered to 38 Preparatory to Year 3 teachers, 31 Year 4/5 teachers and 31 Year 6/7 teachers across 24 schools in a capital city of Australia. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the extent to which oral reading activities were being used in the classroom and second, how they were being used.

Section 1, provides a general overview of the questionnaire data, and contains four distinct parts. The first of these examines the frequency of oral reading events in the classroom, in particular when, where and how often they occurred. The second looks at the types of oral reading activities teachers used. The third examines why oral reading activities were why used and in particular examines its perceived worth as a pedagogical tool. The final section, summarise some of the main issues arising from the data.

Section 2 makes comparisons between the data collected from the questionnaires in Early Childhood (Years 1 - 3), Middle Primary (Years 4/5) and Upper Primary (Years 6/7). It compares the frequency of the use of oral reading activities, the practices employed and the reasons connected to its use across the three different areas of the primary school. Section 2 comprises three main parts similar to Section 1.

Administration of the questionnaires occurred in April 1999. All questionnaires were completed and returned by July 1999. Twenty-four of the 33 schools contacted elected to participate. This represented 70% of all the schools in the region. The 100 questionnaires returned represented 34.8% of the classroom-based teachers in these schools at this time.

The Questionnaires

Frequency

There were four questions relating directly to the frequency of use of oral reading activities in the classroom. The first four questions in the questionnaire were formulated to establish first whether teachers did in fact use oral reading, second, the extent to which they used it, third in which parts of the school day and fourth in what learning areas it was used. As stated earlier there were one hundred teachers in the sample. The data suggest that oral reading was a frequent activity in the classroom since all participants claimed to use oral reading activities in the classroom with 74% reporting frequent use.

The data suggest that the use of oral reading distributed evenly across the school day however, before recess and after lunch proved the most popular times. Seventy-one percent of teachers reported using oral reading before recess, 28% before lunch and 56% after lunch, however there was considerable overlap with many teachers reporting the use of oral reading on two or more occasions during the day.

Question 4 asked teachers to indicate the learning areas where they used oral reading. **Table 1** below summarises the responses given.

Table 1- Oral Reading across the Learning Areas - (N=100)

	Maths	English	Science	SOSE	LOTE	Health	Art	P.E	Music	Drama
YES	70%	98%	71%	83%	36%	61%	16%	10%	30%	58%
NO	30%	2%	29%	17%	64%	39%	84%	90%	70%	42%

Teachers cited its use more frequently in learning areas such as English, Studies of Society and Environment, Science and Mathematics however, as indicated in **Table 1** teachers also reported its use in other learning areas. Most of the activities discussed by students and teachers in the interviews related to its use during English.

Activities

Teachers claimed to use a wide variety of different oral reading activities. In Question 5 they were asked about their use of a range of different activities and asked to rate their use as either frequent, sometimes, rarely or never.

Table 2- Oral Reading Activities Used - (N=100)

ACTIVITY	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER	NO RESPONSE
READING GROUPS	31%	37%	15%	7%	10%
PAIRED READING/PEERS	35%	46%	14%	4%	1%
PAIRED READING - ADULT	39%	35%	11%	11%	4%
ROUND ROBIN	25%	34%	19%	16%	6%
ORAL COMPREHENSION	56%	32%	5%	1%	6%
READING CIRCLES	22%	29%	24%	12%	13%
ORAL CLOZE	35%	35%	16%	6%	8%
READING CONFERENCE	31%	43%	19%	7%	0%
CHORAL READING	22%	37%	24%	11%	6%
SCRIPT READING	8%	47%	29%	10%	6%
READING ALOUD - TEXT	64%	34%	1%	1%	0%
ORAL BOOK REPORT	14%	54%	20%	9%	3%
SHARED READING	52%	43%	1%	3%	1%

As shown by **Table 2** teachers surveyed used a wide variety of different oral reading activities with reading aloud from a text and oral comprehension rating the most popular. However, if we include those who rated their use either 'frequent' or 'sometimes' I find that well over 50% of teachers who participated in the questionnaire claimed to use all the activities. In addition to the activities detailed above the participants identified 32 other oral reading activities that they used in the classroom. Group reading of own stories, reading lists of sight words, reading activities off the board, poetry, reading instructions from text books and reading Big Books were the most frequently cited. Only one or two of the participants mentioned the other 26 activities.

Becoming a School Reader: Pedagogical issues

This part comprises five sub-sections. The first looks at questions in the questionnaire that addressed the 'importance' placed on oral reading. The second discusses the nature of its' use. The third reports on the skills that teachers suggested were important to foster in oral reading. The fourth section discusses questions relating specifically to assessment and the fifth reports on

how teachers indicated they acquired their pedagogical knowledge about the various oral reading practices.

Oral reading: Importance

In Question 7 participants rated on a scale of one to five how important they felt oral reading was in the classroom. As **Table 3** shows only one participant suggested, that it had little importance in the classroom.

Table 3 Teachers rating of the importance of oral reading - (N = 100)

Not important				Very important
1	2	3	4	5
0%	1%	11%	28%	60%

Concerning importance, participants also stated whether they thought there were any specific ages where oral reading was more or less important for students. Forty-six percent of the participants said that there were times when it was more important, 50% stated that it was equally important for all students and 4% were unsure. Participants gave reasons for their responses. I will now elaborate on each of these.

Oral reading: Stages and ages of importance

The 46 participants who stated that there were times when they believed oral reading was more important for some students gave 69 reasons why. I sorted these into six different categories. Where participants gave extended responses they were categorised in the following way. One teacher commented:

> Should occur more frequently in early stages. As students become more confident and independent readers they should be given more time for silent than oral reading. However the different skills involved in oral reading should continue to be nurtured in the upper grades.

I divided this response into three different reasons. The first idea that it "should occur more frequently in early stages" was categorised under the heading 'Early ages and stages'. The second idea that as "students become more

confident and independent readers they should be given more time for silent than oral reading" was placed under the category 'Oral versus silent reading'. The final idea that the "different skills involved in oral reading should continue to be nurtured in the upper grades" was placed in the category 'Upper ages and stages'. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of responses.

Importance of oral reading
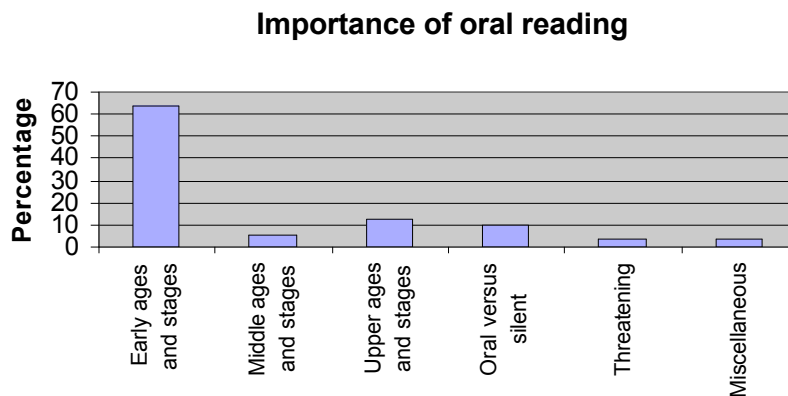
Figure 1 - Importance of oral reading (N=69)

As **Figure 1** shows most of the responses (64%) suggested that it was more important in the early years. Four percent stated that it was more important in the middle years and 13% said that it was more important in the upper years. Four percent indicated it was more important for different ages because some students found it threatening, 10% of the reasons given suggested that it was something to do with the difference between oral and silent reading practices and the remaining 4% were difficult to classify as they shared no common characteristics.

The following sections discuss each of these categories further.

Early ages and stages

There were 44 responses where teachers indicated that they considered oral reading to be more important in the early stages of school more generally

or early stages of reading development more specifically. Sixteen of these responses simply indicated that they felt it was more important in the early stages of schooling and/or reading development. The remaining 28 responses gave reasons why they felt it was more important in the early years. As **Figure 2** shows most of the reasons were of an instructional nature.

Figure 2 - Early ages and stages (N=28)

Early ages and stages
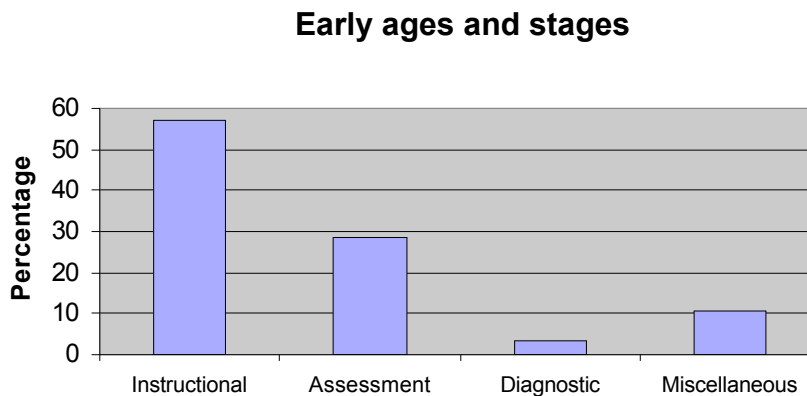
This spread of responses was very similar to the spread of responses discussed in the following section 'Oral-reading: Use' where teachers discussed the benefits of using oral reading in the classroom (See **Figure 4**). Some of the responses connected to the notion of 'confidence' were interesting. I grouped two of these responses under 'Miscellaneous' and the other two under a sub-heading of skills called 'Dispositions'. They deserve some discussion since both students and teachers interviewed identified 'confidence' as an important characteristic of a 'good' reader generally. One teacher suggested that Early Childhood children did not have the confidence to read orally and another said that younger children were more confident. The other two responses suggested that oral reading was an effective means to "develop confidence" in students. My interview data suggest that many children did not feel confident when reading to a group regardless of their age, stage or reading ability. Further, it suggests that confidence did not necessarily improve if students had more opportunities to read aloud, particularly in the case of struggling readers.

Middle ages and stages

Only three comments indicated that oral reading was more important for children in this period of schooling. All of these responses related to instructional aspects of oral reading. One teacher commented that it was necessary at this time in order to develop comprehension skills. Some teachers interviewed also said that oral reading helped to develop comprehension skills. Students interviewed however, claimed that it was more difficult to comprehend what they had read when reading orally. As was pointed out in the literature review the research is inconclusive as to whether oral reading does in fact develop comprehension. Another said it was important for students to practice their oral reading skills and the third said that it necessary for them to gain more confidence in reading orally in the middle primary area.

Upper ages and stages

Nine of the responses related to the degree of importance placed on oral reading in the upper grades. Six of these were general statements that said it should continue to be "nurtured", "fostered", "practised" or "refined" throughout a students' schooling. Two responses indicated that it should not be in the upper grades since students should already be proficient in "decoding words". The final response suggested that oral reading was "too difficult for the weaker readers in the upper grades". My interview data suggest that oral reading was difficult for any "weaker" reader and that much of this difficulty was compounded for these students due to the discomfort they experienced through making their "weaknesses" public. A detailed discussion of this occurs in the third data analysis chapter, "The student perspective" and in the discussion chapter.

Oral versus silent

I have separated these seven responses because they suggested a perceived difference between oral and silent reading. Five of the responses indicated that oral reading was not needed as students became more "mature", "proficient", "independent" and "confident". In this sense, oral reading preceded silent reading and it was something that learner readers needed to do. Another

participant commented that "real reading" was not oral reading. This thesis argues that 'oral reading' is a particular kind of 'school reading' that is different to reading at home or out of school. The final comment said that older children preferred to read silently. The interview data collected strongly support this.

Threatening

Only three of the responses suggested that teachers felt oral reading could be a "threatening" activity for some students. One commented that there "needs to be a fine line between encouraging children and forcing them to read out loud". Another said, "even weaker readers can read out loud. Most of them enjoy oral reading if the environment is non-threatening." The third response stated, "A threatening activity (on their own) for shy readers or poor readers - less embarrassing in a group." I have included these comments since they support many issues that students raised throughout the interviews. A discussion of how students felt during oral reading events occurs in later chapters.

The remaining three responses were categorised under the heading 'Miscellaneous' since they shared no common characteristics with any of the established categories.

Oral reading: Important for all

As was stated earlier 50% of participants felt that oral reading was important, for all students. Of these 50%, 37 participants indicated reasons why. I divided these responses into 45 separate reasons. 'Instructional', 'Assessment', 'Diagnostic', 'Entertainment' and 'Miscellaneous' were the categories used to sort the responses. **Figure 3** shows the spread of the responses.

Figure 3 - Oral reading. Important for all - (N=45)

Important for all
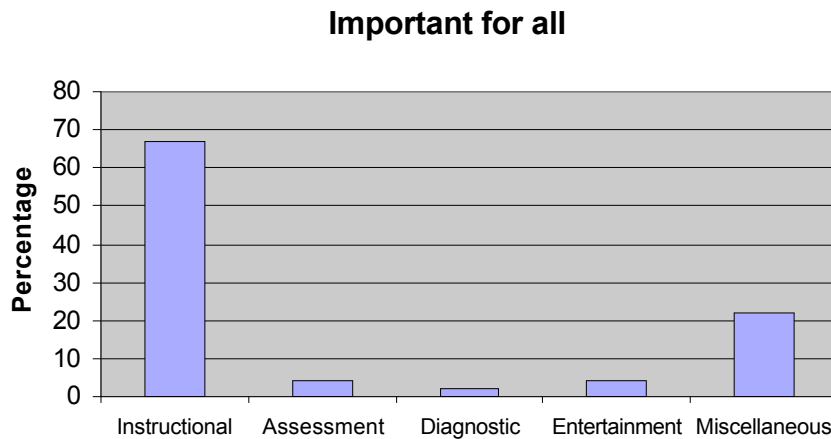
As **Figure 3** indicates most reasons given (67%) were of an 'instructional nature'. I will now discuss each further.

Instructional

I divided responses that fell into the instructional category, into another three sub-categories, 'Skills', 'Teaching Strategies' and 'Dispositions'. I have used these categories in other sections of this chapter. Twenty of the responses related to the development of reading skills more generally or oral reading skills more specifically. Five of these also discussed the connection between oral reading and the development of comprehension skills. There was consensus that oral reading assisted in the development of comprehension skills. As is pointed out in the literature review disagreement exists over the connection between oral reading and comprehension. Further, my interview data would suggest that for some students oral reading hinders comprehension. A full discussion of this occurs in subsequent chapters.

Only two of the responses related directly to teaching strategies. One suggested that oral reading was necessary at all ages for 'modelling' and the other said that it was necessary to encourage "interaction" between "students", "peers" and "adults". During the observations of the various oral reading activities there were not many 'good' role models provided for students to follow unless the teacher participated in the activity.

The remaining eight responses fell under the category of 'Dispositions'. "Dispositions", a term used by Lambert and Clyde (2000) encompasses such things as "motivation, persistence, curiosity, confidence, patience and open mindedness". All of the eight responses related to 'confidence' in some way. Some felt that all students should develop the confidence to read out-loud "no matter what age". Four of the eight responses felt it was necessary at all ages to "develop confidence".

Assessment/Diagnostic/Miscellaneous

A number of responses (22%) fell under the 'Miscellaneous' heading since they shared no common characteristics. Many of these suggested that it was important for all ages but that there should be different foci depending on the age or stage of development. One teacher commented that in Early Childhood it should be 'oral reading' in a 'shared' sense using such resources as "Big Books". In the upper years teaching should focus on issues such as "punctuation" and students should be expected to transfer this to their "oral reading" of texts. Another teacher commented that in the early years the focus of instruction during oral reading should be on "decoding", whereas in the upper years it should be on "comprehension" and "expression". In a sense, many of these reasons are of an instructional nature since they suggest the teaching of specific reading and oral reading skills.

One response indicated that it was important for all ages for assessment reasons and one indicated that it was important for diagnostic reasons.

Oral reading: Use

Question 8 required participants to indicate whether oral reading was useful for them in the classroom and then asked teachers to give reasons why. Ninety-nine percent of the participants indicated that it was useful and they gave 222 responses indicating why this was the case. Most participants offered more than one reason in their explanations and only four of the participants did not supply a reason.

The responses are categorised under the headings of 'Oral reading as instruction' (107 responses), 'Oral reading as assessment' (93 responses), 'Oral

reading as diagnosis' (13 responses), and "Oral reading as entertainment' (9 responses). These are the same categories used in the literature review section that discussed research specific to oral reading. Where participants gave an extended answer, it was categorised in the following way.

> Children can develop in confidence and in skills. They can model each other. I can assess their progress and establish where there needs to be improvement.

I divided this response into four separate reasons. First that it helped to develop confidence, second that it helped to develop skills, third that it was a useful way to model appropriate reading strategies to other students and fourth that teachers could assess a child to help identify where there needed to be improvement. I categorised the first three of these reasons under the category "Oral Reading as Instruction" and the fourth was categorised as "Oral Reading as Assessment". Further, the "Oral Reading as Instruction" is categorised into four other sub-sections. The first of these is "Skills", the second "Teaching strategies", the third "Dispositions" and the fourth "Management". The idea that it is useful to develop confidence was categorised under the category "Dispositions", the idea that it develops skills was placed in the category "Skills" and the suggestion that it is useful for modelling was placed in the category "Teaching strategies".

Figure <u>4</u> - Benefits of oral reading (N = 222)

Benefits of oral reading
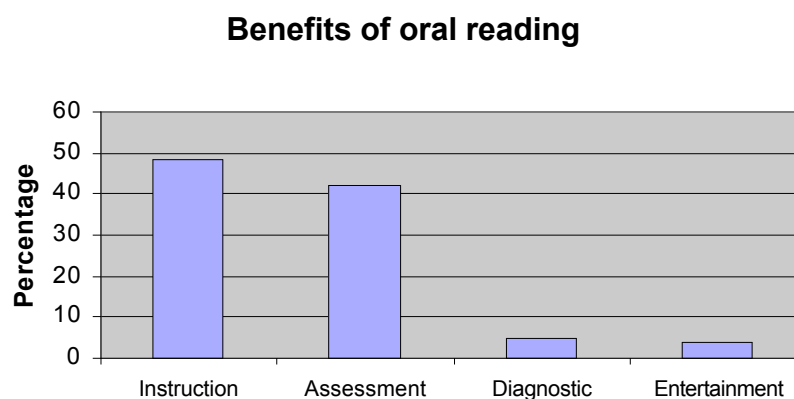
As **Figure 4** indicates over 90% of the responses given fell within an instructional or evaluative mode. I will now explore each of these categories further.

Oral reading as instruction

One hundred and seven of the responses (48%) related to instructional benefits of some kind. As mentioned previously I have divided these into four sub-categories. The first relates to skills (42 responses), the second to teaching strategies (32 responses), the third to dispositions (29 responses) and the fourth to management (4 responses). **Figure 5** represents the distribution of these responses.

Figure 5 - Oral reading as instruction (N=107)

Oral Reading as Instruction
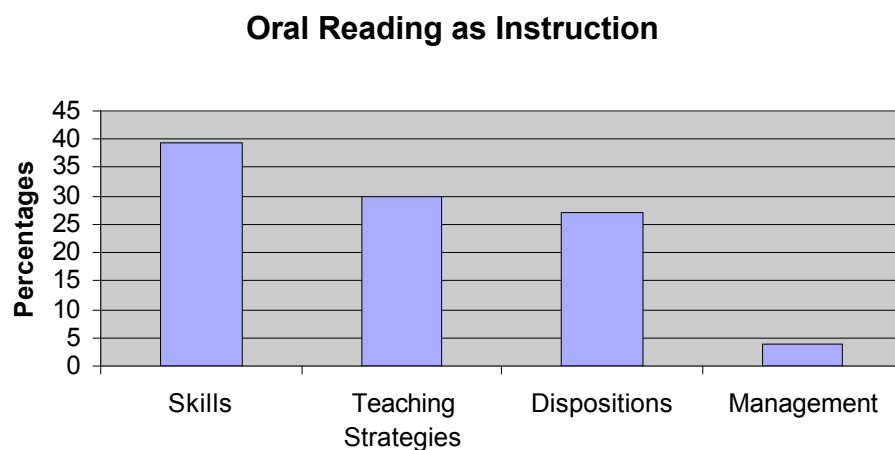
Skills

I classified responses under the category 'Skills' when the participants suggested that the use of oral reading was to improve a student's ability to read aloud or improve their ability to read more generally. Many of the skills identified by teachers directly related to what children do when they read out-loud, for example "develop rhyme and rhythm", "develop articulation" and the "use of expression". Others related more specifically to the reading process, for

example, "develop decoding strategies" and to "develop comprehension". **Table 4** provides a summary of the responses given.

Table 4 - Oral reading as instruction - Skills (N=42)

Skills	No. of responses	Percentage
Oral reading	19	40.5%
Comprehension	6	14.3%
Word attack	4	9.5%
Fluency	4	9.5%
Listening	2	4.8%
Communication	1	2.4%
Miscellaneous	6	14.3%

Teaching strategies

Almost 30% of the responses related to instruction indicated that oral reading was useful as a teaching strategy. Many teachers reported it as an effective means to model proficient oral reading to other students. Others suggested that it was a useful context for a "shared experience" whilst others suggested that it was a useful means to conduct "explicit teaching".

Table 5 - Oral reading as instruction - Teaching strategies. (N=32)

Teaching Strategies	No. of responses	Percentage
Modelling	16	50%
Shared reading	5	15.6%
Peer tutoring	4	12.5%
Explicit teaching	2	6.2%
Paired reading	1	3.1%
Miscellaneous	4	12.4%

As **Table 5** indicates modelling, peer tutoring and shared reading were the responses most commonly given.

Dispositions

Some responses (27%) indicated that oral reading aided in the further development of particular 'valued' dispositions. As stated earlier 'Dispositions' was a term used which encompasses such things as "motivation, persistence, curiosity, confidence, patience and open mindedness" (Lambert & Clyde, 2000).

Table 6 - Oral reading as instruction - Dispositions - (N=29)

Disposition	No. of responses	Percentage
Builds confidence	21	72.4%
Develop wider reading	2	6.9%
Foster love/need to	2	6.9%
Guide selection	1	3.4%
Develops self-esteem	1	3.4%
Tolerance	1	3.4%
Patience	1	3.4%

As **Table 6** shows confidence was the most commonly cited response. During the interviews and student questionnaires, teachers and students identified 'confidence' as an important characteristic of a 'good' reader. Students also claimed it was important for 'good' readers to enjoy reading.

Management

A small number of responses (3.7%) indicated that some teachers found oral reading a useful strategy to manage students and the classroom. Two teachers claimed that it assists in keeping "students on task"; another said it helped to "keep kids quiet" and one reported that it was useful to gain "attention".

Oral reading as assessment

Ninety-three of the responses (42%) suggested that oral reading was a useful means to assess students' reading. In the responses given words such as "gauge", "check", "identify", "indicate", "show" and "place" which suggested some form of monitoring or assessment were used to assist in categorisation of the responses.

In most of the responses evaluation was something performed by the teacher, however six participants suggested that it was useful as a means for self-evaluation. One participant said that it was useful for students to "self-assess" another said that, "children need to hear themselves and four suggested that it was useful for students to edit their work. **Table 7** outlines the number and type of responses given.

Table 7 - Oral reading as assessment - (N=93)

Response given	No. responses	Percentage
Teacher Assessment		
To gauge where a child is	28	30%
Assessment	17	18%
Check comprehension	20	21%
Check word attack	6	6.6%
Check fluency	4	4.3%
Check pronunciation	1	1.1%
Check appreciation	1	1.1%
Indicate attitude	1	1.1%
Identify reading material	1	1.1%
Identify areas of weakness	4	4.3%
Show strategies used	4	4.3%
Self-assessment		
Editing work/self assessment	6	6.6%

It is worth noting that I recognise (as a teacher) that some of these responses whilst not explicitly stated, teachers may have used assessment for diagnostic purposes. As a result, they are included in this category and not the following category, "Oral Reading as diagnosis".

Oral reading as diagnosis

Responses that suggested that oral reading was a means to monitor or assess a student's reading to aid in further planning for a student or group of students were categorised under this heading. Only 6% of the 222 responses given directly related to diagnostic purposes (See **Table 8**).

Table 8 - Oral reading as diagnosis - (N=13)

Response given	No. of responses	Percentage
Identify area of weakness to plan further teaching	5	38%
Diagnostic tool	3	23%
Helps plan teaching	3	23%
Monitor teaching	2	15%

Oral reading as entertainment

Nine responses indicated that oral reading was a means to entertain. See **Table 9** below for the number and nature of responses given.

Table 9 - Oral reading as entertainment - (N=9)

Response given	No. of responses	% total responses
Enjoyment	6	66.6%
Brings children together	2	22.2%
Brings life to the classroom	1	11.1%

The majority of students interviewed, however did not talk about the activity of oral reading as an enjoyable experience, although teachers and some students interviewed made connections between oral reading and public speaking. Both teachers and students also cited "expression" frequently as an important characteristic of a 'good' reader.

Skills in Oral Reading

Question 11 asked participants to identify any skills they thought were important to develop during oral reading activities. There were 251 responses to this question. Participants identified 31 different skills that they believed were important to develop in readers. I have divided these into four categories. The first includes skills directly related to the ability to read out-loud, the second includes skills related to the ability to read more generally; the third includes those that encompassed particular 'dispositions' and the fourth for participants

who simply answered "all". Most of the responses fell under the category 'oral reading skills'. See **Figure 6** for distribution of responses.

Figure 6 - Important skill in oral reading - (N=221)
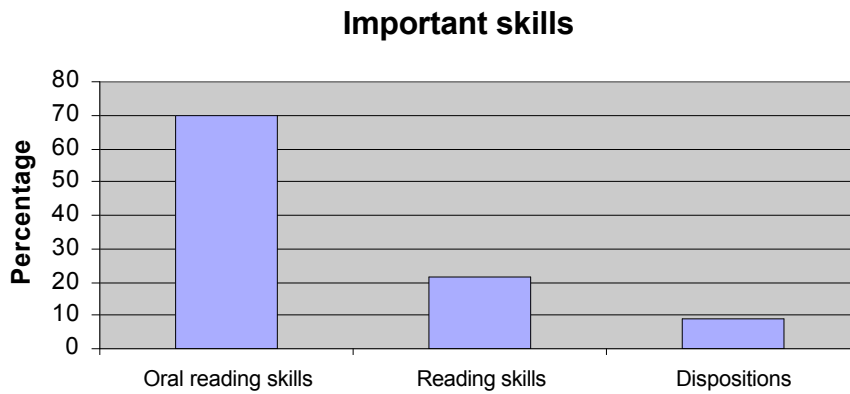
Participants identified 19 different oral reading skills that they felt were important to develop. **Table 10** provides a summary of the number and types of responses given.

Table 10 - Important skills to develop - (N=251)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Oral reading skills		
Expression	45	17.9%
Punctuation skills	24	9.6%
Fluency	20	7.9%
Tone/Pitch/intonation	20	8%
Diction/enunciation/clarity	15	5.9%
Volume	10	3.9%
Public speaking	9	3.6%
Pronunciation	7	2.8%
Timing/tempo	4	1.6%
Eye contact	4	1.6%
Accuracy	1	.4%
Reading skills		
Decoding/word attack skills	26	10.3%
Reading with meaning	16	6.4%
Phonics	8	3.2%
Following print	1	.4%
Read variety of texts	1	.4%

Dispositions		
Confidence	15	5.9%
Enjoyment/attitude	8	3.2%
Risk taking	2	.8%
All	4	1.6%

As **Table 10** shows, 'expression' rated the most popular comprising 42 of the responses. 'Fluency' and 'punctuation skills' also rated highly with 20 and 24 responses respectively. As was stated in the "Literature Review" many reading researchers also identified "fluency" as an area of need (Allington, 1983a, 1984; Anderson, 1981; Dwyer & Bain, 1999; Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Hintze & Conte, 1997; Rasinski, 1989). Most of the responses related to 'reading skills' generally included the development of word attack or decoding strategies (10%) or developing comprehension skills (6%). Responses under the category 'Dispositions' included "confidence", "enjoyment", "attitudes" and "risk taking". Teachers identified "confidence" most frequently accounting for 6% of the total number of responses.

Assessment

This section comprises two parts. The first reports on the methods used by teachers to assess a student's reading. The second reports on how teachers described 'good' readers.

Reading assessment methods

Question 14 required teachers to identify the ways they assessed a child's reading ability generally. I included this question in order to gain a sense of the importance of oral reading in the assessment process. There were 270 responses given to this question and teachers identified 52 different assessment techniques. I have divided these into seven categories, 'Oral reading', 'Reading strategies', Comprehension', 'Skills', 'Tests', 'Recording methods', and 'Miscellaneous'. **Figure 7** below shows the spread and frequency of the responses given. Following is a more detailed discussion of the various categories that comprised more than 5% of the total responses.

Figure 7 - Assessment methods - (N=270)

Assessment
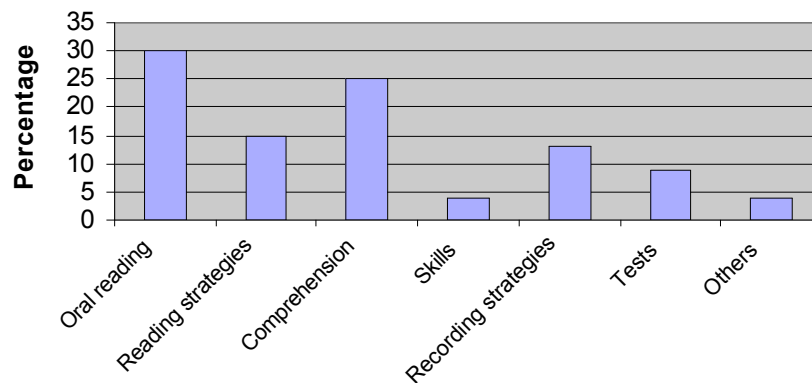
Thirty percent of teachers surveyed used oral reading to assess a child's reading. Teachers identified 12 different oral reading activities they used to do this, although in most cases it was not clear what aspects of reading they were assessing. **Table 11** provides a summary of the responses.

Table 11 - Reading assessment methods - (N=80)

Response	No. of Responses	% Total Responses
Listening to oral reading	41	51%
Reading conference	14	17.5%
Read aloud 1 - 1	12	15%
Reading groups	3	3.7%
Reading own work	2	2.5%
Reading to whole class	2	2.5%
Read on to a tape	1	1.25%
Reading known text	1	1.25%
Reading unknown text	1	1.25%
Reading in content areas	1	1.25%
Round robin reading	1	1.25%
Shared reading	1	1.25%

Forty-one teachers simply reported that they listened to oral reading whereas others were more specific and said they used activities such as "reading

conferences", "reading aloud to the class", "round robin" reading and "reading groups".

Other responses (15.5%) indicated teachers used specific assessment methods to help ascertain what kinds of reading strategies children used. These are categorised under 'Reading Strategies' (see **Figure 7**). Some of these for example, running records and miscue analysis required the student to read orally in order for the teacher to conduct the assessment. However, I separated these from the other oral reading methods to facilitate comparisons between other sets of data (See chapters 6, 7, 8, 9). The data highlight a mismatch between how students and teachers perceived the instructional and assessment role of oral reading activities. In particular, it appeared that instruction centred on developing reading strategies, focussed on the development of a students' graphophonic knowledge rather than their semantic or syntactic knowledge. Further, only one group of the students interviewed discussed teachers conducting assessment techniques such as miscue analysis or running records. **Table 12** provides a summary of these responses.

Table **12** - Reading strategies - (N=42)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Cloze activity	21	50%
Running records/miscue	14	27%
Oral cloze	2	4.8%
Reading strategies	2	4.8%
Ability to sound out words	1	2.4%
Written cloze	1	2.4%
Self-correction	1	2.4%

As **Table 13** shows, a number of the responses (25.2%%) related to 'understanding' or 'comprehension' of what students had read. Whilst some did involve oral language, they did not necessarily require a student to read orally from a text.

Table **13** - Assessment methods - comprehension - (N=68)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Comprehension	27	40%
Oral comprehension	15	22%
Written comprehension	14	20.6%
Reading response/book report	9	13.4%
Retelling story/chapter summary	3	4.4%

A number of the responses (12.5%) indicated ways in which teachers might record and collect assessment data. Anecdotal records were the most popular method cited. Only one respondent suggested that students might be involved in the assessment process. **Table 14** outlines the responses given.

Table 14 - Recording strategies - (N=34)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Anecdotal records	11	32%
First steps	10	29.4%
Observation	7	20.6%
Reading records	2	5.9%
Reading enjoyment scale	2	5.9%
Self-assessment	1	2.9%
Profiles	1	2.9%

Twenty-four of the participants claimed to use testing as a method of assessing reading. Many of these (67%) used standardised reading tests and some (10%) named the type of test they used. A summary of the responses is out-lined in **Table 15**.

Table 15 - Reading tests - (N=24)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Standardised reading test	18	75%%
Waddington reading test	4	17%
Schonnell Reading test	1	4.2%
Holbourne reading test	1	4.2%

'Good' Readers

The final question asked teachers to identify what they thought characterised a 'good' reader generally. Teachers gave 318 responses in which they identified 59 different characteristics. These responses fell under five categories, 'Oral reading', 'Reading Strategies', 'Comprehension', 'Dispositions' and 'Miscellaneous'. Again, a more detailed discussion of those categories comprising more than 5% of the total responses follows.

Figure 8 Characteristics of a 'good' reader - (N=318)

This question was included because I wanted to get a sense of how teachers described a 'good' reader and to what extent 'oral reading' skills featured in their descriptions. As **Figure 8** indicates 35% of the characteristics identified related directly to the skills involved with oral reading. Another interesting aspect is that 24% of responses given related to particular dispositions. Only 56 out of the 100 teachers surveyed mentioned 'comprehension' or 'understanding as an important characteristic. I will now elaborate on each of these categories further.

Oral reading characteristics

Teachers identified 21 characteristics of a good reader that directly related to oral reading skills. Fluency (31%) and expression (28%) were the most common characteristics identified. **Table 16** provides a summary of the frequency and nature of responses given.

Table 16- Characteristics of a 'good' reader - (N=112)

Response	No. of responses	Percentage
Fluency	35	31%
Expressive	31	28%
Punctuation	10	9%
Clarity	8	7%
Engages audience	7	6%
Speed	4	3.6%
Pronunciation	4	3.6%
Tone	3	2.7%
Reads with meaning	3	2.7%
Volume	2	1.8%
Uses different voices	2	1.8%
Voice projection	2	1.8%
Does not stumble over words	1	.9%

Reading strategies

Table 17 - Reading strategies - (N=64)

Response	No. of responses	Percentage
Word attack/decoding	27	42%
Good sight vocabulary	9	14%
Self corrects	9	14%
Sounds out unknown words	4	6%
Prediction skills	4	6%
Uses variety of strategies	3	4.7%
Cueing systems	2	3.1%
Follow print	2	3.2%
Critical reading -	2	3.2%
Knows author and authors	1	1.6%
Debates	1	1.6%

As **Table 17** shows, approximately 20% of the responses given related to the reader using particular reading strategies. Most of these (62%) directly related to word attack strategies. Thirty-one percent involved the use of other cueing systems (semantic and syntactic) and approximately 6% suggested other strategies that suggested the ability to think critically about a text.

Comprehension

Teachers gave 59 responses that indicated that an important aspect to a 'good' reader was the comprehension of what they had read. Thirty-one of the responses simply used the term 'comprehension' and so it was unclear whether they meant comprehension on a 'literal' level or a more 'critical' level. Only one teacher suggested that 'good' readers needed to 'look for more than literal meaning' in text. **Table 19** summarises the responses given.

Table 18 - Comprehension - (N=59)

Response	No. of responses	% total responses
Comprehension	31	52.5%
Understands text	22	37.3%
Reads for meaning	3	5.1%
Can retell text in own words	2	3.4%
Looks for more than literal	1	1.7%

Dispositions

Twenty-four percent of the characteristics reported related to particular dispositions. Confidence and enjoyment rated highest. This is interesting since the students interviewed also talked about the fact that 'good' readers enjoyed the task. Students also frequently discussed the need to develop greater confidence. See **Table 19**on the following page.

Table 19 - Dispositions - (N=76)

Response	No. of responses	Percentage

Confidence	24	31.6%
Enjoys reading	20	26.3%
Enthusiastic	11	14.5%
Reads for different purposes	8	10.5%
Risk taker	5	6.6%
Interested in books	3	4%
Imaginative	2	2.6%
Perceives themself as a	1	1.3%
Likes to share	1	1.3%
More quiet/wiser	1	1.3%

Pedagogical knowledge

Question 13 asked teachers where they acquired their knowledge about oral reading practices. Teachers gave 248 different responses to this question and identified 17 different sources. Most (59%) claimed to acquire their knowledge from, colleagues, professional development or university or a combination of all three. **Table 20** provides a summary of the frequency and nature of responses given.

Table 20 - Source of pedagogical knowledge - (N=248)

Response	No. Responses	Percentage
Other colleagues	57	23%
Professional development	47	19%
University	43	17%
Journals	26	10.5%
Practical experience	26	10.5%
First Steps tutor	22	9%
Texts on reading pedagogy	13	5%
Others	14	6%

The data suggest that teachers' greatest source of information came from other teachers. The number of responses from teachers who claimed to acquire their information from journals and/or texts on reading pedagogy accounts for 16% of the responses. Nineteen percent cited professional development as a

source of pedagogical knowledge and this helps to offset the reported lack of professional reading by 84% of teachers.

Summary

The data suggest that oral reading was a frequent activity in the primary classroom and its use distributed evenly across the school day. Its use occurred in most learning areas although Mathematics, English, Social Education and Science are the learning areas where it was most used.

Teachers claimed to use a wide variety of oral reading activities with reading aloud from a text and oral comprehension being the most popular.

Most teachers surveyed (99%) felt that it was an important activity and 50% said that it was equally important for all students. Those who felt it was not important for all students suggested that it was of more importance in the early years. Their reasons for this were largely of an instructional nature. A small percentage of reasons given (10%) highlighted the fact that teachers felt there was a real difference between oral and silent reading and that silent reading was a necessary skill for the more mature reader. Further, 4% of the responses indicated that oral reading was possibly a threatening activity for some students.

Similarly, the 66% of teachers who indicated that oral reading was equally important for all students claimed that it was largely due to instructional reasons.

In addition to the high importance placed on oral reading and its frequent use, teachers also reported that it was a useful activity for them. Again, most of the reasons were either instructional or evaluative. Further analysis of the responses revealed that they could be categorised into four main areas. First, to develop particular skills, second, to use as a particular teaching strategy, third, to develop particular dispositions and fourth, as a management strategy. The development of 'Confidence', which was categorised under 'Dispositions', surfaced again as being important.

Teachers also reported using oral reading frequently as an assessment tool. Similarly, students interviewed felt that this was one of the main reasons

for reading aloud to teachers. A relatively small number of students did discuss the fact that there were some instructional benefits from oral reading but that this was largely associated with helping them figure out unknown words. Most students reported that they were encouraged to use graphophonic knowledge to assist them with this. Students also mentioned the fact that teachers thought oral reading was a useful and necessary activity to help in developing their confidence and to read expressively. A full discussion of student perceptions of oral reading activities occurs in Chapters 8 and 9. In the questionnaires, teachers also identified a number of reading skills that they believed oral reading activities developed. Most of these (70%) directly related to the skills needed to read well orally. Only 21% related to reading skills more generally and the remainder related to particular dispositions. Again, teachers cited 'confidence' frequently.

When teachers detailed the particular assessment strategies they used to assess a child's reading generally oral reading and comprehension activities were the most frequently cited.

Oral reading skills were also a major factor when teachers made decisions about the level of a child's reading ability. Thirty-five percent of the characteristics given directly related to oral reading skills. Again dispositions particularly the child's level of 'confidence' was a major determining factor.

The data would suggest that teachers frequently used oral reading in both an instructional and evaluative mode. Oral reading abilities are also instrumental when teachers are making decisions about a child's reading ability.

The section to follow, reports on comparisons made between the early childhood, middle primary and upper primary data in order to determine whether these trends were consistent across the primary grades.

Comparing Data

For the purpose of this study, Early Childhood referred to teachers who taught from Transition through to Year 3. Most children in the transition year of school are around five years of age. Children in Year 3 are approximately eight years of age. Middle Primary referred to those teachers who taught in

either Year 4 or 5 and Upper Primary referred to teachers who taught students either in Year 6 or 7. In some instances teachers surveyed had a composite class, which meant their classes might comprise a combination of Years 4 and 5 or Transition and Year 1. Of the 100 questionnaires administered 38 were from early Childhood teachers, Middle Primary teachers completed 31 and there were 31 questionnaires completed by Upper Primary teachers. The Early Childhood sample is 7% larger than the Middle and Upper Primary samples.

Frequency

As was reported in the previous section all of the teachers surveyed claimed to use oral reading in the classroom. Further, 74% of teachers claimed to use it frequently and the remainder used it sometimes. A comparison of the figures in relation to where the teachers taught in the primary school revealed that the use of oral reading was more frequent in Early Childhood with 86% of the 38 Early Childhood teachers surveyed claiming they used it frequently.

Figure 9 - Frequency of oral reading - (N=100)
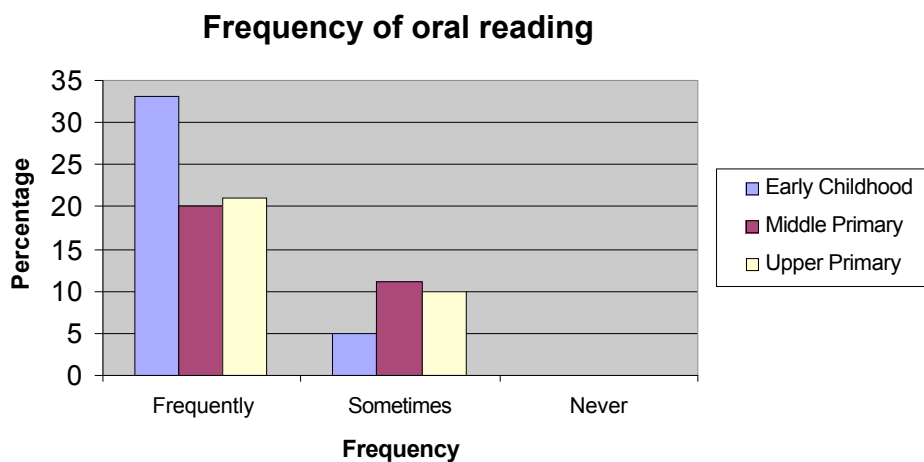
As **Figure 9** indicates 33% of the hundred teachers surveyed who claimed to use oral reading frequently taught in Early Childhood, 20% taught in Middle Primary and 21% in Upper Primary. None of the teachers surveyed claimed to use it rarely. There were no significant differences across the various year levels in relation to when its use across the school day.

As is stated in Section 1 the curriculum areas where its use was most popular included English, Studies of Society and Environment, Science and Mathematics. There were no significant differences in areas of use when comparing the Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary data.

Activities

In the previous section, **Table 7** showed the types of oral reading activities teachers claimed to use in the classroom. The table also detailed whether teachers used the activity 'frequently', 'sometimes', 'rarely' or 'never'. **Figure 10** below shows the distribution of the responses where teachers claimed to use the various activities frequently.

Figure 10 - Frequently used oral reading activities - (N=100)
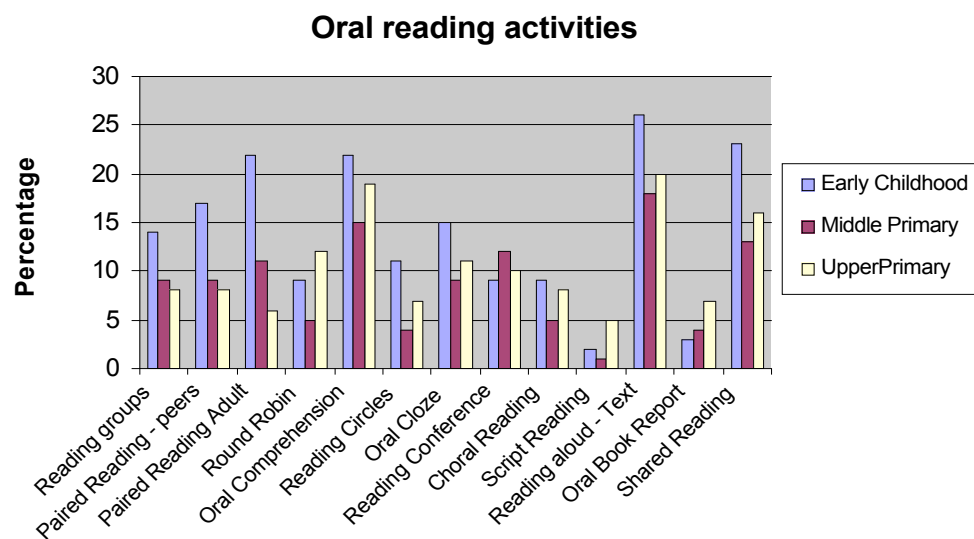
As **Figure 10** shows Early Childhood teachers reported using all of the activities more frequently with the exception of "round robin" reading, reading conferences, script reading and oral book reports. In particular, Early Childhood teachers used reading groups, paired reading (both with adults and peers) and shared reading more frequently than teachers in the middle and upper grades. Reading aloud from a text was the most frequently used activity across all the primary grades. Oral comprehension, reading aloud from a text

and shared reading were the most frequently cited activities used by both Middle and Upper Primary teachers. Upper Primary teachers used "round robin" reading more often than both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers with 12% of these teachers reporting its use frequently.

When I combined the responses indicating the use of oral reading 'frequently' and 'sometimes' it was apparent that early Childhood teachers used all of the activities more often with the exception of script reading. The use of "round robin" reading was the same for both Upper Primary and Early Childhood teachers.

Figure 11 - Oral activities used frequently/sometimes - (N=100)

Activities used frequently/sometimes
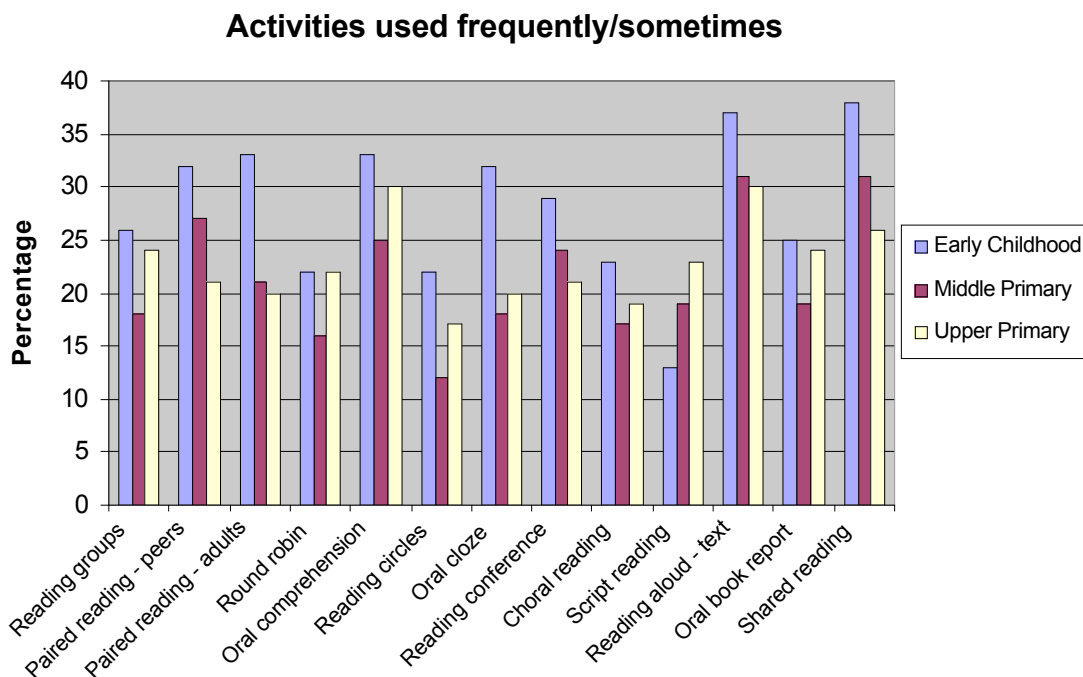
As **Figure 11** shows, the use of these activities spreads more evenly when combining those teachers who indicated using the activities either 'frequently' or 'sometimes'. Paired reading, oral comprehension, oral cloze, reading aloud from a text and shared reading remained popular with Early Childhood teachers. Paired reading with peers, oral comprehension, reading aloud from a text and shared reading were more common with Middle Primary

teachers whilst the data suggest that Upper Primary teachers favoured oral comprehension and reading aloud from a text.

Combining the responses that indicated teachers either 'rarely' or 'never' used an activity revealed different trends as shown in **Figure 12**

Figure 12 - Oral reading activities used rarely/never - (N=100)

Activities used rarely/never
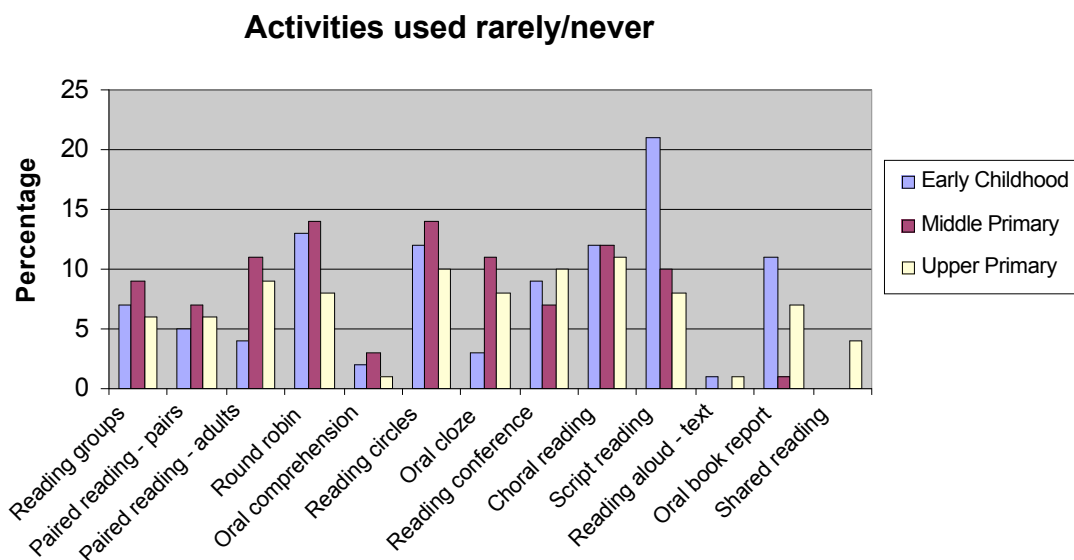
Figure 12 shows that 'script reading' was the only activity identified by Early Childhood teachers that they, 'rarely', or 'never' used. Forty-five percent of both Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers also reported rarely or never using both "round robin" and 'reading circles'. Again, closer examination of the responses indicates that oral comprehension; 'reading aloud from a text' and 'shared reading' were the more commonly identified activities. The data suggest that over 50% of teachers in Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary claimed to use all of these activities except for 'script reading' in varying degrees. For example, 57% of Early Childhood teachers, 52% of Middle Primary teachers and 70% of Upper Primary teachers claimed to use "round robin" reading either 'frequently' or 'sometimes'. Similarly, 65% of Early

Childhood teachers, 61% of Middle Primary teachers and 77% of Upper Primary teachers claimed to use 'Oral book reports' either 'frequently' or 'sometimes'.

Becoming a School Reader: Pedagogical issues

This section comprises five sub-sections. The first looks at the importance placed on oral reading. The second section discusses how it is used. The third section reports on the skills that teachers suggested were important to foster in oral reading. The fourth section discusses questions relating specifically to assessment and the fifth reports on the ways teachers indicated they acquired their pedagogical knowledge about oral reading.

Oral Reading: Importance

In the previous section, the data indicate that all of the participants rated oral reading as having some degree of 'importance' in the classroom. **Figure 13** provides further analysis and shows the degree of importance placed upon oral reading by Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers.

Figure 13 - Importance of oral reading - (EC = 38, MP = 31, UP = 31)
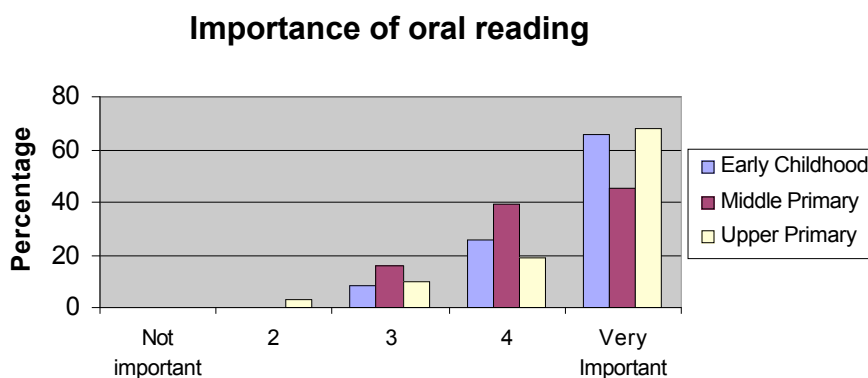
As **Figure 13** shows only a very small percentage (3%) of Upper Primary teachers viewed oral reading as having 'little' importance in the classroom. Sixty-six percent of Early Childhood, 81% of Middle Primary and 68% of Upper Primary rated it as 'very important'.

Section 1 has already highlighted the fact that 46% of the respondents felt that there were times when oral reading was more important. Further, that 64% of these responses suggested that it was more important in Early Childhood. The reasons given for this were of an instructional or evaluative nature (Refer **Figure 2**). The data also revealed that 50% of the respondents felt it was equally important for all students and similarly most of the reasons given were of an instructional nature.

Oral Reading: Use

As was stated in Section 1, 99% of respondents reported that oral reading was useful for them in the classroom. Further, teachers gave 222 responses why this was the case. In the previous section these responses were categorised under the headings of 'Oral reading as instruction' (107 responses), 'Oral reading as assessment' (93 responses), 'Oral reading as diagnosis' (13 responses), and "Oral reading as entertainment' (9 responses). **Figure 14** shows the spread of these responses across Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary.

Figure 14 - Benefits of oral reading - (N=222)

Benefits of oral reading
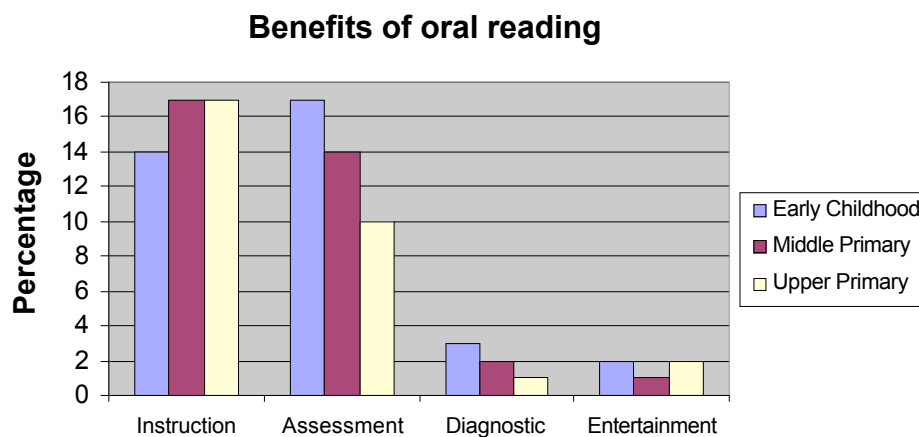
The data represented in **Figure 14** support the conclusions made in Section 1 in that the teachers surveyed see the benefits of oral reading as largely instructional and evaluative and that apart from Early Childhood the greatest benefits lie within an 'instructional' framework. Upper Primary teachers reported instructional benefits over assessment benefits, whereas Early Childhood and Middle Primary reported the instructional and evaluative

benefits as being equally significant. None of the responses suggested that oral reading was particularly valuable in a diagnostic or entertaining way. As was pointed out in the previous section some of the assessment reasons given may have been diagnostic in nature, although teachers did not explicitly state this.

The following sections explore each of these categories further and look for any trends in the ways in which Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teacher use oral reading in an instructional, evaluative, diagnostic and entertaining way.

Oral reading as instruction

This category comprises four sub-categories. The first relates to skills, the second to teaching strategies, the third to dispositions and the fourth to management. One hundred and seven of the responses (48%) related to instruction of some kind. As mentioned previously I have divided these into four sub-categories. The first relates to skills (42 responses), the second to teaching strategies (32 responses), the third to dispositions (29 responses) and the fourth to management (4 responses). **Figure 15** below presents the data differently in order to make comparisons between the responses given by Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers. This helped to highlight the different ways in which these teachers used oral reading in an instructional sense in the classroom.

The data represented in **Figure 15** suggest that Middle Primary teachers were more inclined to use oral reading to teach specific skills. Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers favoured it as a teaching strategy and that Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers used it to foster particular dispositions. The data suggest that its use as a management strategy was not widespread.

Figure 15 - Oral reading as instruction - (N=107)

Oral reading as instruction
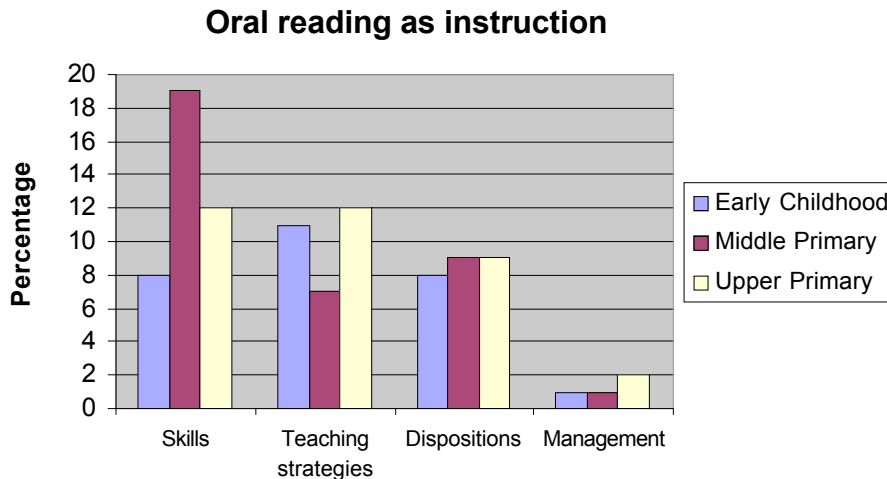
As in the previous section, it is worth examining each of these areas a little further.

Skills

As **Table <u>4</u>** in the previous section shows, there were six categories under the heading of skills. These included oral reading skills, word attack skills, fluency, listening skills, comprehension skills and communication skills. A small number of other responses that did not fit these categories, are in the 'miscellaneous' category.

Figure <u>16</u> shows the skills identified by Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers. The data suggest that both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers saw oral reading as important in developing skills associated with the activity of reading aloud such as pronunciation, articulation and diction. Middle Primary teachers also identified oral reading useful in the development of comprehension skills. Only a very small percentage (2.5%) of the 42 responses related to the development of word attack strategies.

Figure 16 - Skills (N = 42)

Skills
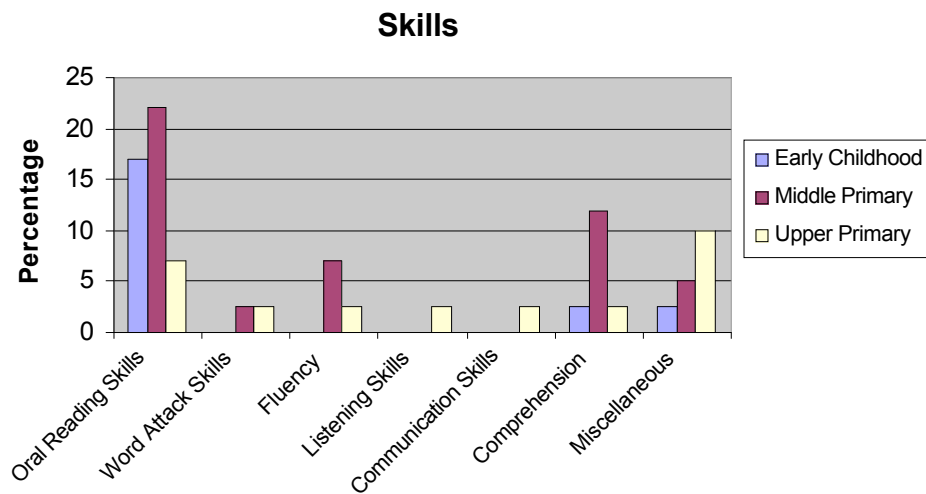
Teaching strategies

As indicated in Section 1 almost 30% of the responses related to instruction indicated that oral reading was useful as a teaching strategy. **Figure 17** shows the distribution of these responses across the three areas of the Primary school.

Figure 17 - Teaching strategies - (N=32)

Teaching strategies
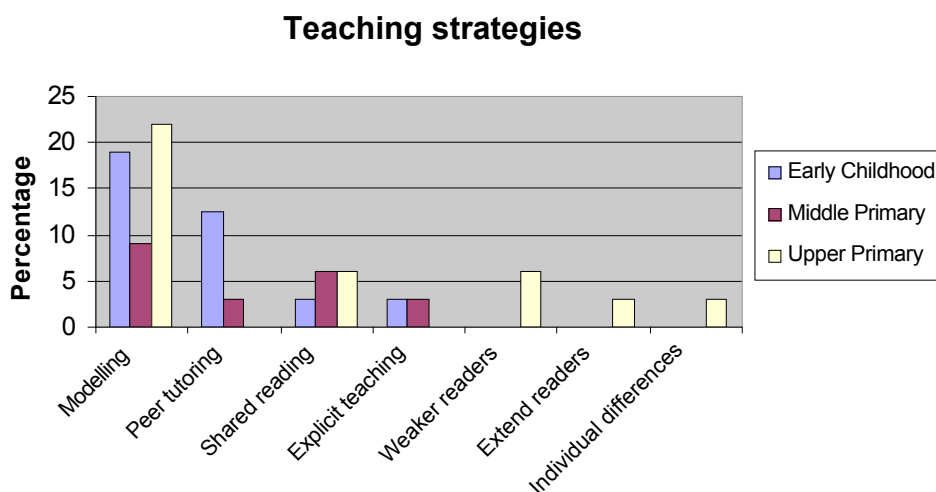
The data suggest that teachers used oral reading primarily as a means to model effective reading/oral reading to other students. The responses given included both modelling by peers and modelling by teachers. The data show that Early Childhood teachers also used it as a means to conduct 'peer tutoring', which in a sense is also similar to 'modelling'. Middle Primary teachers tended

to use it less often as a teaching strategy and some Upper Primary teachers found it useful to either assist 'weaker readers' or 'extend' more able readers.

Dispositions

A number of responses (27%) related to the idea that oral reading was useful to develop particular 'dispositions'. **Figure 18** shows the nature of the distribution of these responses.

Figure 18 - Dispositions - (N=29)

Dispositions
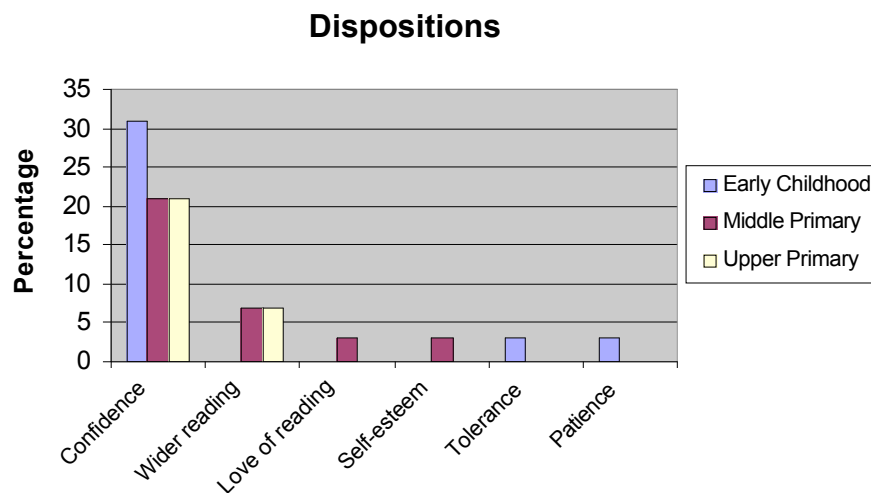
The data clearly show that teachers surveyed saw oral reading as an effective means to develop 'confidence' in readers, in particular Early Childhood teachers. As was stated in the previous section a full discussion on the connections between the activity of oral reading and the development of 'confidence' occurs in later chapters.

Management

There were only three responses given which suggested that some teachers found oral reading a useful management strategy. One of these came from a Middle Primary teacher and the other two from Upper Primary teachers.

Oral reading as assessment

Of the 222 responses given relating to the usefulness of oral reading, 42% of them related to assessment of some kind. Of these responses, 41% came from Early Childhood teachers, 36% from Middle Primary teachers and 22% from Upper Primary teachers. Given the sample of Early Childhood teachers was slightly larger (7%) than the Middle and Upper Primary teachers the data would suggest that both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers saw the assessment benefits relatively the same but that it is viewed with less importance by Upper Primary teachers. **Table 7** in Section 1, detailed the nature and frequency of the responses given. **Figure 19** examines the responses given that were more than 4% of the total responses in relation to assessment in an attempt to reveal any differences or similarities of use across the primary grades. I have represented responses, comprising less that 4% of the total number under 'miscellaneous'.

Figure 19 - Benefits of oral reading - assessment - (N=93)

Benefits of oral reading
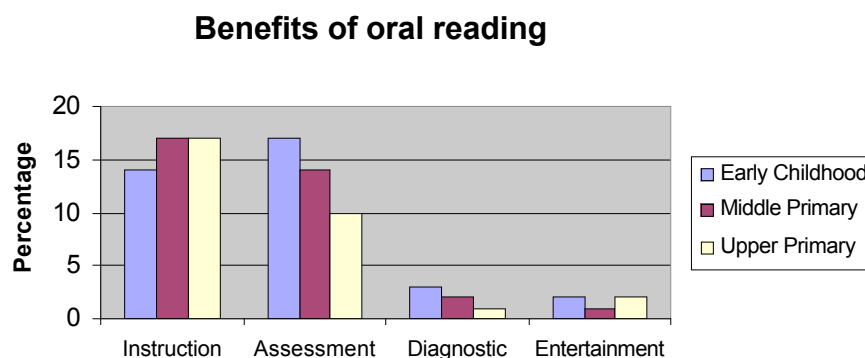
As **Figure 19** shows, 49% of the responses simply indicated that it was used either to "gauge where a child is at" or for "assessment". Of these responses, 22% came from Early Childhood teachers, 17% from Middle Primary and 11% from Upper Primary. Again, if we take into account the fact that the Early Childhood sample was 7% larger, then the Early Childhood and Middle Primary responses were similar in number. Apart from the 8% of responses indicating oral reading was useful to "gauge" where a child is at and the 8% which suggested it was useful to "check comprehension" the data do not

suggest that Upper Primary teachers surveyed used oral reading in the 'assessment' mode as often as both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers.

Oral reading as diagnosis

As stated in Section 1 only 6% of the total 222 responses suggested that oral reading was a means to monitor or assess a students' reading to aid in further planning for a student of group of students. Of the thirteen responses that made up the 6%, seven (3%) came from Early Childhood teachers, four (2%) from Middle Primary and two (1%) from Upper Primary teachers.

Oral reading as entertainment

Nine responses (4%) indicated that oral reading was a means to entertain. Early Childhood teachers gave four responses, Middle Primary, two responses and Upper Primary three responses. There were no significant differences in the nature or spread of these.

Skills in Oral Reading

Participants identified 31 different skills that they believed important to develop in readers. In Section 1, I divided the responses into four different categories. The first included skills directly related to the ability to read out-loud, the second to reading more generally, the third to 'dispositions' and the fourth for those teachers who simply responded "all". Of the 251 responses given Early Childhood, teachers contributed 37% of the responses, Middle Primary teachers 35% of the responses and Upper Primary 28%. Whilst there was little difference in the number of responses given across the three different areas of the Primary school, it is worth examining the types of responses given in further detail.

Figure <u>20</u> - Important skills to develop - (N=251)
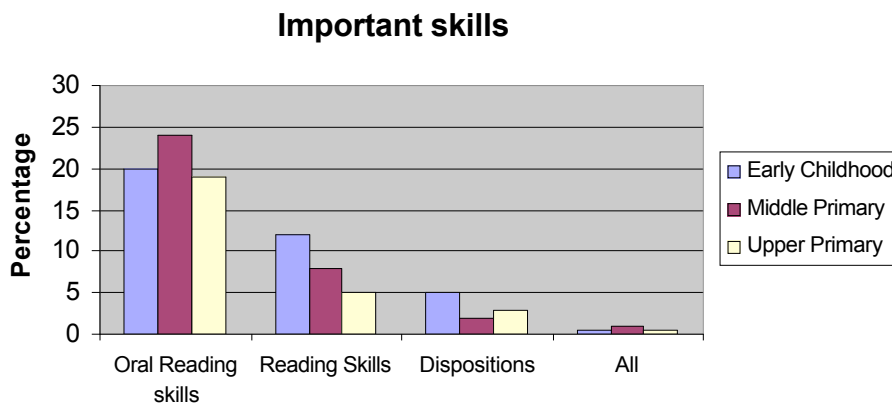
Important skills

Figure **20** clearly shows that many of the skills teachers saw as important directly related to the ability to read out-loud. Again, there was little difference in the number and types of responses given.

If I compare some of the more specific responses given between Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary I see some more noticeable differences between the type and number of responses given. **Figure 21** below compares the responses stated seven or more times in the data in the three different categories. It compares, 'expression', 'fluency', 'punctuation', 'volume', 'public speaking' and 'tone' from the 'oral reading skills' category. 'Reading with meaning', 'decoding strategies', 'phonics' 'comprehension' and 'word attack skills' from the 'reading skills' category and 'confidence' and 'enjoyment' from the 'dispositions' category. The percentages calculated relate to the number of responses given for each response, for example, there were 42 responses in total for 'expression' so this number is used to calculate the percentages for each area of the primary school for this particular response. **Figure 21** shows the number of responses given for each item.

Figure <u>21</u> - Comparing important skills.

Comparing important skills
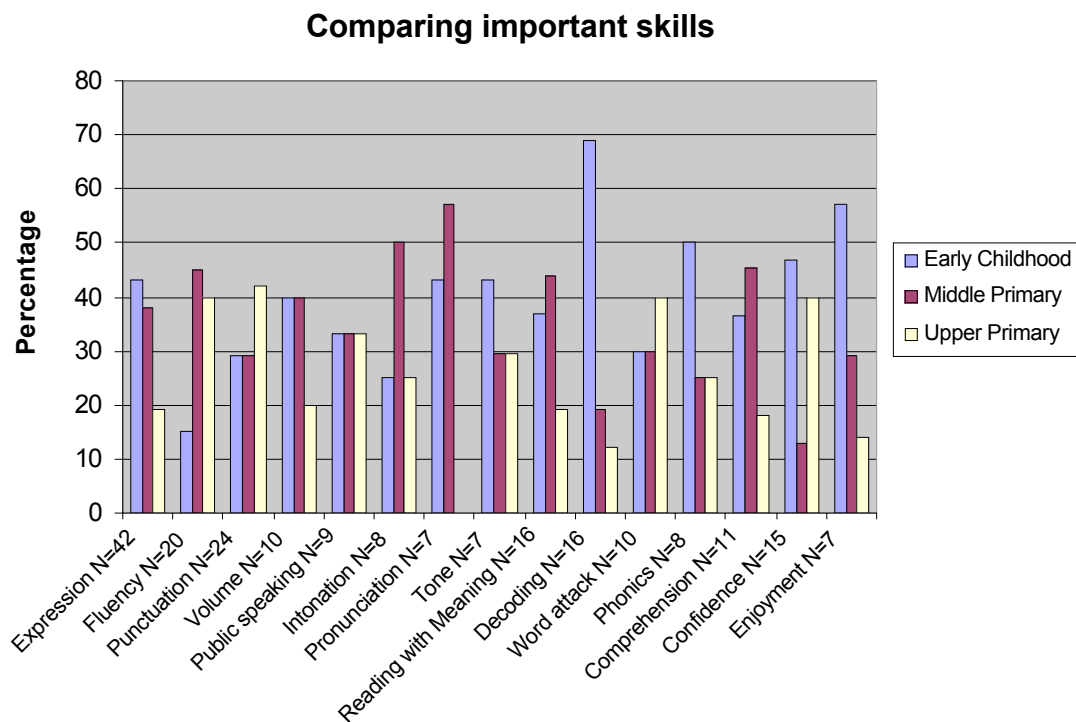
As **Figure <u>21</u>** show, Early Childhood teachers saw the development of 'decoding strategies', 'confidence', 'phonics' and 'enjoyment' as being important. Middle Primary teachers did not place as much emphasis on the development of 'decoding strategies', 'phonics' and 'enjoyment'. Similarly, Upper Primary teachers placed little emphasis on 'decoding strategies', 'phonics' and 'enjoyment' although 'confidence' was important. All three areas saw equal value in the development of 'public speaking' skills. Upper Primary teachers also identified 'fluency', 'punctuation' and the development of 'word attack' skills as important. Middle Primary teachers viewed a number of the skills as important, in particular, 'fluency', and 'reading with meaning ', 'intonation ',' 'pronunciation' and 'comprehension'. The data suggest that Early Childhood teachers might have used oral reading more specifically to teach general reading skills as opposed to 'oral reading' skills than Upper Primary and Middle Primary teachers did given the high emphasis placed on 'decoding skills' and 'phonics'. However, the data also reveal that teachers saw value in developing particular 'oral reading' skills.

Reading Assessment Methods

In Question 14 teachers identified 52 different assessment techniques that they used to assess reading. **Figure 7** showed the spread and frequency of these responses, which I divided into seven categories - 'Oral reading', 'Reading strategies', 'Comprehension', 'Skills', 'Tests', 'Recording methods', and 'Miscellaneous'. **Figure 22** below shows the spread of these responses across the three different areas of the Primary School.

Figure 22 - Comparing assessment methods -1 - (N=270)

Comparing assessment methods
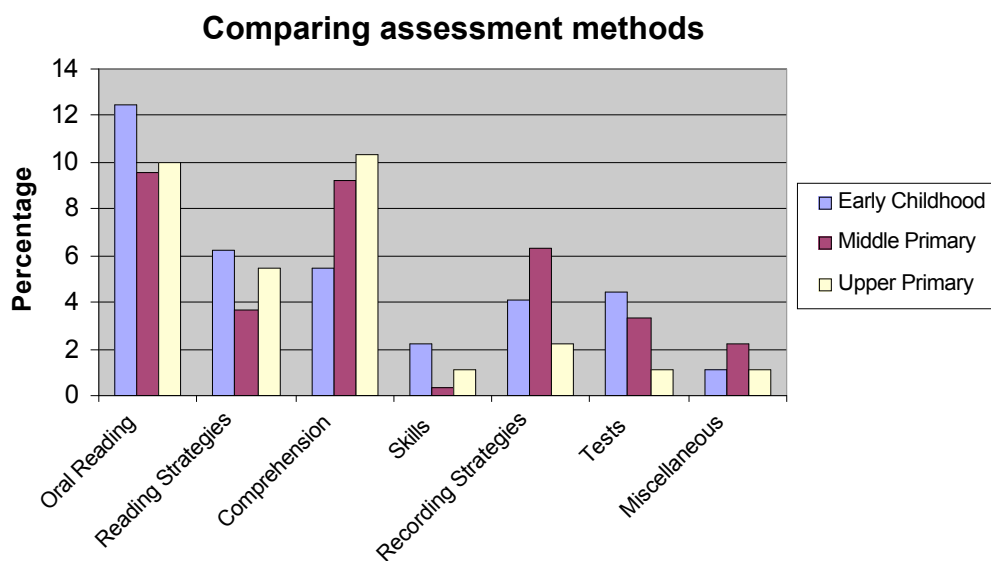
The data represented in **Figure 22** suggest that oral reading rated highly as an assessment tool for reading across the primary school. Both Upper and Middle Primary teachers also reported on the importance of comprehension in the assessment process. It is worth noting some of the frequently noted methods within each of these categories to gain a better sense of how teachers assessed their students. I will do this similarly to the previous section where I looked at skills. Again all responses cited seven times or more are included in this analysis. 'Listening to oral reading', 'reading one to one' and 'conferencing' are included from the 'oral reading' category. 'Running records' and 'cloze' are included from the 'reading strategies' category. 'Comprehension', 'written comprehension' and 'oral comprehension' are included from the 'comprehension' category. I have not included any of the responses in the 'skills'

category since they all occurred in the data less that seven times. 'Observation' and 'anecdotal records' are included from the 'recording strategies' category and 'standardised tests' from the 'test' category.

Figure 23 - Comparing assessment methods -2

Assessment methods
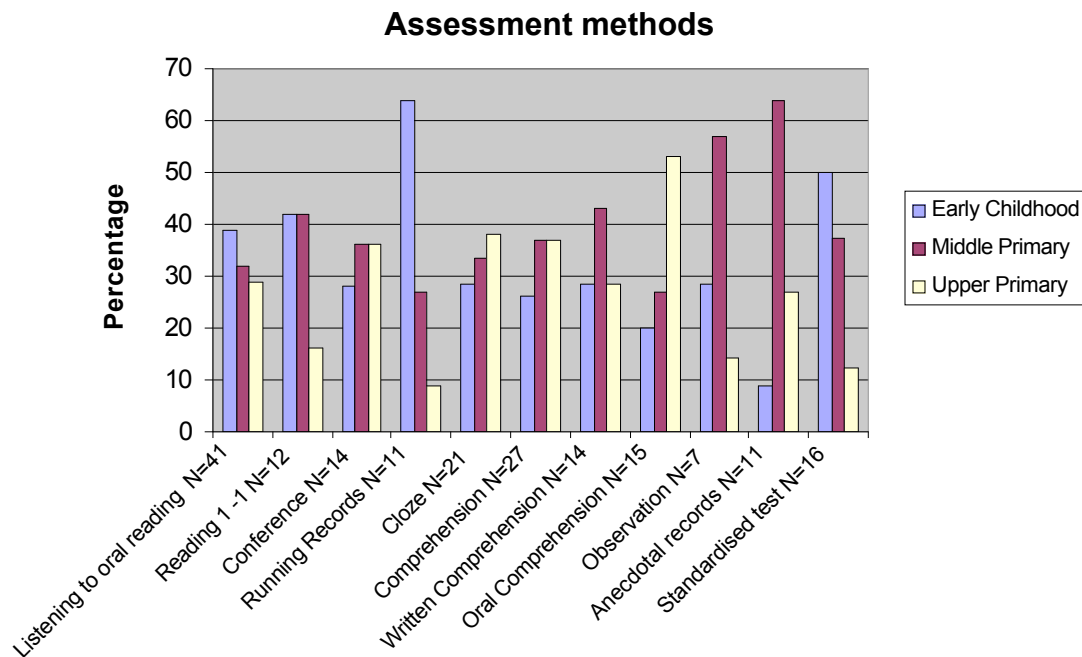
Figure 23 shows that all areas of the Primary school used oral reading as a means to assess. Thirty-nine percent of the responses came from Early Childhood teachers, 32% from Middle Primary teachers and 29% from Upper Primary teachers. The reported use of conferencing, comprehension and cloze were similar. Upper Primary teachers reported little use of 'running records' whereas the data show that some Early Childhood teachers favoured their use. There is little difference in the use of 'comprehension' generally, written comprehension more specifically and cloze activities. Upper Primary teachers reported using 'oral cloze' activities more frequently. With respect to recording strategies, the data suggest that Middle Primary teachers favoured 'observation' and 'anecdotal records'. Early Childhood favoured 'observations' over 'anecdotal' records and the reverse was true for Upper Primary teachers. The data suggest that both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers surveyed found standardised tests useful and that Upper Primary teachers rarely used them.

'Good' readers

Teachers gave 318 responses and identified 59 different characteristics of what they considered constituted a 'good' reader. In the previous section, these responses fell under five categories, 'Oral reading', 'Reading Strategies', 'Comprehension', 'Dispositions' and 'Miscellaneous'. **Figure 24** below makes comparisons of these across the three different areas of the Primary school.

Figure 24 - Compare 'good' reader across primary school- (N=318)
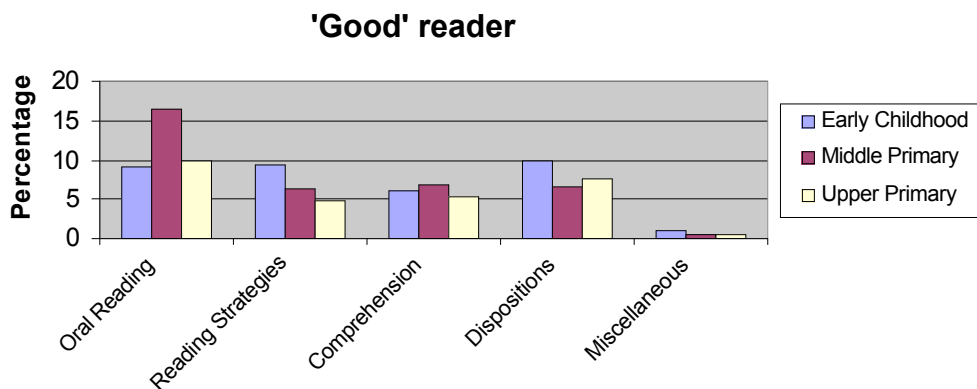
As **Figure 24** shows 35% of the total responses fell under the category 'Oral Reading'. Middle Primary teachers clearly saw these characteristics as important when defining a 'good' reader. Early Childhood teachers tended to give a more rounded picture of a 'good' reader as they saw the ability to read well out loud, the use of various reading strategies and developing particular 'dispositions' as all important. Both Middle and Upper Primary teachers saw the various oral reading skills as important when describing a 'good' reader. They expressed less emphasis on the readers' ability to use particular strategies or comprehend what they had read. Similarly, Early Childhood teachers placed less emphasis on 'comprehension'. Again, the data suggest that particular 'dispositions' were an important aspect of a 'good' reader.

As in previous sections, it is worth comparing responses reported seven or more times in each of the categories to get a sense of the various

characteristics viewed as important by teachers in the three different areas of the school.

Figure <u>25</u> - Compare characteristics of 'good' reader.

Compare characteristics of 'good' reader
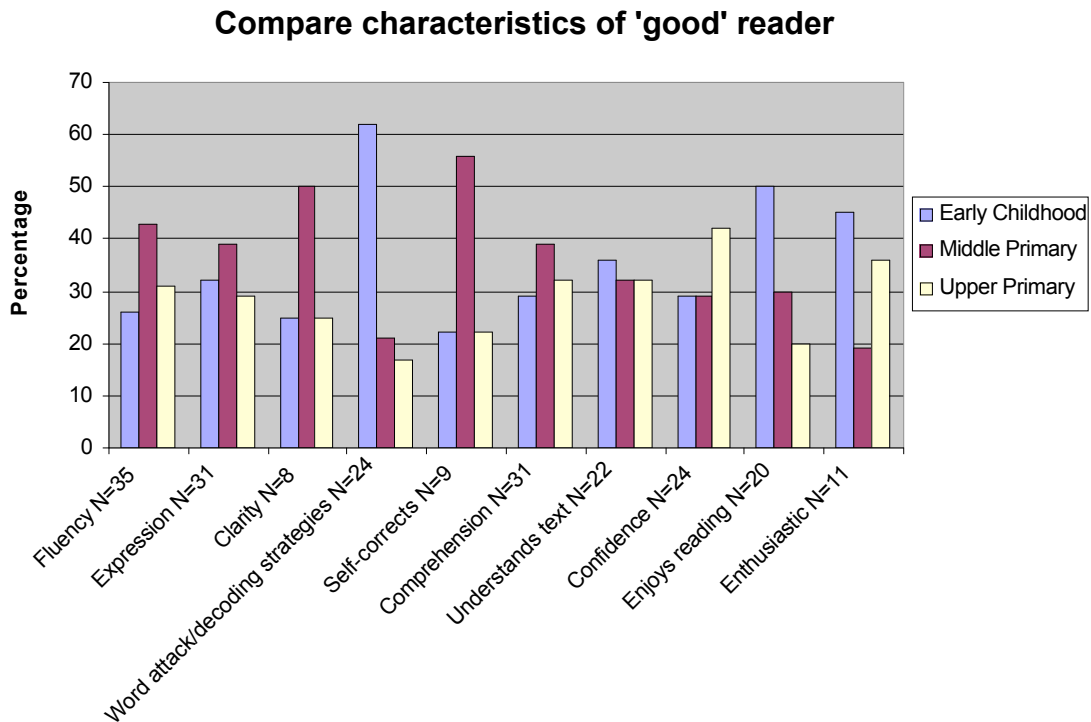
As is represented in **Figure <u>25</u>** above, Early Childhood, Middle Primary and Upper Primary teachers indicated that 'fluency', 'expression', 'comprehension', 'understands text', and 'confidence' were important. Early Childhood teachers claimed the ability to use 'word attack and decoding strategies', the 'enjoyment' of reading and 'enthusiasm' were very important when describing a 'good' reader. Middle Primary teachers rated 'fluency' 'clarity' and the ability to 'self-correct' as important characteristics of a 'good' reader and Upper Primary teachers identified 'confidence' as an important characteristic.

Pedagogical Knowledge

In Section 1, participants gave 248 responses and identified 17 different sources of pedagogical knowledge about oral reading. **Figure <u>26</u>** shows the distribution of these responses across the Primary school.

Figure 26 - Comparing pedagogical knowledge - (N=248)

The data suggest that the only marked difference in responses given is

Comparing pedagogical knowledge
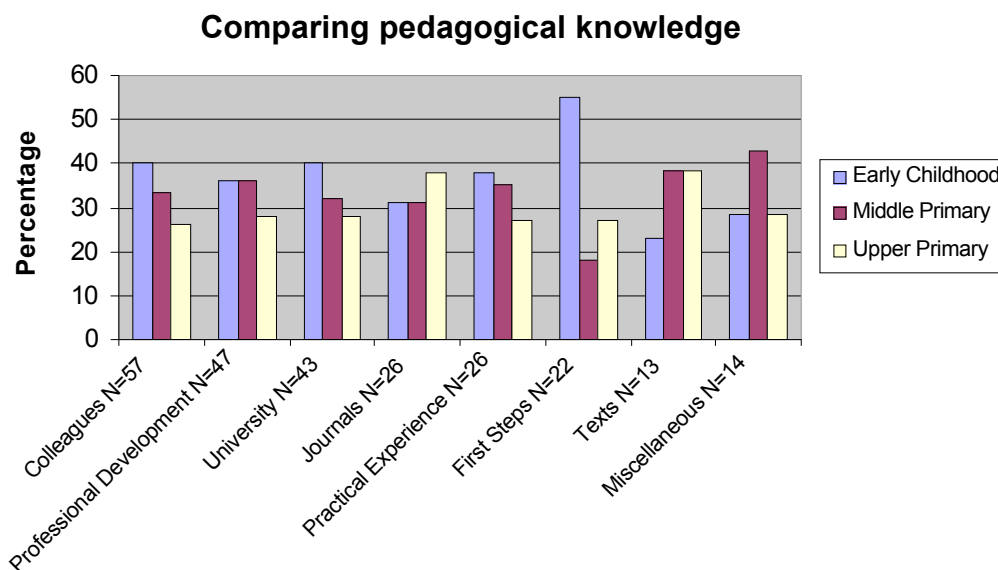
that Early Childhood teachers used First Steps as a major resource in their oral reading programs.

Summary

Comparing the data within the three different cohorts in the data saw other trends emerge in terms of the frequency, importance and nature of the use of oral reading activities in the classroom. Whilst 74% of the teachers surveyed claimed to use it frequently, Early Childhood teachers (33%) reported its use more frequently than both Middle Primary (20%) and Upper Primary teachers (21%). If we take into account the fact that the sample of Early Childhood teachers was 7% larger, the reported frequency of its use remains greater. There were no significant differences in when oral reading occurred throughout the school day and the data suggest that over 50% of the teachers' surveyed claim to use all of the activities in varying degrees.

All teachers with exception of 3% of Upper Primary teachers rated oral reading as being moderately to very important in the classroom. Forty-six percent believed that it was more important in Early Childhood and 50% claimed that it was equally important for all students. Most of the reasons given for its importance were of an 'instructional' or 'evaluative' nature. Very few

teachers suggested that it was important in a diagnostic or entertaining way. As was stated in Section 1, some of the assessment reasons given by teachers may have been diagnostic.

Ninety-nine percent of those surveyed claimed that oral reading was useful for them. Teachers gave 222 reasons why it was important and most of these fell within an instructional (48%) or evaluative mode (42%). Early Childhood teachers provided 30% of the instructional responses, Middle Primary 35% and Upper Primary 35%. There was relatively little difference across the three different areas of the Primary school in the number of responses given. Ninety-three of the responses fell within the evaluative category. Early Childhood teachers provided 41% of these responses, Middle Primary 35% and Upper Primary 24%. This data suggest that Upper Primary find it less useful as an evaluative tool.

A closer look at the instructional category revealed that Middle Primary teachers saw it as useful in developing particular skills. There was a relatively equal spread of responses in the 'teaching strategies' and 'dispositions' category. Very few teachers saw oral reading as a useful management tool. Both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers saw it as a useful means to develop particular oral reading skills. Middle Primary also saw it useful in developing comprehension skills. Only 6% of the responses related to the development of oral reading skills came from Upper Primary teachers. **Figure 16** suggested that Upper Primary teachers used it in a limited way to develop particular skills with their responses spread quite thinly across the different categories. In contrast, Upper Primary teachers (See **Figure 17**) found it more useful as a teaching strategy, in particular to model effective oral reading to others. Most of the responses given under the 'dispositions' category involved the development of 'confidence'. Early Childhood teachers provided 31% of these responses and both Middle and Upper Primary teachers 20%.

Closer examination of the assessment benefits of oral reading (See **Figure 19**) showed that both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers saw more benefit in the assessment use of oral reading generally than Upper

Primary teachers. The data suggest that Upper Primary teachers favoured its use more specifically to check comprehension.

Teachers identified 31 different skills that they thought were important to develop in readers with the 251 responses given to the question. I divided these into four categories. Most of the skills identified by the teachers fell within the 'oral reading' category. **Figure <u>21</u>** analysed the responses given in relation to skills that occurred seven or more times in the data. This shows further how both Early Childhood and Middle Primary teachers viewed oral reading as a useful means to develop particular skills. Upper Primary teachers quite clearly use it less often in this way. In particular, Early Childhood teachers viewed the development of decoding strategies as very important.

The data suggest that teachers used oral reading as a means to assess. When asked to identify the ways they assess reading generally oral reading was the most frequent response given (41%) followed by comprehension. These responses spread relatively evenly across the three different areas of the school though Early Childhood teachers identified comprehension fewer times.

When teachers described the characteristics they felt described a 'good' reader, 35% of the 318 responses given fell within the oral reading category. In particular, Middle Primary teachers saw this as very important. Early childhood teachers' responses spread relatively evenly across the 'oral reading', 'reading strategies' and 'dispositions' categories. Upper Primary teachers responses fell mainly within the 'oral reading' and 'dispositions' categories. **Figure <u>25</u>** examined some of the various responses given seven or more times. Fluency, expression, word attack strategies, comprehension, understanding text, confidence and enjoyment were the most popular with twenty or more responses each. There was relatively little difference in the number of responses for fluency, expression, comprehension, understanding text and confidence. It was very clear however, that Early Childhood teachers saw the ability to use word attack or decoding strategies as very important. Upper Primary teachers favoured confidence as an important characteristic of a 'good' reader. Again, this supported the instructional focus evident throughout the data from the Early Childhood cohort.

Only 30% of the instructional responses provided by Early Childhood Teachers as opposed to 35% from both Middle and Upper Primary the types of responses given suggested that Early Childhood teachers used is as a means to teach reading more generally rather than develop skills in oral reading. This was evident in the importance they placed on word attack and decoding strategies throughout the data. The data suggest that Middle Primary teachers on the other hand tended to focus on the development of oral reading skills in the instructional mode and the importance of oral reading skills when assessing reading and describing a 'good' reader. Upper Primary teachers expressed oral reading as a useful means to model effective reading to other students. Further, 'oral reading skills', 'comprehension' and 'confidence' was evident in the data in terms of instruction, assessment and describing a 'good' reader.

As was stated earlier there was little difference across the three different areas of the Primary School in regards to where teachers gained their knowledge about oral reading pedagogy. The only significant difference was in the Early Childhood teachers' use of First Steps.

The questionnaires were designed to gain a sense of the frequency, nature and purposes of oral reading activities. Seventy-four percent of teachers surveyed claimed they used the practice frequently. Teachers identified reading instruction and assessment as the main purpose. Instruction centred on code breaker practices with some suggesting it was a useful means to enhance comprehension or meaning-based practices.

The following chapter reports on interviews conducted with six different teachers across two school sites. Teachers interviewed were asked similar questions to those in the questionnaire. However they were also asked to discuss the specific oral reading activities they employed in their respective classrooms. The data from these interviews revealed a similar pattern of responses to those collated from the questionnaires.

CHAPTER 6

A Teacher Perspective: Teachers speak

This chapter reports on the data gathered from interviews held with six teachers. The teachers interviewed were teachers of the various student interviewees. They came from two different school sites and included two Early Childhood teachers, two Middle Primary teachers and two Upper Primary teachers. Two of the teachers were male and four were female. Both the schools and teachers have pseudonyms, in keeping with ethics requirements. The chapter comprises two sections. The first discusses the interview data from the teachers at Farrer Primary and the second section, discusses the interview data from the teachers at Gunn Primary.

Farrer Primary

Farrer Primary is an urban state primary school that caters for students living in Farrer and the nearby suburbs. At the time of the interviews, the school had a student population of around 500 students. Specialist teachers provided instruction in Music, Computing, Indonesian and library. The school operated a gifted unit for students from Years 5 to 7.

I interviewed three teachers at this school site. They included a Year 3 teacher named, Ms D, a Year 4/5 teacher named, Mr W and a Year 7 teacher, named Ms E. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, were semi-structured and covered a range of issues relating to reading generally and oral reading more specifically.

This chapter examines teachers' perceptions of oral reading in terms of its importance, frequency and use. It also discusses teachers' reading programs generally and the oral reading activities used in their classrooms. These oral

reading activities are important aspect of this thesis since they also feature prominently in the students' interview data and in the observation data.

Farrer Primary: Year 3

Ms D had been teaching for nine years at the time of the interviews. All of her teaching had been in Early Childhood. Her class was one of two year 3 classes at the school.

Ms D reported that students in her class read out-loud frequently with each child reading out-loud at least once a week to the whole class. Ms D felt that oral reading was the only means to "judge" how well the students in her class read. It helped her to gauge their "fluency" and to see "how good they were or how bad they were." I asked Ms D to explain how she understood "fluency":

Transcript 6. 1 - Fluency

	Ms D	Fluency for me is if you can read a sentence smoothly (.)
65		um you're not stopping and starting after every word. You're not sounding out every word (2) There's a bit of expression in your reading (2) and it's (.) pleasant to listen to.

As was stated in Chapter 3 teachers generally acknowledged that fluency was an important characteristic of 'good' readers however, they often had difficulty describing what fluency was (Martinez et al., 1998/99). Definitions of reading fluency also differed in the literature (Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Klenk & Kibby, 2000; Rasinski, 1989; Schreiber, 1980; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Ms D's definition reflected the definition put forward by Galbraith and Clayton that was simply "the ability to read easily and smoothly" (1998, p. 99).

Ms D said that she also found oral reading useful to help students understand instructions. She often asked students to read out instructions on worksheets that the students were required to do. In this sense it was not teaching the students how to read but rather using oral reading to ensure they followed and understood instructions.

I asked Ms D if oral reading helped students to improve their reading generally. She indicated that it was useful to develop confidence, fluency and expression. Ms D claimed it was important for students because regular oral reading helped them to overcome their "embarrassment":

Transcript 6. 2 - Improve confidence

50	J	So do you think it's an important thing for children as well?
	Ms D	(1) I think it's important cause they also overcome their um (1) they don't feel so embarrassed=
	J	=Uh hum=
55	Ms D	=to read to a crowd. If they do it on a regular basis they get used to the kids in the class and it's not such a shame thing for them=
	J	=Uh hum so they actually=
	Ms D	=their confidence build to speak to a crowd and (1)

Ms D acknowledged that there were always a "handful of students" who did not like to read out-loud in front of their peers. However, she said that she told them it was important to develop their confidence and fluency and that they must "give it a go":

Transcript 6. 3 - Giving it a go

115	Ms D	=Yeah it does because they normally when I start an oral reading thing there are about a handful that don't want to do it
	J	Uh huh
	Ms D	They're too shy. Oh I don't want to do it. They feel that
120		their reading skills are not good enough=
	J	=Mm=
	Ms D	=to read to a class so I tell them that no you have to give it a go. Your first few goes won't be that flash but the more you do it the better you feel (.) um you're not so shy anymore and you do feel you can do it so its something I do say you have to=

The teacher felt oral reading was very important for students in her class who she described as "stage 2" readers and that by this stage they should be able to do it well. She believed it was something that should begin in the "early years" of school. Data from the teacher questionnaires also suggest that teachers perceived oral reading as important in the early years.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the students' perspectives on oral reading and its relation to 'confidence' building. Most of their comments provided an

alternative view of the 'usefulness' of oral reading as a means to establish confidence.

Ms D described a "reading recount" activity as a regularly used oral reading activity in her classroom. A full discussion of this activity occurs later. She said that she rarely listened to students read individually and that they rarely read together in pairs. Although she sometimes used parents and teaching assistants to provide remedial help for students who struggled.

The students interviewed also spoke about reading to parents and about some students who read with Miss S, who was a literacy support teacher in the school at the time. Similarly, they also reported never reading to their teacher on an individual basis.

Ms D said that she used oral reading as a means to assess reading. I asked her if there were any other ways, she did this. She said she did this through the students' writing:

Transcript 6. 4 - Using oral reading

	J	Main two. How do you you've already said that you use oral reading to assess a child's reading um what other ways do you assess um a child's reading ability?
140	Ms D	Through their writing
	J	Uh huh=
	Ms D	=so um (.) when they write well and they have to read what they write to class
	J	Uh hum
145	Ms D	(2) then I see that they how good understanding (1) of both. They sort of both together aren't they=
	J	=cause reading and [writing=
	Ms D	[are both
	J	=they're very hard to separate
150	Ms D	so if they write something. I ask them to read it to the class it makes them proofread what they've written
	J	Uh hum
	Ms D	They realise what words they've left out=
	J	=Yeah=
155	Ms D	=when they're reading aloud. Then they say oops I'll fix this or (.) I left this out that's the whole idea. They notice their own mistakes.

The students interviewed did not identify the ways in which Ms D assessed them although one student, Nick was certain Ms D did this by looking at their reading record chart.

Ms D described 'good' readers generally as those who read 'fluently', with expression and understanding. She added later that it was important for 'good' readers to "enjoy" their reading and to develop a "love for books". These were similar to the ways in which the students interviewed from Ms D's class described a 'good' reader. The students mentioned "enjoyment", "speaking clearly" and "loudly" and reading with "expression". However, unlike their teacher the students did not mention "understanding" as an important characteristic.

As stated earlier Ms D spoke in detail about a "reading recount" activity used regularly in her classroom. Since the students interviewed also spoke about this activity and this was the oral reading activity observed in this classroom, it warrants closer examination.

Reading recount activity

Ms D discussed an oral reading activity that happened every day after recess. Each child had a specific day to read. When it was their nominated day, they would have their written recounts of their weekend, which they wrote on the Monday ready to read to the rest of the class. All of the students sat on the floor and there was a chair positioned at the front of the class for the reader. The following data detail the procedural aspects of the activity, which was similar to both my observations and the students' interviewed, descriptions of the activity:

Transcript 6. 5 - Reading recounts

Ms D   So after recess (1) the children all come in (1) um they sit down on the floor (1). The ones who are meant to read on the day have their recounts ready (2) Their writing books ready (1). Um they start reading (1) and the audience has to sit and listen (1)=

Following this, I asked Ms D if there were any rules associated with the activity. She emphasised the importance of the other students displaying good

listening skills during the reading. The students interviewed also said this was important and added that a consequence for breaking this rule was to have their name written on the board for "listening skills".

According to the teacher, the role of the reader was to read when required. She mentioned that some students did not always want to read. Ms D told the students they had to but that she would help them if they needed it.

The students interviewed mentioned that the teacher helped them with words they did not know and that she reminded them about taking note of punctuation and speaking clearly and loudly during their reading. The role of the other students was to listen, be polite and have some questions for the reader:

Transcript 6. 6 - Different roles

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        Ms D   =and the audience has a job to do to listen and be polite
220            (1) and actually have questions. They might have
               questions to ask (2) and the readers' job (1) is just to read.
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It is interesting that Ms D described the readers' role as "just" to read which again suggests that it was possibly a relatively unimportant role and correct ways of behaving such as listening to others and being polite were of more importance. Baker has described the classroom as a physical and social space, which is a "morally organised course of action". She claimed that teachers and students assembled "classroom order" as a "framework" for participatory "rules" and "procedure" (Baker, 1997). In this instance listening and displaying "good" manners were important aspects of this literacy event.

I asked Ms D about the instructional benefits of the activity. She first outlined the instructional benefits for the listeners who she felt learned "manners", "respect for others" and tolerance of others point of view". The instructional benefits for the reader included developing their "fluency", improving their "reading and proof-reading skills":

Transcript 6. 7 - Benefits

Example 1

150   Ms D   so if they write something. I ask them to read it to
                the class it makes them proofread what they've written
        J   Uh hum
        Ms D   They realise what words they've left out=

Example 2

        Ms D   Right um for the listeners I feel they're learning (.)
                manners=
230   J   =Uh huh=
        Ms D   =respect for others um (.) listening to other points of
                view (1) taking turns (1) and from the readers' point of
                view I'd say they're hopefully learning (.) to develop
                their fluency (1) improve their reading skills.

Finally, Ms D said that the activity was useful for her to assess students'
reading. I asked her if she kept records of the students' progress and she said
that she kept "mental" records:

Transcript 6. 8 - Mental records

        Ms D   I do I because it's done weekly I see the progress from
255   the start of how they used to be. The first few turns to the
                end result
        J   Uh huh
        Ms D   And um yeah I do I see that they come up or=
        J   =Do you keep records of or notes on them or at any
260   time?=
        Ms D   =Yeah I just keep a mental=

Farrer Primary: Year 4/5

Mr W was a senior teacher at the school with more than twelve years
teaching experience at the time of the interviews. His teaching was mainly in
the middle and upper primary areas of the school.

Mr W described his classroom as a "reading orientated room." He further
added that because of this the students "showed improvement consistently
throughout the year.

According to Mr W, his reading program consisted of silent reading, a
paired oral reading activity and the various assignments the students were
required to do which included their novel studies. He also spoke about Mrs S, a
literacy support teacher who provided remedial help for some students.

He claimed that students read out-loud at least twice a week and that they did this after lunch or recess. They read out-loud in all curriculum areas but mostly language. They often read individually to the teacher and they sometimes participated in "round robin" reading, reading conferences, shared reading and oral book reports. He believed that oral reading was very important but that it had greater importance in the early years because it gave students "confidence" in their own reading ability. He added that in middle primary teachers would "just do an enhancement job on it." Further, by the upper primary years it "could lead to public speaking."

He said that he felt it was very important for students to be able to read out-loud and to be able to "stand up in front of a group of people". He also claimed it was useful to assess readers:

Transcript 6. 9 - Assessing reading

115	Mr W	Because I get to hear how they read in terms of intonations and the style they're reading, whether they pick up the parts where there's speech in the sentences. And if they come across a word it's nice to see how they do word attack with the actual – you know, with the
120		actual words, especially ones in the lower groups who are not as talented as the speedy ones.

I asked him to elaborate further on his reading assessment strategies. He claimed that he did this by listening to students read and by monitoring their progress via anecdotal records.

Transcript 6. 10 - Describing 'good' readers

	J	So if you were going to describe someone who you thought was a good reader, what sort of characteristics
220		do you think those kids have? We're not talking oral reading only but about reading generally .
	Mr W	Confidence in what they're doing. Expression while they're reading, and let's say – or they make a little
225		sound at the end when you say, "That's enough" and they say "Oh, can I keep going because I really like to read".
	J	So a desire to continue reading?
	Mr W	Yes. Keenness to keep reading like that, you know.

The students interviewed mentioned a number of different oral reading skills when they described a 'good' reader. They also said it was important to "enjoy" their reading.

During the interview, Mr W spoke in detail about an oral reading activity that occurred twice weekly. This warrants further discussion since students discussed this activity during the interviews and I observed this oral reading activity in Mr W's classroom.

Paired reading with teacher

Mr W described an oral reading activity that occurred twice weekly after lunch at the time of the interviews. It was a mix of both silent reading and oral reading. When students were not reading to the teacher in a 'paired' reading situation they read quietly to themselves.

He explained that he divided the class into three groups based on ability. At the beginning of the school year, he tested the students using the Chanel and Waddington diagnostic reading tests. Teachers surveyed also mentioned using these tests as a means to assess students' reading. This helped him to group the students. He also said that half way through the year he moved some students to another group if they had shown improvement:

Transcript 6. 11 - Reading levels

	Mr W	Yeah, and myself. The group is originally based on testing earlier in the year, and sometimes I just have to
255		take a stab, if they're all virtually together in terms of their scores, I'll just make an educated guess of where they should be but sometimes throughout the year there is a lot of changing going on because the lower group doesn't want to be the lower group they will want to be
260		in the middle group or the higher group cause their oral reading skills have improved so much. And that's the case with probably 2 or 3 of them, to change those again for the second semester.

The students interviewed spoke about ability groups and how the teacher displayed the membership of these groups on the cupboard door. They also discussed how students moved not only up a level but also, down a level.

Two other adults Miss R and Mrs M assisted with the activity. One of these was a teacher's aide and the other an office assistant. Mr W described how the students sat on the floor near the teacher they were reading to on the day:

Transcript 6. 12 - Paired reading

	Mr W	Yeah, either sitting around on the floor or in the desks where they're actually grouped. Sometimes when
285		they're doing quiet reading I'll say – I'll call the children up to me from each of the groups and they can read to me in amongst that silent reading group.
	J	Oh ok.
	Mr W	Or silent reading time.
290	J	So in that oral reading time the same thing, the kids are in separate groups and they just read to themselves or something, is that right?
	Mr W	Yeah, and they know exactly where to go. Yeah.

He also explained how Mrs M insisted that the students establish a reading order before reading:

Transcript 6. 13 - Paired reading

| 230 | Mr W | When we have reading in the 3 groups that we have every day, and they know where to go and who to read to, and if I make a mistake in the rotation of the groups they'll quickly pick up and say "No, we want to come and read to you down the front here", so I'll quickly get |
| 235 | | down there and they'll be struggling to get in position, who goes first, who goes second, cause Lisa Menchi who comes in says "Now you've got to have numbers so you don't jump over each other and get into hot water". |

The students also described this ritual. They told me that some students tried to be last in line so there were fewer students listening to their reading. Mr W provided a different account of this behaviour. As the data show, he perceived their "fighting" for a reading position as an indicator of their enjoyment of the activity.

Finally, Mr W described how the two assistants kept anecdotal records that he compared with his own assessments of the students:

Transcript 6. 14 - Keeping records

| | Mr W | Yes, Rowena does that, Lena does it for me at the end of |

300   each term, just lets me know how they're going with their style and word attack. But Rowena took it upon herself to actually start writing the kid's name and then "needs to read with more confidence; needs to sound out his words; reads too quickly, needs to slow down", stuff like that.

The students also discussed the other adults who assisted with the activity and they spoke about them both as if they were teachers. They also claimed they wrote notes on their reading, which they understood was for assessment purposes.

Farrer Primary: Year 7

Ms E had been teaching for eight years at the time of interviews. She had mainly taught in upper primary and her class was one of four upper primary classes. Ms E said that students did not have the opportunity to read out-loud in her class as often as she would have liked. They did this about two to three times a term during a reading conference which was part of the assessment requirements of their novel-based reading scheme. She thought it was important for students to be able to read out-loud well. Her experience in working with students and their reading led her to suspect that there was a correlation between reading out-loud well, and comprehension:

Transcript 6. 15 - Enhancing comprehension

50   J   Ok Um (2) so (1) how important do you rate sort of oral reading for the children to be able to do that well? Do you think it's a good thing for them to be [able to do

        Ms E   [yes I do because I think it helps them to I think if they can if they
55   can't read (1) well orally they often find it difficult to comprehend their reading I find a lot that the two go together not with all children. You know there are some children that aren't good with their fluency when they read orally yet they can still comprehend well. But I
60   usually find there's a correlation between the two. So I think it's important.

As was stated in the literature review research conducted on the connection between fluency and comprehension has produced inconsistent

results although recent studies suggest that fluency does increase accuracy and comprehension (Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Pinnell et al., 1995).

She also claimed that oral reading was useful for her in a diagnostic sense in that it identified areas of need and helped her to plan future teaching on an individual basis:

Transcript 6. 16 - Diagnostic tool

Ms E It basically (.) it gives me (.) it gives me focus points for
      particular children you know there might be some children who
      are having trouble with spelling and
70   sometimes when they read orally you can see the sort of
      letter patterns that they don't know very well you know
      it might even go back to phonics that they might have
      missed out on when they were very young. So it can
      give me a teaching point. Helps me assess particular
75   problem areas and I know which kids I need to work
      with maybe on a one to one basis for those things

She believed that oral reading was important for all students although she voiced her frustration at students coming to her as an upper primary teacher with limited ability to read competently out-loud. She said that students needed testing on their oral reading frequently in the early years and any problems should be "picked up immediately" and "focussed on".

When asked to describe the characteristics of a 'good' reader Ms E indicated it was important for students to "comprehend what they read", to "pronounce words correctly", to demonstrate "fluency" and to read with "expression". I asked Ms E about her understanding of "fluency":

Transcript 6. 17 - Fluency

Ms E My understanding of fluency would be that when you
      give the child something to read. A piece of text they can
      read without long pauses. To me fluency is what they are
      saying out loud it just flows and it flows in a way that
400   what the child is reading makes sense to them. I just
      think of fluency as flowing.

Ms E's definition differed slightly to that given by Ms D. She implied that understanding was also important and her definition was similar to the way in

which Klenk defined fluency which was the ability to read "smoothly, without hesitation, and with comprehension (2000)

The students interviewed from her class said that a 'good' reader would read clearly, not "mumble", use "expression" and display "confidence". The students did not include 'understanding' in their descriptions of a 'good' reader, however they did discuss their teacher checking their 'understanding' of the texts they read during reading conferences.

Ms E commented that she assessed students' reading throughout the various components of her novel based reading scheme. During the interview, Ms E discussed two different reading activities in detail. These included a novel based reading scheme and silent reading. She also mentioned that she occasionally read to the students solely for enjoyment

Fostering an "enjoyment " of reading was high on this particular teacher's agenda. She also felt it enhanced their writing skills, writing ideas and punctuation. However, she believed that some students found it more difficult to comprehend text when reading silently as is explained in the following excerpt from the data:

Transcript 6. 18 - Comprehending text

	J	Um and you said that you found oral reading helps children to understand what they're reading. Yeah not all children but a lot of children. Do you think there's
405		children who are reading silently but perhaps not understanding what they're reading when they're [reading silently.
	Ms E	[Yes yes and it happens to me. I know if I'm busy there might be a lot of things on my mind sometimes
410		you'll read a paragraph and all of sudden you'll just think what did I just read and you have to go back and read it again=
	J	Uh huh=
	Ms E	=Um I think there's a lot of children that don't have that
415		skill. Their eyes are just their eyes are going over the words but they don't really (.) you know if you said what did you just read and what was that about on particular days and they might not be able to tell you.

It appeared that the assumption that some students found comprehension difficult when reading silently came from both her

observations of students reading in this way and from her own experiences as a 'reader'.

A discussion of reading novel-based reading scheme that has an oral reading component follows.

Novel-based reading scheme

Ms E described a reading activity that she called her "novel based reading scheme". This activity incorporated most of Ms E's reading program. Each student needed to complete at least two novel studies per term. The activity comprised five different sub-activities. They included students reading a novel independently, writing a book report, completing two other written activities of their choice, participating in a reading conference with the teacher which involved reading a page of the text to the teacher and engaging in a discussion about the text and presenting an oral book report to the class. She also said that if she could get whole class sets of a novel they did a whole class novel study where each student read the same book. They read the book as a class in a "round robin" fashion. She emphasised the fact that students were not "forced" to do this. Students discussed a previous term where they had read the novel "The Cay" by Theodore Taylor as a whole class.

Students followed general classroom rules during the activities such as making a "minimum amount of noise" and "sitting at their desks". Ms E said that the main two learning outcomes for the activity were for students to develop "a love of reading" and to "enhance comprehension". It was also useful to expose students to different genres, which helped with their writing of these. She also believed it served to enhance spelling, punctuation and grammar and believed that students who were 'good' readers or who enjoyed reading tended to be better spellers. Further, the various activities helped her to assess each student's reading:

Transcript 6. 19 - Novel-based reading scheme

	J	(3) Um Ok so you've said how the activity's useful. What
290		do you think the children learn from the activity? You've already said that you're hoping it will foster their enjoyment of of reading. What else would they learn

		from it?
	Ms E	Um I try to encourage the kids to look at different
295		genres=
	J	=Uh huh=
	Ms E	=so I think if if they're exposed to a lot of different genres
		it helps them when I ask to write a narrative. Um you
		know an adventure story or you know whatever it might
300		be so I think it helps them with their writing skills. And
		also you know they're looking at spelling. They're
		looking at punctuation. You know when you talk to the
		kids about speech marks all you have to do is say look
		open your novel and have a look. Where do the speech
305		marks go=
	J	=yeah=
	Ms E	=so I think it covers love of reading, teaches them
		comprehension, writing skills, punctuation, spelling. I
		find a lot of the children who are good readers or who
310		enjoy reading. They tend to be the better spellers=
	J	=right=
	Ms E	=so I think there's a link there.

She claimed that most of the students enjoyed doing the novel study but like any classroom activity there were a "handful" who did the novel study simply because they had to. A discussion of each of the sub-activities comprising the activity follows.

Reading the book

The teacher said that the students needed to choose a "novel". She did not allow comics and magazines; however, the novel could be any genre. They read the book during two time slots designated each week for the program, during silent reading time and at home. There was an expectation that the students read their novel at home for at least twenty minutes each night:

Transcript 6. 20 - Rules

120	Ms E	=it's not allowed to be a magazine or a comic book um (.)
		ah so one thing I specify it must be a novel. It can be any
		genre that they like. Um and then they have to read the
		book and some kids [ ] the children should read the
		book during silent reading time at school and also at
125		home as part of their homework. I expect them to
		read for say twenty minutes every night of the week.

I asked Ms E if she assisted students with their choice of reading material. She said that she asked them to show it to her. She then "flicked" through it to check whether it was appropriate:

Transcript 6. 21 - Choice of reading material

190   J   Ok so (.). Do you (.) um assist the kids choosing novels (.) or do they just do it on their own?

       Ms E   Um basically when they've chosen a book I ask them to bring the book to me and I have a look at you know I have a look at the cover. I flick through it. I look at the

195   you know what genre it is and I look at the subject matter. Whether or not it's appropriate and um jus the size of the book cause you get some children that deliberately choose very thin (.) very simple novels. Um and a um usually I let them do that once and then if they

200   do it again (.) and I think they're capable of a more challenging novel I usually say no pick a better novel.

The students mentioned the fact that they would like a greater choice of reading material during silent reading time. There appeared to be a number of restrictions on the choice of reading material for this activity. The instructions written for students about the activity stated: "Make sure you choose a book that you are going to find interesting and not "give up on". Students understood that this "book" must be a novel and not a magazine or comic even although this was not stated. However, as the above data show, after choosing their novel the teacher had a number of undisclosed criteria by which she assessed the "appropriateness" of the book. These included genre, subject matter and level of difficulty. The students did not discuss these criteria, which suggested students did not have an explicit understanding of them.

Writing the report

After completing their reading, students wrote a book report, which included information about the setting, characters and plot. At the conclusion of their report, they gave the book a score out of ten, which they justified in writing:

Transcript 6. 22 - Book report

                Ms E   Ok um (1). They have to fill out a book report and the book report it's sort of like a book review. And they have

135		to talk about um the setting of the story. So they describe the setting. Where did the story take place? Ah they describe they identify and describe the characters and I try to get them to focus not only on the the physical traits of the characters but I also like them to focus on personality description=
140	J	=Uh hum=
	Ms E	=Um then they talk about the plot basically what was the story about. What were the issues that it dealt with and then they um give the book a score out of ten=
	J	=Uh hum=
145	Ms E	=and recommendation. Who would they recommend the story to and they have to justify the score that they give it. They say oh I give it a six out of ten. They have to tell me why. You know because it was boring or because you know I didn't like the ending or something like that

Written activities

After writing the report, students chose two activities from a list of twenty. These included such things as constructing a story map, making a mobile, designing a new cover, writing a diary kept by one of the characters, writing a new ending and building a model of their favourite part of the story:

Transcript 6. 23 - Fun activities

150		and then they also choose some fun activities to do=
	J	=Uh hum=
	Ms E	=They have a list of activities. And what I do now is they choose two activities to do based on that novel. And they can be art activities or writing activities but it basically
155		the activity show me that they have read the book that they've comprehended the book=
	J	=Mm=
	Ms E	=Um and it might focus on a (1) character or a certain scene from the story.

As the data indicate the purpose of these activities in addition to the "fun" aspect was to assist the teacher in establishing whether students had read the book and comprehended the text.

Reading conference

Another aspect of this activity was the reading conference held with the teacher. During the conference, students read a page of their novel to the teacher and engaged in discussion with the teacher about the text:

Transcript 6. 24 - Reading conference

| | Ms E | And they also another part of the novel based reading they have to read a page of their story or their novel to me at some stage during the process. And um I I question them about the book to see if they've actually |
| 165 | | read it so I might flick through and find a characters name and say "Oh who's Fred and what did Fred do and if they can't tell me then I know they haven't read the book. They've just read the blurb and said oh I've finished. |

The teacher used this time to check whether they had actually read the book, monitored their comprehension of the text and assessed their oral reading skills. Students interviewed also said it was a means for the teacher to check whether they had actually done the reading. During the interview, Ms E explained the specific oral reading skills she assessed during this time:

Transcript 6. 25 - Assessing skills

	Ms E	Um the oral reading um I basically assess children on
240		things like fluency um their their pronunciation whether they're actually saying the words accurately so I guess I'd say fluency, accuracy um volume whether they actually read it with an appropriate volume. Cause some kids are just so quiet cause they lack [confidence
245	J	[I think Harvey said he was a mumbler=
	Ms E	=Yeah yes and I I do they every time they read to me orally I fill out a little [assessment=
	J	[Oh alright
250	Ms E	=and I tick boxes so I have criteria. Then I tick either (a) if they're excellent, (b) if they're good, or (c) if they need to improve.=
	J	=Alright=
	Ms E	=and I think for Harvey for his a (2) ah what was it called
255		just (2) not pronunciation his clarity clarity was the criteria and I actually wrote (c) and I said you tend to mumble so [that=
	J	[he did say that
	Ms E	=that was something he could focus on for the next novel
260		study. Gives them something like an aim or a goal=

As the data show at Lines 265 and 266, Ms E looked for fluency, expression, confidence, accuracy, clarity, and self-correction strategies. The teacher showed me the assessment sheet she completed after the students read. She explained that she provided this feedback to students as it gave them an area to focus on for the next novel study.

Oral book report

In addition to the written report, students presented an oral book report to the class. Again, the teacher had a list of assessment criteria for the activity. These included volume, clarity, fluency, posture and eye contact, confidence, quality of information and keeping to a time limit. She displayed this information on a chart in the room.

Gunn Primary

Gunn Primary was an urban school that had a student population of 450. It catered for Pre-school through to Year 7. School facilities included a library, computer laboratory, school bus, large ovals and play areas. Teaching staff received support from two ESL teachers, a special needs teacher and nine Indigenous tutors.

The school kept abreast of latest trends and development in relation to student needs and curriculum design. Literacy and numeracy were an important part of core business and the school developed explicit teaching programs using both First Steps and Stepping Out resources. Teachers participated in a variety of professional development.

I interviewed three teachers at this school site. They included a Year 3 teacher named, Ms N, a Year 4/5 teacher named, Mr P and a Year 7 teacher named, Ms S. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, were semi-structured and covered a range of issues relating to reading generally and oral reading more specifically.

A discussion of the data from each of these interviews follows. Each of the discussions divides into two main sections. The first looks at how the teachers perceived oral reading in terms of its frequency, use and importance.

The second section discusses their reading programs generally and more specifically some of the oral reading activities they used. Again, this is important since there is reference made to these activities throughout the student interview data and the observation data.

Gunn Primary: Year 3

Ms N had been teaching for five years at the time of the interviews. Most of her experience was in the Early Childhood area, however she did teach upper primary during one year. Ms N said that students in her class read out-loud on a daily basis although not every student would do this. They would be most likely to do this during their reading groups. She said that she rated oral reading "highly" and that she felt it was important to foster the ability to do this early:

Transcript 6. 26 - Confidence

| 55 | Ms N | It's important overall but (2) I think you should get em while they're young. They should be confident in their own place in the room and their own place in the school and their own (2) particularly in the classroom because that's their home for most of the year so they should be |
| 60 | | able to (2) express and read in front of their peers. |

Oral reading was useful for her as a teacher as it allowed her to gauge students' understanding of the text and to assess their reading generally. She claimed that it was important to develop "confidence", "understanding" and "expression" in readers.

She believed it was particularly beneficial for the "confident" readers but that it could be a "stressful ordeal" for the less confident readers:

Transcript 6. 27 - Reducing stress

	Ms N	=the contents or the context or (2) the (2) whether or not
25		they're comfortable reading out loud. If they're not then I don't ask them to till they're ready. Um (2) it's good for them the ones that are confident you can always pick the confident ones (2) it is nice for them to (1) have that little bit of a boost.
30	J	Uh huh
	Ms N	in front of their peers. And it's nice (3) when it works for

		those kids it is yeah it's nice for them to correct help correct other kids and pick up on other things that. The children don't like reading out loud that can be a real
35		stressful ordeal.
	J	So how is it useful for children then?
	Ms N	Um well depending on the child (2) in small groups it's a less stressful with their little mates peers how I had mine set up. They were all fairly of an equal level.
40	J	Yep
	Ms N	In their groups. So there was no (2) I'm embarrassed because she can read the whole book and I can't whereas the struggling readers were struggling along together and helping one another and getting a real kick out of
45		finding the answers together

As the data suggest Ms N claimed the graded nature of the reading groups was beneficial in helping the less confident readers, as students in each group were relatively equal in terms of ability.

Ms N said that she assessed her readers by making anecdotal notes, both mental and written as students read to her. She also had recently used a checklist given to her by another teacher where she indicated what sounds they heard, whether or not they used contextual clues and if they paid attention to beginnings and endings of words. Further, she conducted running records once or twice a year and kept the comprehension activities they completed. She often listened to students read during silent reading sessions.

When I asked her to describe the characteristics of a 'good' reader generally she said that they would enjoy the task, understand what they read and be able to discuss what they had read critically:

Transcript 6. 28 - Describing 'good' readers

	J	Ok so how. If you were going to describe someone who was a good reader um what sorts of things would they
105		do (1) and this is generally.
	Ms N	Um (3) they'd enjoy it.
	J	Uh huh
	Ms N	They'd understand what they're reading. (2) Um they wouldn't have to agree with it but
110	J	Uh hum
	Ms N	just they could do it (2) um they'd be able to think about it afterwards.
	J	Uh hum
	Ms N	And talk about it afterwards. (3) Form opinions. (4) Yeah

It is interesting Ms N did not mention characteristics such as "confidence" and "expression" although she had identified these earlier as being important oral reading skills to develop. It is possible that this teacher viewed oral reading and reading as two distinct practices.

Reading groups

Ms N described a reading group activity that comprised a number of different sub-activities. These included reading independently, reading in a small group, reading to the teacher and completing written comprehension and grammar activities. She explained that she divided the class into four groups based on ability although there was room for movement between groups. Each group had an animal name which students also mentioned during the student interviews.

She indicated that one group, comprising the better readers, read the "Cracker" series, which she described as "little novel books" that "came with the questions and things". The second group read Level 7 "Story Chest" and the third group read Level 3 "Story Chest". "Story Chest" was a more recent basal reader series at the time of the interviews. The fourth group comprised mainly ESL and special education students. I asked her further about this group as the students interviewed mentioned that the ESL students did not come to school very often. She said this was the case although there would be at least two students present from that particular group of four students on any given day. The group comprised all boys and an ESL teacher provided support for this group of students.

I asked Ms N about the procedural aspects of the activity. She said that first they read the text as a group. Following this, students discussed the text and then completed a number of comprehension and grammar activities related to the text. She stressed the importance to students of reading through the question sheet before commencing the questions:

Transcript 6. 29 - Responsibilities

Ms N   And then they would go through the question sheet

230	because I would stress please read the questions before so you know what you're doing. And if you don't understand what you're doing ask me or Mrs R. And um (1) because even though she's there to work with them she told me that she was willing to [ ] questions from the other kids. (1) And after they asked if there was any
235	questions on the activity they didn't understand. And when we got all that sorted out then they would work together as a group. To go through and it was things like finding nouns or=

This was similar to the Year 3 teacher at Farrer Primary who also made reference to using oral reading as a means to understand the instructions for written tasks they had to complete.

In addition, each group read to the teacher in a small group context and she sometimes read individually with students. According to Ms N, she had a specific day assigned to each group:

I asked her about the rules for the activity. She said that she was a bit of a "stickler" for rules. Students could not interrupt any other groups, they had to stay in their groups and follow general classroom rules such as showing respect and listening to each other. The students interviewed also discussed the importance of listening to each other and one student in particular told me how their group enacted management strategies when the teacher was not present. When I observed this activity the level of cooperation and autonomy within each of the groups surprised me.

Ms N explained the instructional benefits of the activity to me during the interview. She said the activity helped them to learn to enjoy books; that it enhanced their comprehension skills; it assisted in their working together cooperatively and it increased their levels of perseverance:

Transcript 6. 30 - Instructional benefits

	Ms N	Um to enjoy books. To enjoy reading. I don't know whether that (1) got to all of them but most of them did. (1) Um (1) to be able to (2) understand text (2)
	J	Uh hum
275	Ms N	to get information from it as well as enjoy it.
	J	Yeah
	Ms N	And um (1) to work together. (2) Which is not actually not a reading one

This activity had a wide range of instructional benefits which go beyond "learning to read" according to Ms N. It assisted in students' ability to read by developing their comprehension skills, it developed "perseverance", a disposition valued by this teacher and it encouraged students to work together, an important aspect of being a member of this classroom community.

Ms N claimed to keep all of the written activities the students completed and this helped her to figure out if there were any other areas such as "syllables" that needed attention. Ms N did not mention the reading out-loud sub-activities of this activity as useful strategies for the assessment of students' reading. In this sense, the activity was also beneficial in a diagnostic way.

Gunn Primary: Year 4/5

Mr P had been teaching for five years at the time of the interview. Most of his teaching was in the upper primary area and this was the first year he had taught a middle primary class. Mr P explained that students read out-loud in his class at least twice each week during their whole class novel study and that they read out-loud to him individually during silent reading.

Mr P said that oral reading was useful for students because it assisted them with developing their confidence, that it helped them with unfamiliar words and that other readers modelled effective reading to those who struggled with the task.

He did not believe there were any ages or stages of reading development when it was more important to read out-loud. He attempted to develop the way students projected their voice and how they used expression through the various oral reading activities he used.

When I asked Mr P how he assessed a students' reading he said that he used running records at least once or twice a year, the whole class "round robin" reading activity and the comprehension activities they completed after the reading:

Transcript 6. 31 - Assessment

190   J   So you've talked about running records with children. So
               what sorts of assessment records do you keep in terms of
               kids reading? So you [sort
      Mr P   [as in their work [or
      J   [yeah. So how do
195   you sort of put that picture together?
      Mr P Um (2) so to get the levels where their at. You got your
               running records and then (1) um like examples of work
               that I keep that if (1) um (2) story predictions where they
               think the story's leading. Story maps there they're always
200   a good one.

He described 'good' readers as expressive and as those who 'understood' what they read. Interviewed students mentioned both understanding and expression in their descriptions of 'good' readers.

Mr P described two reading activities in detail including a silent reading and a whole class round robin activity. A discussion of the "round robin" reading' activity follows.

Whole class round robin reading

Twice a week Mr P conducted a whole class "round robin" reading activity using a novel they were studying at the time. The class was reading the "Wicked" series by Paul Jennings at the time of the interviews and classroom observations. Mr P explained that each session began with some questions about what they had read in the previous session, which helped to set the context for the reading.

He explained that he would go around the circle and each child was required to read a "reasonably sized paragraph to half a page" of the text. Some days he changed the reading order and picked students "randomly" so the students did not know when it was their turn to read. He believed this helped to ensure that students followed the text whilst others read. I told him that the students interviewed were under the impression that their position on the class roll established the reading order. He agreed this might have happened on one occasion:

Transcript 6. 32 - Round robin reading

	Mr P	Um and the other kids would follow on and then if I
135		noticed that someone wasn't following on you'd sort of
		bring it their attention and then um on any other given
		day I might just go randomly around the circle so the
		kids didn't know=
	J	=Uh huh=
140	Mr P	=who's going to um be reading next. So they had to
		actually follow the story.
	J	The kids sort of thought were under the impression you
		went down the roll. (1) When you called them out.
	Mr P	No
145	J	No ((laughter)) That's what they [said
	Mr P	[Oh that might have
		been on one occasion yeah. I sort of tried to vary it a bit .
		Yeah no um ((laughs)) I varied it around a little bit so
		more often that not it's just going around the circle to
150		whoever was next.

The activity was useful for him as a teacher because he could hear when students had trouble with particular words, whether they used strategies such as "sounding out" and "reading on" and how confident they were. Further, he claimed that he sometimes kept anecdotal records during the activity and that this helped him to assess students' reading.

Mr P explained that the activity was useful for students because it helped them to learn new words and to gain an understanding of them.

He said that the activity was not "stressful" for students because they were encouraged to help each other:

Transcript 6. 33 - Helping each other

175		just (3) gain its not put in a situation where that the stress
		levels I don't think were that high and=
	J	=Uh hum=
	Mr P	=And it was explained at the start that if you get in
		trouble you lift your head up and you have any number
180		of kids will be willing to help.

The teacher's role in the activity was to nominate the next reader, assist students with unknown words, to monitor the class for students not following the text and initiate discussion about the text. The student's role was to read

when required, follow the text, assist others with unknown words and to participate in discussions initiated by the teacher.

Gunn Primary: Year 7

Ms S had been teaching for thirteen years at the time of the interviews. She had often acted in a senior teaching role and taught one of the two Year 7 classes. Most of her teaching had been in the middle and upper primary areas of the school. Ms S said that students read out-loud in her class each day. This included reading out-loud in a variety of curriculum areas including English and Mathematics. She felt it was important for students to read out-loud in the early years of school as long as the activities were enjoyable. Ms S also said that she did not force students to read out-loud:

Transcript 6. 34 - Participation

25	Ms S	Cause um sometimes as a reader myself quite often I get
		embarrassed aloud because I like to read ahead quickly
		or I like to rehearse my reading as I'm doing it by myself
		with my eyes so a child would possibly do the same
		thing. So but some children are more confident to read
30		and share and then another person is quite happy to sit
		back and just listen and I'll support that=

She said that oral reading was useful for her because it helped her to establish whether students used the various cueing systems, how fluent they were and their degree of understanding. Ms S said that she allowed the students to choose the material they read to her as this helped to prevent barriers being set up. She felt students' familiarity with the text was important:

Transcript 6. 35 - Familiarity with the text

	J	Um (2) and [what
	Ms S	[in terms of the article I think the child
75		should select the material that they're going to read to
		you as well. I don't think you like sure enough you want
		to gauge what levels or whatever you're at but if you
		have a choice of reading material then that child reads
		from that selection. Not read this. That instantly puts a
80		barrier.

I asked Ms S if there were any oral reading skills she thought were important to develop in students. She felt that "expression" and "punctuation" were important:

Transcript 6. 36 - Developing skills

| | Ms S | I think expression. And you're making them cue into grammar of text like speech marks the ah exclamation marks. So you're making them use expression so your making them look for meaning of how to interpret it if |
| 55 | | you like. Yeah more than just getting the meaning of the story. You're making them practice out loud with all the enthusiasm that the author intended. |

One of the students interviewed mentioned the teacher placed a strong emphasis on developing "punctuation skills" in her reading group.

When asked about how she assessed students' reading Ms S said that she conducted running records, listened to students read, used the comprehension activities they did during the "reading group" activity and had students conduct self-assessment. She collected all this information and kept it in a portfolio.

I added that students interviewed spoke about a folder not seen by them which they thought was given to their high-school teachers in the following year. She laughed and responded to these comments in the following way:

Transcript 6. 37 - Work folder

	J	Cause in the interviews the students talked about a folder that you had that goes to high school. But they don't see. Is that another folder that's got stuff in it?
220	Ms S	((laughs)) That folder we it's like that's what we kept and we always said you had to put all your work in there because we were going to show the high school teachers [what they=
	J	[Oh Ok
225	Ms S	=there's a bit of bribery there ((laughs))
	J	OK
	Ms S	But they did use it and it was just a samples kept in that yeah ((laughs))
	J	OK. It's interesting the way they talk about it=
230	Ms S	=Oh yeah that shows the importance of it. I do it now.

Ms S described a 'good' reader as someone with "good" "quick" eye movement. She added that they were able to avoid "distractions" in the room

and were "totally engrossed in the reading process". She claimed she often saw them "dart their eyes backwards and forward" as they read and reread paragraphs to find information. She summed this by saying a 'good' reader would "tend to the book".

Reading groups

Ms S spoke about a small group reading activity that occurred twice weekly comprising of a number of sub-activities including small group "round robin" reading, oral discussion of the text and written comprehension based activities. She divided the class into three groups based on ability. The "top" group worked with students in the adjoining Year 7 class and read the novel "The Diary of Anne Frank" at the time of the interviews. The second group (which I observed) worked with her and read "Two Weeks with the Queen". The third group comprising mostly English as a second language students (ESL) worked with an ESL teacher in another room. In relation to rules associated with the activity, Ms S said that there was an expectation that "all work would be submitted" and that it was "completed to the best of their ability."

In Ms S's group students would begin the activity by participating in a small group "round robin" reading of the text. She felt that readers in this particular group needed to develop confidence. She also read during the activity and claimed she did not force students to read. In addition to developing confidence, she wanted the readers to "enjoy" reading the book. She felt that "Two Weeks with the Queen" was successful in achieving this because it was a "humorous" book. During the reading, students discussed aspects of what they had read and she attempted to develop their ability to make "inferences":

Transcript 6. 38 - Small group reading

	Ms S	Probably with this group they needed to build their
130		confidence. Needed to make them want to read to make
		them have enjoyment from the book. So we do some
		often I was the reader because they were very reluctant
		readers any way. But by me being the reader then they
		could get enjoyment out of the book and feel um with
135		Gleitzmann he's such a humorous author anyway that
		they had suddenly began to click in with it. Then we'd go

back to what I really wanted them to get out of that chapter or
whatever or we'd go back to it during activity
like inferring or making meaning in another way.'

Following the reading the group broke into smaller groups of four
where students completed written comprehension based activities related to
the text:

I asked Ms S about the instructional benefits of the activity. With this
particular group, in addition to developing their confidence, Ms S tried to
enhance their abilities to make inferences:

Transcript 6. 39 - Making inferences

	Ms S	The group reading activity at that time (1) um was at mine main outcome was to start inferring. That was an explicit outcome I was looking for.
175	J	Yeah
	Ms S	That's what it was. Because it was trying to connect the unit. Making meaning from the knowledge gained from the unit of work on Sex Ed and the relationships and during what was happening in this boys life in this
180		Australian novel.
	J	OK Um (2)
	Ms S	Yeah cause too often kids regurgitate Yeah yeah
	J	So it's just a retell=
	Ms S	=yeah and it was going beyond that and trying to see
185		why how the author's craft yeah yeah. Looking at his humorous ways of looking at a sad situation cause it was a very sad story. How he uses humour to bring personalities out.

The only rules identified by Mr S for this activity was that all work would
be submitted and completed to the best of students' ability.

Summary

All of the teachers interviewed said that oral reading was an important
activity. Five of the six participants reported that students read out-loud at least
once or twice a week and one teacher indicated that students read out-loud
each day. Most teachers rated it as very important and they all claimed that it

should begin in the early years of school. There was a sense of a developmental sequence associated with the ability to read out-loud. In the early years, many said it was important for learning to read and in developing students' confidence as readers. A middle primary teacher reported that at this stage of schooling, teachers should be simply doing an "enhancement job on it" and one upper primary teacher voiced her frustration at students coming to her in Year 7 not being able to read out-loud well. Similar to the questionnaire data many felt that it assisted students in developing their ability to engage in public speaking.

All of the teachers interviewed were very clear about the procedural aspects of the various activities. They reported how students had specific days and times to read and how they read particular suitably levelled texts. Four out of the six teachers organised their reading groups according to ability.

The two early-childhood teachers were more explicit about the rules associated with the various activities discussed. Both emphasised the need for other students to display 'good' listening skills when others were reading and one described how she felt it was important for students to show manners, respect and tolerance for others' ideas. The middle and primary teachers related the rules of the activities to "general" rules in the classroom. There was a sense that there was explicit teaching associated with the rules of each activity during the early years of school and that there was an expectation that students in the middle and upper years already had a good understanding of the rules and that they were expected to follow them.

All of the teachers reported instructional benefits of oral reading. Fluency, proof-reading skills, comprehension, expression, word-attack skills and punctuation were some of the most frequently reported benefits. They also felt that oral reading was useful to develop, enhance or give students confidence in their reading. Some of the teachers also indicated that it fostered an "enjoyment" or "love" for reading. The Year 3 teachers in particular, said it assisted students with developing "listening" skills, collaborative skills, perseverance, manners and respect for others.

Similarly, all of the teachers claimed that oral reading was a useful means to assess readers. Two of the six teachers reported that this was the main way they assessed reading. They said it was useful to gauge fluency, comprehension, the use of word attack strategies and oral reading skills such as expression, volume and punctuation. Most said they recorded these assessments using anecdotal records or checklists although one teacher said she kept mental notes.

Four of the six teachers interviewed suggested that some of the procedural aspects of the various activities and in some cases, the activity itself were a means to hold students accountable. In one of the activities, students established a reading order before reading. This ensured that each student had a turn at the reading. In others, students had specific days to read. In another class, the teacher reported changing the reading order so students could not figure out when it was there turn to read. He did this to ensure students followed the text whilst others were reading. Differently again another teacher reported that it was a means to establish whether in fact students had done the reading.

Finally, three of the teachers acknowledged that the activity of oral reading was "stressful" for some learner readers although they all held slightly different views on this. One said that frequent oral reading helped students to overcome their embarrassment. Two highlighted the fact that they helped to alleviate this stress through the way they organised the activity. Both encouraged others to assist each other during the activity and one felt using ability grouping also made it easier on students. Finally, one teacher said that she did not "force" students to read out-loud.

These data were reflective of the data collected through the teacher questionnaires where teachers also reported a number of instructional and assessment benefits of oral reading. The instructional benefits cited were again more to do with code breaker practices although a small number suggested that oral reading facilitated comprehension.

The following chapter reports on questionnaires administered to the students of the interviewed teachers. The students also reported that oral

reading was a means for them to acquire new skills such as learning new words and using expression. The students unlike their teachers felt that the main purpose of oral reading was for assessment purposes.

CHAPTER 7

A Student Perspective: Students write

In August 2001, I surveyed 122 students using a questionnaire (See Appendix 2). The students came from two different school sites. The first site was Farrer Primary and the second, Gunn Primary. Students surveyed had the same teachers as the students who participated in the interviews in the previous year. I implemented the questionnaires in order to provide a broader view of students' perceptions of oral reading activities. I also used the additional data as a means to check the student interview data in order to gauge whether the interview responses were representative of a larger group.

The survey groups comprised one group of Year 3 students, one group of Year 5 students and one group of Year 7 students from each school site. In total, there were six groups of students, which included 43 Year 3 students, 45 Year 5 students and 34 Year 7 students.

Students answered fifteen questions. (See Appendix 2) Ten of the questions required the students to circle a response. I kept the number of choices to a minimum. For example, three of the questions were simply 'yes' or 'no' responses. Three of the questions were similar to a "Likert scale" in that students were required to indicate whether they did something 'every day', 'weekly', 'not very often' or 'never'. Other items included identifying whether students did most of their reading 'at home' or 'at school'. Five of the questions required students to write a response. For example, Question 7 asked students to circle how they preferred to read. The choices available were, out-loud, silently or not sure. Question 8 required students to explain why they preferred to read the way they chose. The questionnaires referred to oral reading as

'reading out-loud' throughout to avoid any possible confusion between the two terms. I gave a detailed explanation of what it meant to read out-loud and students had the opportunity to ask questions before completing the questionnaire.

Some Year 3 students had difficulty with the questionnaires. They left some questions unanswered and needed more detailed explanations of the various questions. Some also required assistance writing their responses. To help minimise these problems I divided each of the Year 3 groups of students in half and administered the questionnaire to only half the class at a time. In addition, the classroom teacher, a classroom assistant and myself, assisted some students with the writing of their responses. The students answered one question at a time after I had read it out. Students had the opportunity to ask clarify each question. Most students filled out the questionnaire well although some students missed questions.

I administered both the Year 5 and Year 7 questionnaires to the whole class. Like the Year 3 groups, I read each question to the students allowing them time to ask questions. Similar to the Year 3 group we also completed the questionnaire together though a small number of Year 7 students went ahead and completed it independently.

Students did not identify themselves on the questionnaire but placed either a 'G' or 'B' to indicate whether they were 'girl' or a 'boy'.

The questions sought to investigate a number of ideas related to reading generally in the classroom and oral reading more specifically. They covered six different areas: the frequency of reading activities in the classroom; reading preferences; the difference between reading out-loud and silent reading; reading strategies; describing good readers, and the assessment of reading. These areas shape the discussion to follow.

Frequency

Question 3 asked students to indicate whether they read out-loud in school. Ninety-two percent said that they did and 8% indicated 'no'. The small percentage that indicated 'no' was confusing since teachers who said that they

did use oral reading led the classrooms where I surveyed students. One possibility for these responses was that they thought the question referred to how 'they' read rather than the different ways they read in the classroom.

The next question asked students to indicate whether oral reading occurred 'every day', 'weekly', 'not very often' or 'never'. Figure <u>2</u> below represents the students' responses.

Figure <u>27</u> - Frequency of oral reading

Frequency of oral reading
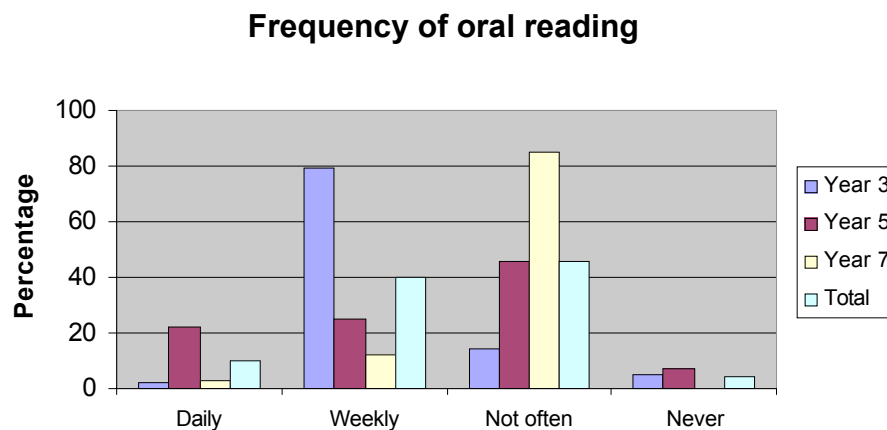
As Figure <u>27</u> shows oral reading occurred more frequently in Years 3 and 5. This is relatively consistent with how the teachers interviewed reported the use of oral reading activities in these classrooms. Both Year 3 teachers reported using it once or twice weekly. Similarly, the Year 4/5 teachers reported its use at least twice weekly. The Year 7 teacher at Farrer Primary reported that students read to her at least twice per term on a formal level and the Year 7 teacher at Gunn Primary reported that one of her reading groups (12 students) read orally twice a week.

Finally, in Question 11 students indicated whether they participated in different reading activities named in a pre-determined list, 'a lot', 'sometimes' or 'never'. The following graph details the responses given.

Figure <u>28</u> - Frequency of reading activities - (N=122)

Frequency reading activities
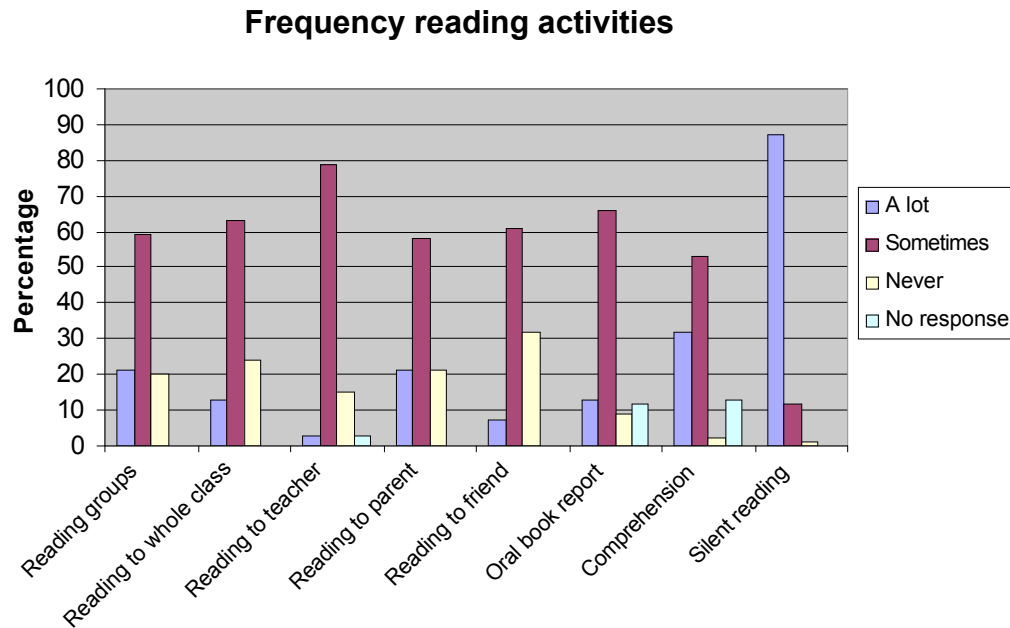
As Figure <u>28</u> shows more than fifty percent of students reported using all of the activities either 'a lot' or 'sometimes'. The students interviewed also described a number of different oral reading activities in which they had participated. It is interesting that 15% of the surveyed students reported 'never' reading to their teacher. This was also evident in the student interviews. In particular, the Year 3 group at Farrer Primary reported never reading to their teacher on an individual basis. Similarly, the group of Year 7 students at Gunn Primary said they only read individually to their teacher around reporting time and the other group of Year 7 students at Farrer Primary only read individually to their teacher twice a term at the completion of their 'novel study'.

Preferred Ways of Reading

Students answered a number of questions that related to their reading preferences. First, students indicated whether they enjoyed reading. Second, they were required to indicate whether they preferred to read out-loud or silently. Students chose between four responses. They were 'out-loud', 'silently', 'both' or 'unsure'. Following this they gave extended responses indicating why they preferred one method to another. Finally, students marked their preferences against a pre-determined list of different reading activities as 'I like it', 'I don't like it' or 'I'm not sure'.

Reading Enjoyment

The first question required students to indicate whether they enjoyed reading. The following graph represents the responses given.

Figure <u>29</u> - Student enjoyment of oral reading

Reading enjoyment
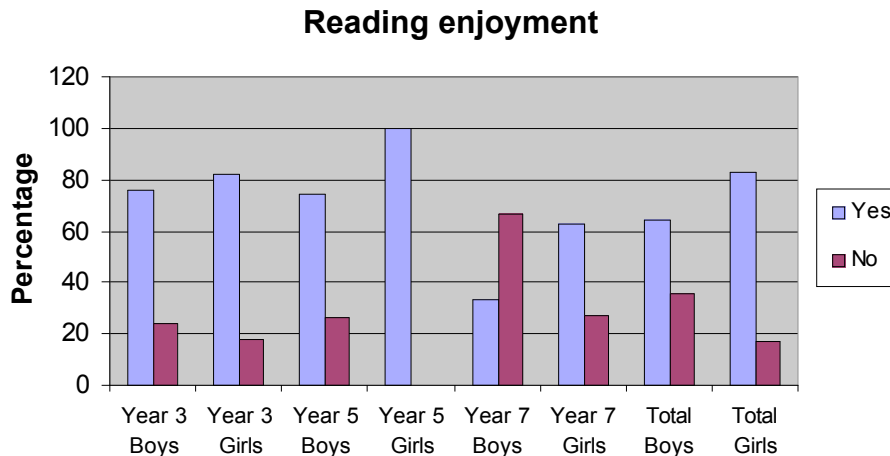
As Figure <u>29</u> shows the boys indicated, particularly in Year 7 that they enjoyed reading less than the girls. However, I did not expect the overall figures to be this high. For example, every Year 5 girl reported enjoying reading yet in the interviews only four out of the seven students said they did. In Question 12 students circled phrases that described themselves as readers. One of the choices was 'I prefer not to read'. Fifteen percent indicated that they preferred not to read'. If this figure is broken down into the various year levels, we find that the preference 'not to read' increased as students moved through the primary school. Five percent of the Year 3's said that they preferred 'not to read', 11% of the Year 5's indicated that they preferred 'not to read' and 32% of the Year 7's indicated that they preferred 'not to read'. What is more interesting is that when these responses are broken down by gender we find that 31% of the boys indicated that they preferred not to read while only 6% of the girls said the same thing. It is probable that these figures were conservative given that younger students often approach a questionnaire with a "test-taking mentality" writing what they believe is the "correct" response (Scott, 2000, pp.104-105). This idea was also evident during the interviews. During the first

interview, I suspected that some answers supplied by students were those they thought I wanted to hear.

During the group interviews four out of the six Year 3 students said they liked to read, four out of the seven, Year 4/5 students said they liked to read and two of the six Year 7 students said they liked to read. In total 10 out of the 19 interviewees enjoyed reading. This figure comprised six girls and four boys. Four out of the seven boys interviewed said they did not like to read and only five of the twelve girls interviewed said the same thing. In fact, all of the Year 7 students interviewed said that they generally only read because they had to. This lends support to the trend shown by the questionnaire data where the number of students who "prefer not to read" increased as students moved through the primary years.

Reading Out-loud versus Reading Silently

Question 7 asked students to indicate how they preferred to read. They had four responses to choose from that included 'out-loud' 'silently', 'not sure' or 'both'. Six percent indicated that they preferred to read 'out-loud', 70% indicated that they preferred to read 'silently', 22% said 'not sure' and 2% reported a preference for 'both'. Most of the 'unsure' answers (67%) came from the Year 3 students. Similarly, 14 of the 19 students interviewed (74%) said that they preferred to read silently. However, the 5 students who said that they did not mind reading out-loud said that if they had a choice they would prefer to read silently.

Students then wrote an extended response detailing why they preferred to read that way. They gave 104 reasons why they preferred to read silently, 11 reasons why they preferred to read out-loud, 14 reasons why they preferred both and 7 reasons for 'unsure'. A discussion of these follows.

Reading silently

As stated earlier, 70% of the students indicated a preference for silent reading. The 104 reasons given fell into four categories. The first, 'Ease of reading' related to the idea that it is easier to read silently. The second, 'Dispositions" incorporated responses which suggested they preferred reading

silently because they lacked 'confidence' or did not like to disclose their reading ability to others. The third, 'Quiet nature', included responses that referred to the quiet nature of silent reading and the fourth, included those responses that were difficult to categorise as they shared no common characteristics:

Figure 30 - Silent reading - (N=99)
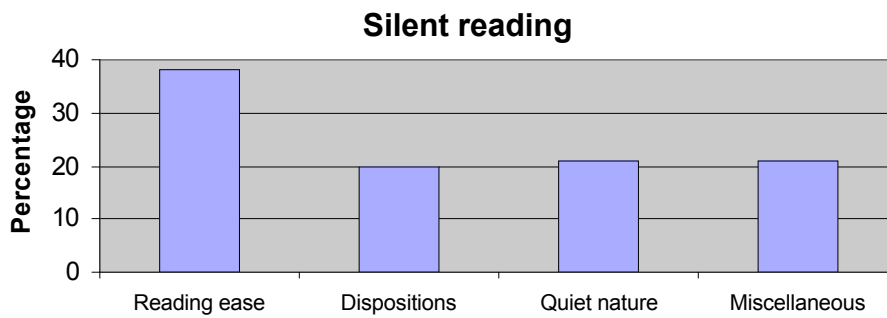
Silent reading

Reading ease

The 39 responses' under this category were categorised further into 'easier', 'reading speed', 'comprehension', 'concentration' and 'miscellaneous'. A number of the responses suggested that students found it quicker to read silently. In fact, 12 students simply said it was 'faster'. Further, students suggested that they also found it easier to 'comprehend' what they read. Some of the responses included "because when I read out-loud it's harder to understand the book", "you understand more", "less confusing" and, "you can put yourself in the characters' situation". Figure 31 details the frequency and the nature of the responses given.

Figure 31 - Reading ease - (N=39)

Reading ease
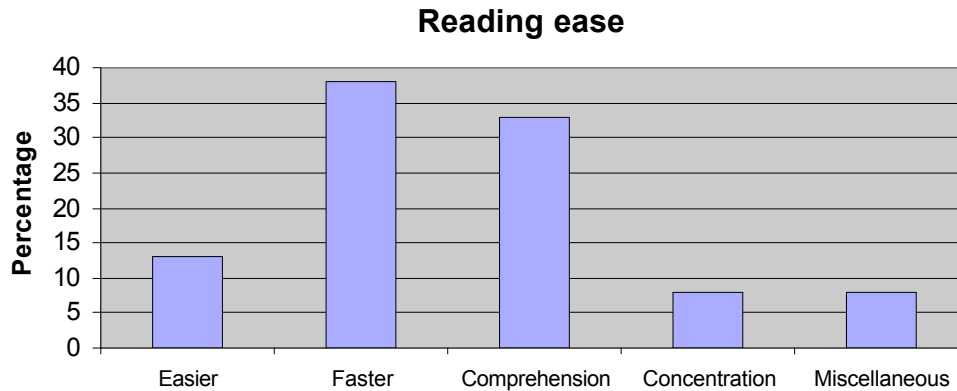
As Figure 31 shows students expressed a preference for silent reading because it was faster and easier to 'comprehend' what they had read. Others simply stated it was 'easier' without explaining why and some suggested it was easier to 'concentrate'. Most students interviewed also said that silent reading was quicker and that it was easier to comprehend what they had read. Only two of the students interviewed said that it was easier for them to concentrate when reading out-loud.

There appears to be some disagreement not only in the literature about the connection between the development of comprehension skills and oral reading but also, between teachers and students. Some teachers claimed that oral reading assisted students in comprehending what they read whereas a large number of students surveyed and interviewed insisted that they found comprehension more difficult when they read out-loud.

Dispositions

Just over 21% of the responses given related to the students' lack of confidence or their preference for not making their ability known to others. Twelve students said that they were 'shy' or that they become 'embarrassed' and eight wrote responses suggesting that they did not like their reading ability to be on display. Some of the responses included, "So no-one can listen to me", "So no-one knows my mistakes", and "Because I am a bad reader and I don't like showing or telling everyone."

Similarly, 12 out of the 19 students interviewed said they preferred reading to themselves because of the 'embarrassing' nature of oral reading. For

some of the students their nervousness caused them to read more slowly, make more mistakes, hindered their comprehension and made them feel uncomfortable. All of the students interviewed said that they did not like making mistakes in front of their peers and that they were more likely to do this when reading out-loud. Again, there is a disjuncture between what teachers and students reported. Teachers claimed that oral reading built students' confidence and students across the primary grades reported that they found it difficult and did not enjoy reading out-loud because of their lack of confidence. Only 4% of teachers surveyed suggested that oral reading was possibly a 'threatening' activity for some students.

Quiet nature

Twenty-two of the 104 responses related to the 'quiet' nature of silent reading. Eight of these responses indicated that students enjoyed the 'quiet', 'relaxing' nature of silent reading. Some of the responses included "it is more peaceful", "it's sleepier", "it makes me calm down", and it's "relaxing."

The remaining 14 responses indicated that students felt silent reading was better because reading out-loud during silent reading would disturb the other readers. These students may have misunderstood the question.

Miscellaneous

The remaining 22 responses fell into the 'miscellaneous' category. They included responses that did not give a detailed reason. For example, three students said it was because they 'like it better' and another said it was 'the way' they 'read'. Others said that they did not know why they liked it better.

Reading out-loud

Students gave ten responses that related to the reasons why they preferred to read out-loud. Three of these indicated that they preferred reading out-loud because other people could enjoy their reading with them. This suggests that these students perceived oral reading as an activity to 'entertain'. The remaining seven reasons related to the idea that the students found it easier. For example, two students claimed that it was easier for them to 'pick up'

on the mistakes they made and another suggested that it was easier to 'concentrate'. During the interviews, there were two female students in particular who thought it was beneficial to read out-loud. Rowena, a Year 3 student from Gunn Primary said that it helped the other children to 'listen' better. Haley, the Year 7 student from Gunn Primary said that it helped her to stay on track and that if she read silently she tended not to concentrate.

Reading Activities

In Question 11 students marked their preference for a number of pre-determined reading activities as 'I like it', 'I don't like it', or 'not sure'. The following graph summarises the data collected.

Figure <u>32</u> - Reading activities - (N=122)

Reading activities
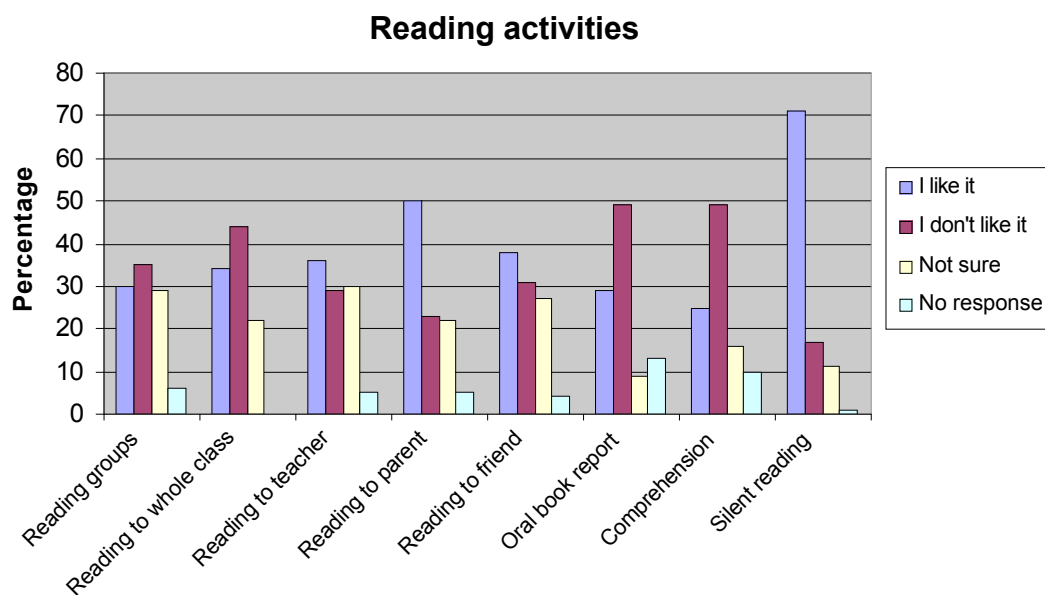
As Figure <u>32</u> illustrates more students disliked rather than liked reading groups, reading to the whole class, oral book reports and comprehension activities. Silent reading and reading to parents, which is also an oral reading activity, were the most liked activities. Similarly, the students interviewed also disliked reading out-loud to large groups of peers. They also preferred reading in a paired reading situation.

Oral Reading versus Silent Reading

Question 9 asked students to determine whether 'silent reading' or 'reading out-loud' was more difficult. Fifteen percent of students said that silent reading was more difficult, 63% said reading out-loud was more difficult and the remaining 21% were unsure. Students then gave extended answers explaining why either silent reading or reading out-loud was more difficult. There were 82 responses explaining why reading out-loud was considered to be more difficult, 13 responses explaining why silent reading was considered to be more difficult and 21 reasons explaining why some students were unsure. The fact that students indicated that reading out-loud was more difficult has implications for the ways in which teachers' assess students' reading. Thirty percent of teachers surveyed reported using oral reading as a means to assess students' reading. One of the teachers interviewed claimed this was the only method she used. If reading out-loud is more difficult then one has to question whether reading out-loud is an accurate way to assess students' reading ability. I will now discuss the reasons given by students for reading out-loud and reading silently.

Reading Out-loud

I divided the responses given into three categories. The first included responses related to the skills needed to read out-loud. The second category included responses that described the affective aspects associated with the activity. I called this category "Dispositions". The third category included those responses that did not fit any of the established categories.

Skills

Sixty-six percent of the responses related to the skills required for reading out-loud effectively. A number of these responses (42%) suggested that it was more difficult because students became 'mixed up' with the words. For example, seven students said, "I get mixed up with words". Another five said they "get confused". Similarly, another five students said, "Sometimes we get the word wrong." Other students commented that the difficulty lay in the fact that they had to attend to 'pronunciation'.

Other reasons suggested that it was difficult because it was 'slower' and it hindered comprehension and concentration. Four students said that the difficulty lay in the fact that they had to pay attention to more than one thing at a time. For example, students said, "Because you have to think about saying the word and think about reading", "Because you have to speak out and sound the letters", "You're doing more things - brain, voice-box, eyes", and "You have to talk as well as reading." The remaining responses included students who simply said that they "don't do it well".

Similarly, the interview data suggested that students found it quicker to read silently, that comprehension was easier and that they had fewer skills to attend to like pronunciation, expression and volume. They added that comprehension was more difficult because they had to attend to oral reading skills such as reading more loudly, pronunciation and expression in addition to reading. They also said that silent reading gave them more time to figure out unknown words. During oral reading sessions, others often supplied them with unknown words before they had the opportunity to work them out for themselves.

Dispositions

Twenty-four percent of the 82 responses related to the 'uncomfortable' nature of some oral reading activities. Students said that it was embarrassing reading in front of a "crowd" and that this makes the task more difficult. Further, they made more mistakes because they were nervous. Students used the words "nervous", "embarrassed", "shy", and "ashamed" in their responses. As was stated earlier 12 out of the 19 students interviewed also discussed their nervousness and the embarrassment they sometimes experienced when reading out-loud.

Miscellaneous

The remaining 9% of responses did not fit any of the established categories. This section included responses such as "I just read silently a lot", "Because I lose my voice", and "Because it's just harder."

Reading Strategies

Question 15 asked students to detail the strategies they used when they encountered an unknown word. Students gave 178 different responses with some students naming more than one strategy. The responses divided further into eight different categories. The first "Sounding out" included all the responses that involved students using the graphophonic cueing system in some way. The second category "Read on" included those responses where students indicated using the semantic and syntactic cueing systems. The third category "Skip it" included those responses where students indicated they simply "skip" unknown words. This is a useful strategy to use only when "skipping" the word keeps the meaning intact. The fourth category was "picture clues" and the fifth, "ask for help". The sixth category, 'dispositions' included those responses where students said such things as "keep trying" and "have a guess". The seventh category included responses where students misunderstood the question to mean "spelling" an unknown word rather than "reading" and unknown word and the final category was for the remaining responses that do not fit any of the other established categories. As **Figure <u>33</u>** below shows, students used "sounding out" as the main strategy when they encountered an unknown word. It is interesting that only 5% of responses related to other strategies such as "reading on" or using "picture cues". Either these students did not use these strategies or they were unaware of the fact that they did use them. Generally, it was apparent that students lacked a vocabulary for describing their own reading strategies.

Figure <u>33</u> - Reading strategies - (N=178)

Reading strategies
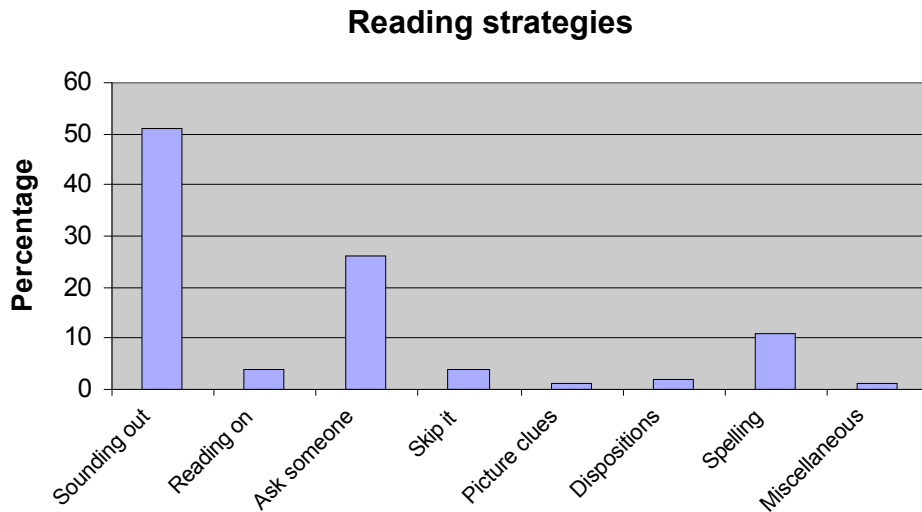
The interview data also suggested that students relied heavily on the graphophonic cueing system for figuring out unknown words. Only 5 out of the 19 students mentioned other strategies such as "reading on" to help them with unknown words.

Describing Good Readers

Students described themselves as readers and named characteristics that their teacher would use to describe a 'good' reader.

Readers: Students describe themselves

In Question 12 students had a number of statements that they could circle to help describe themselves as readers. They could circle as many of the statements as they liked. The following diagram represents the responses given.

Figure <u>34</u> - Readers describe themselves

Readers describe themselves
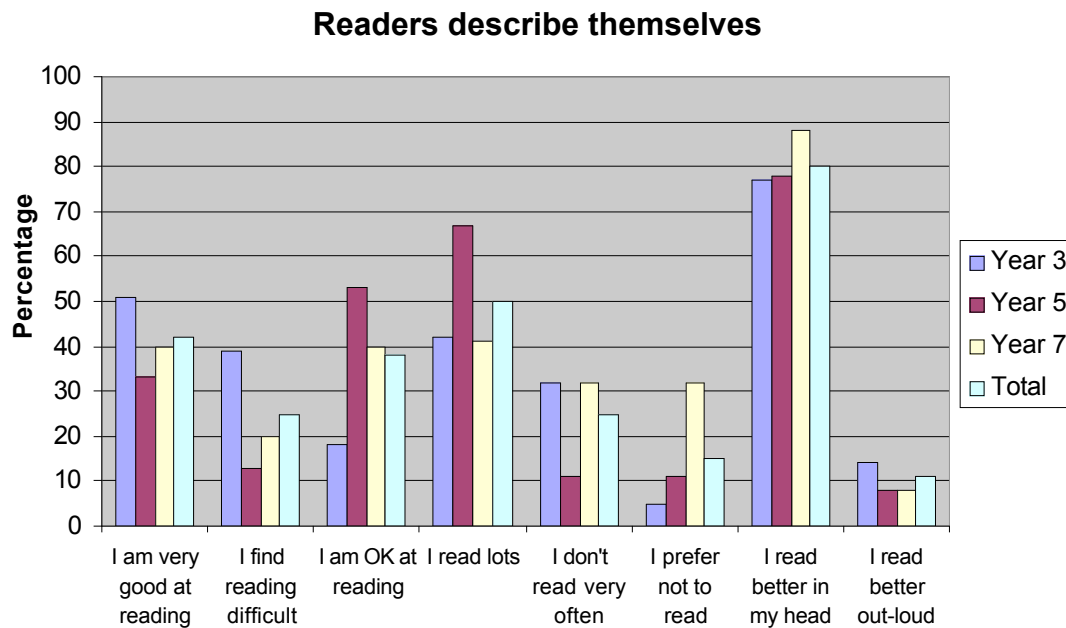
As **Figure <u>34</u>** shows most students circled one of the first three statements: 'I am very good at reading'; 'I find reading difficult', and 'I am okay at reading'. They then circled one of the next three items: 'I read lots'; 'I don't read very often' and 'I prefer not to read'. Finally, most circled one of the last two: 'I read better in my head' and 'I read better out-loud'. I have recorded the Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 data separately in addition to the total responses. I calculated percentages using the total number of students in each separate student cohort.

Eighty percent of the total number of students reported reading better silently than reading out-loud. There were not any noticeable differences between the three sets of data except that the Year 3 cohort identified comparatively more excellent readers and struggling readers. Further, the data suggested that the Year 4/5 cohort read more than the other two groups of students.

When the data are broken into gender, they reveal that more Year 3 boys identified themselves as 'very good' readers than girls. This was similar for the Year 5 data. Differently, more Year 7 girls identified themselves as 'very good' readers than boys. The Year 3 boys also claimed to read more than their

female peers. Both Year 5 and Year 7 girls claimed to read more than their male peers. More Year 7 boys claimed to 'prefer not to read' than any other cohort. Similarly, the data suggest that Year 7 boys experience more reading difficulties than any other cohort. There appears to be little difference between gender and year level in terms of students preference for reading silently as opposed to reading out-loud.

'Good'Readers

In addition to describing themselves as readers students listed words and phrases that their teacher used to describe a 'good' reader. They identified 49 different characteristics in 201 responses. I divided the responses into seven different categories.

Figure 35 - 'Good readers' (N=201)
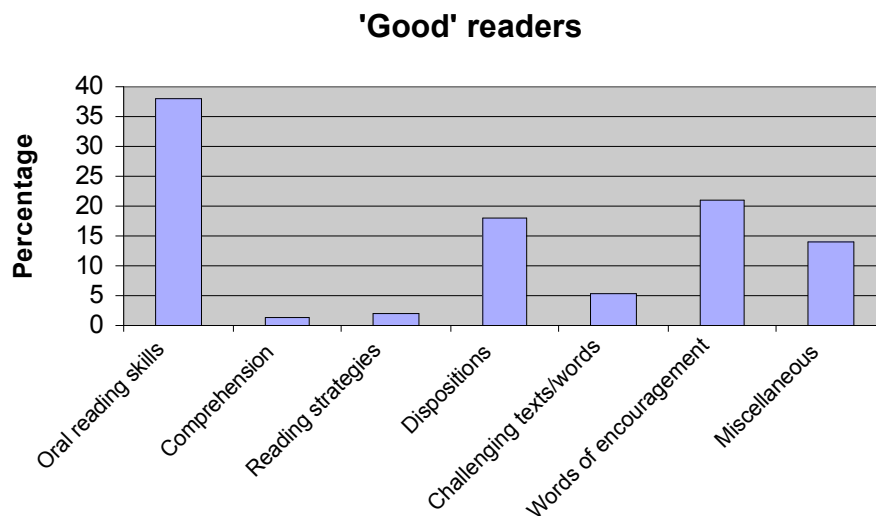
The first included all of those responses that were representative of those skills needed to read out-loud effectively. It included characteristics such as expression, volume, clarity and pronunciation. The second category included skills associated with comprehending text. The third category, 'Reading strategies' included characteristics that suggested a 'good' reader used some of the various decoding strategies. The fourth category included responses representative of particular dispositions such as 'confident', 'enjoys reading' and

'reads every day'. The fifth category named included responses that suggested 'good' readers could read 'difficult words' or 'challenging texts'. The sixth category, 'words of encouragement' included responses where students simply said things such as 'very good', 'excellent' and 'clever'. The final category, 'Miscellaneous' includes all those responses that were not alike and did not fit a category. As **Figure 35** shows oral reading skills featured prominently in the ways students perceived how their teachers described 'good' readers. I will now discuss each of these categories further.

Oral reading skills

Forty-one percent of the characteristics identified included oral reading skills. The following graph details the responses given.

Figure 36 - Oral reading skills - (N=76)

Oral reading skills
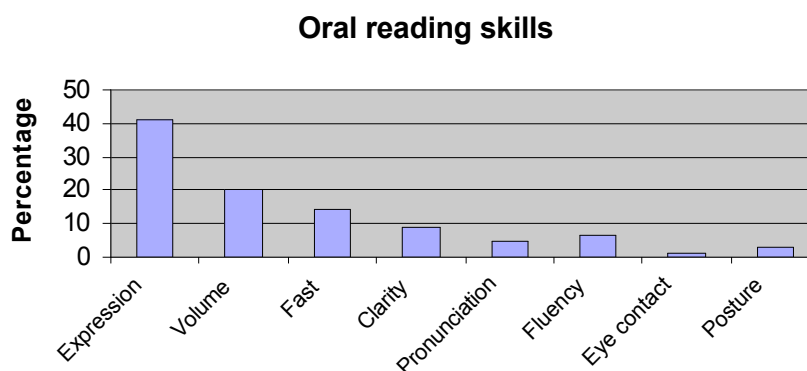
As **Figure 36** indicates expression was the most frequent response, followed by volume, speed and clarity. It is also interesting but not surprising that "posture" and "eye contact" featured in the responses. One Year 7 teacher did display a chart entitled "Speech Guidelines" which included such things as, "stance", "eye contact" and "fluency". Five of the six groups of students interviewed also identified effective oral reading skills as characteristic of a 'good' reader.

Students did not prioritise the ability to comprehend in their perceptions of how teachers might describe 'good' readers. Only three students suggested it

was important to 'understand' what they read. During the interviews students needed prompts to include comprehension as an important aspect of reading.

Only four students mentioned the fact that 'good' readers 'sound' out unknown words. There was no mention of any other decoding strategies. The interview data was also similar.

Dispositions were also high on the list with 18% of students identifying a characteristic in this category. Figure 37 details the frequency and nature of the responses given.

Figure 37 - Dispositions - (N=36)

Dispositions
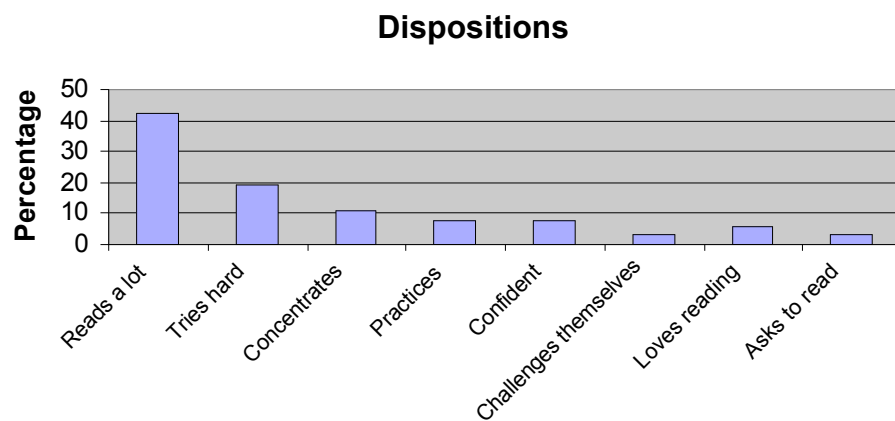
The data show that some students believed that one of the characteristics of a 'good' reader according to their teachers was that they read frequently. It was also important to "try hard" and concentrate.

Five percent of the responses suggested that teachers described 'good' readers as those who use and understand "big" words and who read "challenging" texts.

Twenty-five percent of the responses included comments like 'good', 'very good' and 'excellent'. It is possible that students included these because of the type of feedback they and others received after reading. In Chapter 10 'The Researcher's Perspective' where I discuss observations of a number of different oral reading activities, the teacher often comments in this way after the reading.

Finally, the remaining 14% of responses categorised under 'Miscellaneous' included such things as "wouldn't know", "not sure" and "teacher's pet".

The students interviewed also mentioned characteristics such as "enjoys reading", "reads a lot" and "confident" in their descriptions of 'good' readers. What was also interesting in the interview data was that the characteristics identified by the individual students tended to be the areas identified as needing improvement by their teachers.

Reading Assessment

Question 14 asked students to identify the ways their teacher assessed their reading ability. Students gave 137 responses and identified 19 different ways. I have divided the responses into four different categories. The first different activities that involved reading out-loud. These included such things as "reading out-loud to the class", "reading to the teacher", "conferences" and "reading around in a circle." The second category included those responses that suggested the teacher assessed reading comprehension. These included responses such as, "comprehension", "book reports" and "reading activity sheets." The third category included responses that indicated some form of testing and the final category for all those responses that did not fit any of the other established categories.

Figure <u>38</u> - Assessment methods - (N=137)
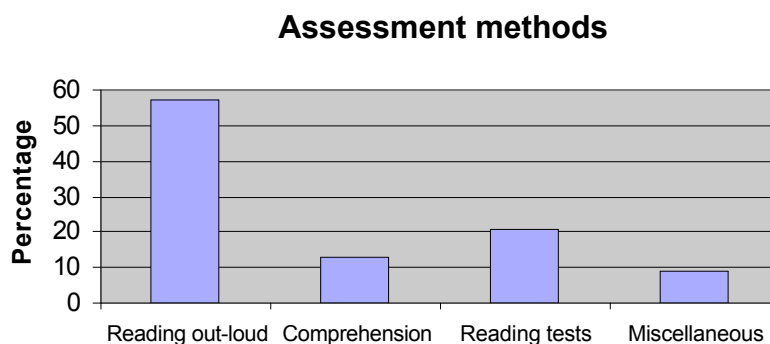
As shown by **Figure <u>38</u>** students identified reading out-loud as the most frequent form of assessment. The data collected from student interviews reflected similar results. This was different from the teacher questionnaires where only 30% of teachers reported using reading out-loud as an assessment method. Further 25% of teachers reported using comprehension as a means to assess reading whereas only 12% of students identified this as a method. The interview data suggest that students had difficulty identifying the ways in which their teacher assessed their reading, which suggests that teachers do not often make the nature of these practices explicit to students.

Summary

Ninety-two percent of students surveyed claimed they read out- loud in school. Most students reported its use either 'weekly' or 'not often'. Only 10% of students surveyed indicated 'daily' participation in oral reading activities. Similar to the teachers surveyed, students claimed they participated in a variety of different oral reading activities.

Seventy-six percent of students surveyed indicated a preference for reading silently. They preferred silent reading because it was easier in terms of speed, comprehension and concentration. Other reasons related to particular dispositions. Some students claimed they lacked confidence and that they disliked reading in front of their peers. Differently, some claimed to like the "quiet and relaxing" nature of silent reading. In line with this 63% reported that reading out-loud was more difficult than silent reading.

The small number of students who indicated a preference for reading out-loud said that it allowed others to enjoy reading with them and that it assisted them to concentrate.

More students disliked rather than liked oral reading activities such as reading groups, reading to the whole class, oral book reports and comprehension activities. In contrast, 70% of students claimed they enjoyed silent reading.

When students described themselves as readers, 80% believed they read better silently. Similar to the teacher questionnaire data, oral reading skills

featured prominently in their descriptions of a 'good' reader. Eighteen percent of descriptions also included dispositions such as 'good' readers read frequently and enjoy their reading. Similarly, 58% of students claimed teachers used reading out-loud as an assessment strategy although only 30% of teachers claimed to use reading out-loud as an assessment strategy.

The following two chapters discuss interviews held with small groups of children from the classes where I surveyed students. Like their teachers, students discuss oral reading generally and some of the oral reading activities in their classes in more detail. In addition to discussing the nature of these activities, the students also talk about issues connected to the construction of themselves as readers and their role as active participants in the various oral reading activities discussed.

CHAPTER 8

Students Speak: Farrer Primary

This chapter and the following chapter are a discussion of the student interview data collected from Farrer and Gunn Primary Schools. Each chapter divides into three main sections. The first examines the Year 3 data, the second, the Year 4/5 data and the third the Year 7 data. Each section covers issues raised throughout the interviews relating to the nature and use of oral reading in the classroom and students' feelings toward various oral reading events. All of the student interviewees also spoke about silent reading as they often made comparisons between the two different types of school reading. Some aspects of their discussion on silent reading are included.

The Year 3 Data

The Students

Three students participated in the Year 3 interviews conducted at Farrer Primary. There was two individual interviews with each student and one group interview with all three. Students answered a number of questions concerning reading generally and oral reading more specifically. I have given students pseudonyms for the purpose of this discussion. They are Eliza, Nick and Leah. All of the students were around eight years of age.

Eliza

Eliza's teacher described her as an above average reader who enjoyed reading. However, she said that she often read too fast. She also said that when reading out-loud she lacked expression.

Eliza told me she liked to read "Solos" which were short stories or "little novels". She said that she enjoyed reading and did most of her reading at home.

Generally, she read about a chapter a day. She borrowed books from the school-library.

Nick

Nick's teacher described him as below average. His comprehension levels were low and he found reading to be a "chore". She said that when he read out-loud he lacked confidence, fluency and expression.

Nick told me he liked to read although he preferred to read silently rather than to others. He also enjoyed the "Solos" books, which he borrowed from the school library. He did reading at home for homework.

Leah

Leah's teacher described her as an "average" reader who enjoyed her reading. She read with expression and was fluent.

Leah told me that she enjoyed reading and liked the "Ozzie Bites" and "Ozzie Nibbles" series. She liked stories with happy-endings and did most of her reading at home at night.

Oral Reading Activities

Initially it was difficult for the Year 3 students to talk specifically about oral reading activities in the classroom. It was necessary to start with a more general discussion about reading events in the classroom. For example, when Eliza answered the question about when she did read in school the following conversation occurred:

Transcript 8. 1 - "We don't do reading"

25	J	When do you do reading at school? What time do you do reading at school?
	E	(.) We don't do reading at school.
	J	You don't do any reading at school?=
	E	=No=
30	J	=Not even after lunch.
	E	No oh yeah we do reading after lunch and recess but I do it after recess.

Eliza for some reason claimed that she did not do any reading in school and she needed further prompts from me to start her talking about reading activities in the classroom. Similarly, Nick found it difficult to answer the question without additional prompts.

Unlike Eliza, Nick did not say that reading did not happen but rather expressed uncertainty in his answer. Leah on the other hand was quick to identify silent reading as the time when she did reading in school, although, like the others, she too had difficulty identifying any other times that reading occurred. With all of the Year 3 students at this site, it was necessary for me to suggest various reading activities that might occur in the classroom before students would offer any information about what actually occurred. Despite this, they were able to articulate their understanding of the procedural aspects of the various oral and silent reading events in which they had participated. The oral reading activity they discussed, was reading recounts.

Reading recounts after recess and lunch

All of the students discussed a specific oral reading activity that occurred each day after recess and lunch. They could choose to read the recount they had written about their weekend or they could read from the book they were reading in silent reading. Eliza talks about how this activity was organised:

Transcript 8. 2 - "Miss D has a list of when you read"

40	J	Oh so some kids do it after recess and some kids do it after [lunch?
	E	[Yes.
	J	Now I'm getting the picture. OK so what happens if you don't do it after lunch what do you do while the other
45		kids are reading?=
	E	=Um we listen to them read.
	J	You listen to them read. How does that work? Can you tell me how this works?
	E	(.) Well we Miss D has a list of when you read and all
50		that um (.)she one of the kids calls out who reads on one of the days, and then they read read the story, or the um recount of the weekend.=
	J	=And who do they read it to?
	E	They read it to the whole class.

The students also understood the rules associated with this activity and the consequences of not following these. It was a requirement that the students listened well to each other during the reading and if they failed to do this then the teacher wrote their name on the board for listening skills. After the students had finished reading, the other students asked the reader questions. Leah explained the listening component of this activity:

Transcript 8. 3 - Listening

	L	Well then you read the book to the class.
60	J	And what do the other children do, they sit and=
	L	=listen.
	J	Listen and what does the teacher do?
	L	She sits at the back on a chair and listens.

During the activity, the teacher provided help to the students by assisting them with words they were unsure of by encouraging them to use sounding out strategies. In addition to this all three students discussed the teacher giving them reminders about paying attention to punctuation and speaking loudly and clearly during their reading. The teacher also emphasised the importance of the listening component of this activity:

Transcript 8. 4 - "Speak up loud"

180	J	What does she say?
	N	There's a full stop or (.) stuff like that.
	J	Yeah. So she reminds you when you're not doing those things.
	All	Yeah
185	J	What else does she remind you to do when you're reading? (.)
	E	Speak up loud.

Reading in small groups

Another activity described by the students occurred in the previous term. It involved students working in small groups. The students were unsure of the number of students in each group but they were all certain about the name of the book they read and how the reading proceeded. Eliza said that there were six or seven students in each group but during the group interview,

the students were unsure suggesting there may have been any number upwards from five to ten. Whilst the number of students in each group was questionable, the way in which they described it suggests it was some form of a small group "round robin" reading activity:

Transcript 8. 5 - "We all had the same book"

	N	Oh yeah we did that when with the book was called the
260		Shadow Dog.
	L	Follow [
	J	[and what did you have to [do?
	L	[Follow Dog
	E	Yeah Follow Dog
265	N	Um Follow Dog
	E	Um we (.) had our all the same book [and
	J	[How many people
		were in the group?
	E	Um probably about five, six, seven
270	L	About nine or ten
	ALL	Yeah=
	E	=and then um we read a page each.

Home readers

Students also discussed an activity that involved taking readers home to read to their parents. An important aspect of this activity discussed by the students was the signing of their reading record cards by their parents. Leah provided an explanation of this saying that their parents needed to record the title, signature and date. Nick gave further insight into this procedure suggesting that it was a means for the teacher to check that the students had actually done the required reading. The following transcript illustrates this:

Transcript 8. 6 - "They have to sign"

	N	Yep
45	J	And what do your parents do?
	N	They have to sign it.
	J	Sign it and are you supposed to read to your parents or
		not?
50	N	Yes we're sposed to read to our parents. To make sure
		they've heared it so so we're not telling fibs.

Paired reading with an adult

In addition to the group oral reading activities identified by the students they also discussed times when they read to another teacher and to parents on an individual basis.

Reading with Miss S

Leah discussed an activity that involved particular students reading to another teacher called Miss S. She discussed this after I asked her if she had ever participated in a reading activity where she read to teachers and they asked her questions about her reading. Leah explained that she worked with Miss S twice a week. She also identified another three students who read with Miss S and said that she taught them things about vowels and that she helped them with words they did not know by encouraging them to sound them out or read on in the sentence:

Transcript 8. 7 - "She helps when we get stuck on words"

300	L	She doesn't actually yeah, she helps us sometimes.
	J	What do you mean? She doesn't actually help you is that what you're saying?
	L	She helps us when we get stuck on some words.
	J	What does she do when you get stuck?
	L	Um well she sounds them out with us but she doesn't actually say the word.
	J	So you've got to say it after she's sounded it out?
	L	Yeah.
310	J	Does she teach you any other ways to figure out what the word is?
	L	Yeah, like we um (.) you sound two words and then another two, then you what I told you before about when I'm stuck on words=
315	J	=Then you put it all together?=
	L	=Yeah.
	J	So that's the only way she teaches you to figure out the word?
	L	Yeah, or sometimes we read on.

This data shows how the student articulated clearly the strategies used by her teacher to assist her with decoding.

Reading to parents

The students explained that the teacher had a list of parents who came and helped in the classroom and that when they came in they would sit at the back of the classroom where individual children would go and read to them. They also described a "reader list sort of thing" where the parents would write the name of the book and how well the student read. Similar to reading with Miss S the help offered by the parents to the children was in encouraging the students to sound out unknown words:

Transcript 8. 8 - "Yeah we sound it out"

	E	They would help you work it out.
240	L	They would <u>ask</u> you to work it out and if you can't work it out they would tell you.
	J	So how did they work it out?
	L	[ ]
	E	Yeah we sound it out.

Students' Perceptions of the Activities

In the individual interviews all of the students said that they enjoyed reading and they liked participating in the various activities they described. Both Eliza and Leah said they liked reading to the class. Nick said that he was not sure whether he liked reading to other students but that he enjoyed reading to parents. In the group interview, Nick said that he did not mind reading to others now but that he used to dislike it. However, he also said that if he had a choice he would prefer to read to himself.

The students felt that other students also did not enjoy reading activities where they had to read to others. Leah said that they get embarrassed because some of the other students laughed when they made mistakes. I asked her if she has seen this happening and she said that she had. Nick also admitted to feeling nervous sometimes, particularly when he came across an unfamiliar word.

Oral reading versus silent reading

During the group interview, the students explained the difference between reading out-loud and reading silently. They said that the main

difference was in the way they said the words. They explained that when they were reading out-loud they said the word so others could hear them whereas when they read to themselves they said the word in their head so that they could hear the word.

<div align="center">Assessment</div>

During the interviews, I raised a number of questions related to assessment. Students talked about the ways the teacher assessed their reading. They discussed their own reading ability and that of others. Finally, they described both 'good' and 'poor' readers from their own and their teacher's perspective.

Teacher assessing students

During the individual interviews, the students discussed the ways their teacher assessed their reading ability. Both Eliza and Leah were uncertain about this and suggested that their teacher did not listen to them read. I reminded them that they had just talked about a number of activities where the teacher did listen to their reading. They agreed that she probably figured out how good they were at reading during some of these reading times. Nick on the other hand believed he knew how the teacher assessed him:

Transcript 8. 9 - "Looks at the chart on your reader"

	J	How do you think your teacher knows whether you're good at reading or not?
	N	Cos she looks at the chart on your reader.
120	J	She looks at what, sorry?
	N	She looks at the at how much how many books we read.
	J	So in that little thing that goes home your reading record card?
	N	Yeah.
125	J	That's what she looks at. What else does she do?
	N	That's all. I think.

As the transcript illustrates, Nick believed that she did this by looking at their reading record chart. When asked if she would also do this when she listened to him read, he said that she would but was unsure how.

Students assessing themselves and others

In the individual interviews, the students felt that they were 'good' readers although both Leah and Nick did talk about what they needed to improve. Both Nick and Leah said that they sometimes became "stuck on words" and made mistakes. Eliza said that she often could be louder but that she did pay attention to punctuation. However, in the group interview they were a little more conservative in their response to this question. Leah said that she thought she was "Okay", Eliza said "sort of" and Nick said "I'm alright". This is possibly because they knew the others in the group would already have ideas about their reading abilities. All of the students said that there were others in their class that were not so good at reading and they knew this because they listened to them read:

Transcript 8. 10 - "Some of them are and some of them aren't"

135	J	What about some kids that read to the class, are they all good readers or not?
	L	Some of them are and some of them aren't.
	J	The ones that aren't, how do you know they're not good readers?
140	L	Well its not actually that they're good readers, its just that sometimes we can't understand the words and they've got a very small voice and we [can't hear them.

Describing 'good' readers

All of the students identified characteristics they thought described 'good' readers. An important characteristic according to all of the students in the group and individual interviews was the ability to read in a loud clear voice. Eliza also highlighted the fact that paying attention to punctuation was very important. In the individual interviews Leah suggested that "getting stuck on words" was not a good thing and that "good" readers would need to read "lots of books". Nick also raised the issue of using expression in their reading and maintaining eye contact with their audience:

Transcript 8. 11 - 'Good' readers

| 190 | N | [ ] Uses their voice esspres I dunno. |
| | J | Uses their voice what [expressively |

	N	[espress
	J	is that what you're trying to say?
	N	Yeah
195	J	What does that mean expressively?
	E	Um like um if there's someone
	L	[ ] speaking or something you could change your voice
	J	Change your voice
	L	Charac
200	J	For the characters.
	All	Yeah

The students said that their teacher would describe a 'good' reader in the same way as they did. The students talked about times when the teacher gave them advice about speaking "loudly" and "clearly", using punctuation, reading expressively, fixing up their mistakes by sounding out and reading on, and monitoring the amount of reading they had done through the signing and checking of the reading record card. It is possible that these students have constructed their understanding of a 'good' reader through participating in the various activities they have described. Given that a number of these activities were oral in nature then it is understandable that the ability to read clearly, loudly and expressively is going to feature as an important characteristic of a 'good' reader in their eyes. Another interesting point is that the ability to 'understand' what they had read did not feature in the discussion apart from where the students were talking about written "Book Reports".

Learning About Reading

Throughout the interviews, the students articulated some of the things they learned about reading in school. Through participating in these activities, they learned that a good strategy to figure out unknown words was to sound them out. The teacher demonstrated this technique to the students and parents encouraged them to do the same. The only student who identified a different strategy for figuring out words was Leah. She learned this during the activity when she read to Miss S who taught her to "read on" in the sentence in addition to sounding out unknown words.

Initially the students found it difficult to identify reading activities other than silent reading. This was probably because they had not been required to

talk about reading in a classroom in this way before. They learned that 'good' readers read loudly, clearly, with expression and maintained eye contact with their audience so that others could understand them. The discussion did not suggest that this was 'understanding' in the sense that they comprehended what had been read but rather, that they could "hear" what the readers said. They also claimed that 'good' readers knew words and read "lots of books". In addition, the students learned that it was important to listen to others when they were reading to them.

In addition they learned about the various rules that accompanied each of the activities and they knew the consequences for not adhering to these.

They did not learn much about the ways their teachers assessed their reading but were able to articulate the characteristics that they believed a 'good' reader should have. Further, they were able to identify the 'poorer' readers in the classroom. They based these assumptions on what they had learned about 'good' readers through the classroom discourse that was associated with each of the activities.

In these activities, these students learned two strategies to help them "crack the code". They also learned about some oral reading skills that they should develop in order to read aloud effectively to others. Finally when the students were asked to suggest ways that reading in school might be improved they declined saying they liked it "just the way it is".

The Year 4/5 Data

The Students

Four students participated in the interviews. Originally, I asked for three students, however the teacher organised four students so I felt obliged to interview all four as they were all looking forward to the experience. There were nine interviews conducted comprising two individual interviews with each student and one group interview with all four. Again, I gave students pseudonyms for the purpose of this discussion. They were Carla, Bryce, Greg and Ann. Each of the students was around ten years of age at the time of the

interviews. They answered a number of questions concerning reading generally and oral reading more specifically.

Carla

Carla had struggled with her reading in the past although her teacher said she had shown improvement since the first half of the year. He described her as a confident, easy-going student who liked sport.

Carla told me that she preferred to read at home before she went to bed rather than at school. She also preferred silent over oral reading. She liked to read picture books though she had read parts of the "Wicked" and "Baby Sitters" series. She had fond memories of the story, "The Little Princess" although she did not describe herself as an avid reader.

Bryce

Again, similar to Carla, Bryce's teacher said that he had struggled with reading in the past but had shown improvement during the past six months before the interviews. He described him as a child with a great personality who was caring and shy. He enjoyed sport, particularly swimming. At the time of the interviews, he showed an interest in reading RL Stine's "Goosebumps" series.

Bryce told me he liked reading and that he particularly enjoyed the "Goosebumps" and "Jets" series. He said that he used to be a relatively poor reader though he felt he had improved. Reading had a 'calming' effect for Bryce and he enjoyed reading on long car trips. He said that he did more reading at school than home and that he preferred to read silently.

Greg

Greg's teacher described him as a "perfectionist" who did not like to "fail". He too had shown improvement in reading during the six months before the interviews and like Bryce enjoyed the "Goosebumps" series. He also spent a great deal of his leisure time doing competitive swimming.

Greg told me that his favourite authors were RL Stine and Judy Bloome. His favourite story was "Super Fudge" by Judy Bloome. He said that he read for about a half an hour at both home and school each day. He preferred to read silently and rated himself as an average reader. He said further that reading was not one of his favourite activities.

Ann

Ann's teacher described her as a "perfectionist" who was a "delightful girl" with a "strong personality". He said that she was an avid reader.

Ann told me that she did most of her reading at school but preferred to read at home. She liked to read silently and her favourite author at the time of the interviews was Judy Blume.

Oral Reading Activities

When I asked students about the times when they read at school all of the students identified two main activities. The first was an oral reading activity where three teachers including their classroom teacher listened to students read on an individual basis. The second activity was silent reading. The students also talked generally about other reading activities such as written comprehension, novel study and the teacher reading to them. They also described oral reading activities in their previous year of schooling, which included taking readers home and a reading group activity. The discussion is limited to the activities that were a part of their classroom context at the time of the interviews and to those activities that have an oral reading component. Again, some of the discussion on silent reading is included the students often made comparisons between oral and silent reading practices in a similar way to the Year 3 students.

Oral reading

All of the students described an oral reading activity that occurred twice weekly. They described the procedural aspects of this activity. There were three groups. Their class teacher Mr W worked with one group, Miss R worked with another and Mrs M with another. The students waited their turn to read with

the teacher. They were required to read approximately a page of the book they are reading during silent reading to the teacher:

Transcript 8. 12 - "They go 'next please' after they've written down the comment"

	C	They come into the classroom and we have to say I'm first, I'm second all the way to seven well eight, and cause that's as many as there is. Cause the blue group is
170		the (.) one with the most amount of numbers. And we have eight people in our group, so we have to go I'm 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and um the last person always get gets to read last, so they just hear us read and then they go OK, next please after they've written down
175		the comment.

In the individual interviews, Greg described the layout and organisation of the room:

Transcript 8. 13 - "Sometimes in a line sometimes they sit anywhere"

200	J	Can you explain the room to me, what does it look like?
	G	Um well you've got the desks [ ] we've got the desks on each side. You've got groups of four groups. One two three no. One in on the right side, three's up above there three's above one.
	J	Yes?
205	G	Two's down the front on the left side and four's up the back on the right left.
	J	And how do the children sit, do they sit at their desks?
	G	With Mr W they sit at their desks while they're waiting.
	J	And where do the other children sit?
210	G	On the floor=
	J	=How do they sit? Do they sit all over the place or in a line in their order, or what do they do?
	G	Sometimes in a line, sometimes they sit anywhere.

Further discussion with Ann and Carla revealed that one of the teachers, Miss R, insisted that the children sat in a line in front of her to wait their turn to read. Mr W's readers sat at their desks to wait their turn and Miss M's readers sat on the floor near her to wait their turn. This explains why Greg described this arrangement as "sometimes in a line, sometimes they sit anywhere."

I asked the students to explain the formation of the groups and they all said that it was according to ability. There was a yellow group, a blue group

and a green group, which the teacher displayed on the classroom wall. The following transcript excerpts illustrate the graded nature of the groups and the students' knowledge of the status of the groups. The first explained the formation of the groups and the second how this information was accessible to students:

Transcript 8. 14 - "That's the getting there group"

Example 1

	J	Professional group, OK. So who's in what group?
	C	Sashas [in the
	J	[I don't want to know their names but what sort of
120		readers ?
	C	Blues no I'll start from the bottom: green has one most of my friends in it, that's the getting there group. Blue, which I'm in, is a middle age middle group which is in the middle, not good and not bad, and then yellow
125		group is up the top, that's there for the really good readers that have to have fairly thick books.

Example 2

	J	=OK so how does your teacher identify these groups?
	A	He has them on charts.
90	J	And how do you know what group?
	A	Because you can see them.

The students also described how students moved from one group to another. Carla and Bryce gave two examples of this. In the first, a student moved up a level and in the second example, the student moved down a level:

Transcript 8. 15 - "She's in the professionals group now"

Example 1

C	Because he's got a green, a blue, and a yellow piece of cardboard and also we've got our names on them, and he's crossed out Adelines because she's gone up one group, so she's in the professionals group now.

Example 2

C	Like they write them out and then they show them to the teachers, like P was in the yellow group that's the best

		group, he got put back to the blue group which is the intermediate group.
330	J	Ah OK when did that happen?
	C	Only this term.
	J	Oh OK
	B	I heard Miss R say he was the best at like…he makes faces when he reads.
335	J	Using expression?
	B	Yeah.

During the second example was interesting where Bryce and Carla discussed the student who moved from the yellow to the blue group. Bryce appeared to rescue him from this by adding the comment that he had heard one of the teachers comment that he was the best in the class at using expression when he read.

The students knew about the rules for the activity. First, they needed to read their text quietly while they were waiting. Second, they could not practice their reading out-loud while they were waiting and neither could they talk to others. Finally, Carla added that speaking "about the teacher" or being "naughty" to the teacher was not allowed. Further discussion on this occurs in the next section on 'students perceptions of the activities'.

Students were less articulate about the reasons why their teacher used this activity. In the individual interview, Greg said that it was a means for teachers to test their reading and to help them with unfamiliar words. In the group interview, I asked the question again. Greg again referred to assessment by saying it was a means to see whether you were "going good or bad". He then suggested that it was so teachers would "get paid." Carla joined in the conversation stating that as students they were at school to learn. Following this, she said that they often have to read and learn when they are not ready to do so:

Transcript 8. 16 - "Because we're here to learn"

	G	To see if we're going good or bad or not.
375	J	OK.
	G	To get paid((laughs))
	J	To get paid, I don't think so, I can think of other ways of getting paid.
	C	Because we hear to learn like sometimes they make us

learn even if we don't want to read.=

Students discussed how they perceived the teacher's role in this activity. All of them suggested that they played a relatively passive role. They listened to the students and recorded notes about their reading. The teachers did not discuss these with the students. Occasionally they supplied students with words they did not know, helped them with pronunciation and sounding out words. The students received reminders about not mumbling, slowing down, speaking loudly and using expression.

The students elaborated further on the teacher's role in the group interview. As the following data show, the possibility that this activity might have had more to do with improving their ability to read out loud effectively rather than improving their reading generally was explored:

Transcript 8. 17 - "They're fixing your mistakes and slow you down"

	J	How are they teaching you to read? What sort of advice do they give you?
280	C	They're fixing your mistakes and slow you down [sometimes.
	A	[yeah
	C	Sometimes we're reading way too fast and they go…..
	J	Do think so, you [think about it?
285	C	[teaching us to read out loud
	J	But is that what they're teaching you do are they actually teaching you to read or are they teaching you read out loud?
	B	I think they are teaching us to read out loud.

These examples from the data illustrate how these students were able to articulate the procedural, organisational and management aspects of this activity. However, they were less able to identify what the instructional purpose and learning outcomes of the activity might be.

Teacher reading to students

The students spoke about times when their teacher and the librarian read stories to them. Generally, the teachers chose the stories they read. The teacher sat at their desk while the students sat at their desks or they sat in a

chair whilst the students sat on the floor. An oral comprehension type activity where the teacher asked students questions about what they had read usually followed the reading.

Students' Perceptions of the Activities

Students expressed some very specific likes and dislikes associated with each of the activities. They also suggested ways that they might be improved.

Oral reading

All the students expressed some concerns in relation to this activity. Most said that they disliked the amount of time spent "waiting" their turn. However, Ann said she did not mind this because it actually gave her more time to read independently. The following is part of a conversation where Bryce discussed the 'waiting' component of this activity:

Transcript 8. 18 - "When I was in the green group they were taking a long time"

200	J	What do you mean? What's the waiting for?
	B	You know how we have to read on the floor.
	J	Yeah?
	B	Sometimes you're waiting there for a long time because some people just take a long time so=
205	J	=Why do they take a long time?
	B	I don't know, because um last term when I was in the green group and they were taking a long time.

What is interesting here is that Bryce alluded to the idea that 'waiting' was more problematic when he was in the "lowest" or "green" reading group because the students took even longer in this group.

The waiting was not only problematic in terms of 'time' but students also suggested it was problematic in the sense that "others" could "hear" them reading. Bryce and Ann were not as concerned about this but it was a real issue for both Carla and Greg:

Transcript 8. 19 - "There's only one person to listen to"

| | C | Like sometimes you're not ready for the oral reading and you have to go out, sometimes you want to be last but they make you go first= |

	J	=Why do you want to be last C?
	C	Cause then there's less people to read [ ]
385	J	Tell me about that, do you try and get to be last J?
	G	Yep.
	J	Why?
	G	For the reason C said.
	J	So what do you mean there's less people in front of you,
390		you mean less people that are actually listening you?
	C	There's only one person to listen to.

The discussion revealed that both Carla and Greg tried to be the last one to read so others were unable to hear them. Whilst both Bryce and Ann said they did not mind others hearing them read Ann did identify particular students that she did not like reading in front of:

Transcript 8. 20 - "I just read"

405	B	I don't, I don't care who is in front of me I just read.
	J	You don't care. Are there kids in your class that you really don't like reading in front of?
	A	S and P
	J	Why S and P what do they do?
410	G	They start arguing and stuff like that. They start [laughing
	C	[they distract you so much=
	G	=and I don't like reading in front of C because he always picks up on a mistake.

It would seem that none of the students liked making mistakes in front of their peers. Students also suggested in both the group and individual interviews that they felt "nervous" and "embarrassed" when reading aloud to others:

Transcript 8. 21 - "You're allowed to make mistakes to yourself"

	J	Ok, (.) who prefers to read silently than loudly?
110	A	Me.
	C	Me
	J	Ok, can you tell me about why you prefer to read to yourselves rather than reading to others?
	C	You're allowed to make mistakes to yourself and you can
115		fix them up.
	J	Ok, has anyone got some other ideas yep?
	A	And you don't get embarrassed when you it ((giggles))
	J	Ok, who get embarrassed here when they have to read out loud?
120	A	Me.

	B	I do, I mean don't.
	J	You don't, you do Greg?
	G	Yep=
	J	=and Carla you told me you did and you do too Angie.
125		So Ok why do you get embarrassed guys, what's the thing that makes it embarrassing?
	G	Mumbling.
	J	Mumbling?
	A	Yes because he mumbles a lot. ((laughs))
130	J	Do you mumble a lot, do you and why do you find that embarrassing. What do people say to make you feel bad about your mumbling.
	G	Louder, louder.
	J	Who would say they might get nervous when they're
135		reading out loud.
	C	Me ((giggle)).
	J	OK so what happens, how do you feel when you're reading Greg?
	G	Nervous, embarrassed and (.) sometimes…I would mess up on the easiest word.

The data suggest that students also enjoyed reading to some teachers better than others. Carla and Greg in particular, did not enjoy reading to Miss R and Carla was very upfront about this throughout the interviews:

Transcript 8. 22 - "Try again"

Example 1

	J	You don't. So what is it you don't like about that?
125	C	((laughs)) because it's like Miss R she says "Oh that's wrong" ((in a snappy authoritarian voice)) She just rushes in to it.
	J	Miss R does she work at the school?
130	C	Yeah. But Miss M and Mr P they're really good. They go "try again" ((in a loud voice)) "try again we'll give you three chances". And then we go "OK".
	J	So you don't like Miss R correcting you the way=
	C	=she rushes in to it she doesn't give us a chance.
135		Sometimes I get it on my second go and Miss R just rushes me.

Example 2

	J	Are there any rules for this activity?
255	C	Uh hum.
	J	What are they?
	C	No speaking about the teacher. No being naughty to the teacher. And I think that's all.

At Line 255 I asked Carla if there were any rules for the reading activity. She answered with a rule that did not make a great deal of sense in relation to the activity itself. Before this point, Carla had discussed her reasons for disliking reading to Miss R. It is possible that Carla realised that what she had been doing, that is, talking about the teacher, was unsanctioned in the classroom.

The students also spoke about times when they believed the teachers they read to were not listening to them:

Transcript 8. 23 - "Just looking to see if they're behaving"

	C	You've got a story then you can't read this word, ah you'll think of the word and just say you go I'm going to the (and it's parade just say) and don't know the word so you go I'm going to the hospital to see the parade.
465	J	And she doesn't pick you up?
	C	Yes she just goes Ah that's good reading.
	A	And sometimes like you're reading there and they're writing something, like they're not like writing a comment=
	J	=Concentrating on you?
470	A	Yes they're just…
	J	They're doing something else?
	A	Yes and then they just go yes just take this for me.
	C	Yeah and like they're doing other stuff.
	A	Yeah
475	B	And sometimes they're just looking at other people in line, seeing whether [..] just looking. To see if they're behaving.

In both the individual and group interviews students expressed some frustration when they felt teachers were not listening to them. It is unrealistic in any classroom context where a teacher is responsible for a group of students to expect that they can give individuals their undivided attention. At Line 476 Bryce suggested that the reason for this might be that they are monitoring others who are waiting. In some instances students suggested that teachers were not modelling the rules they expected the students to follow. In another part of the group interview students spoke about reading out loud to others more generally and in a similar way to the observation of the Year 3 group there was an expectation that they listened to others while they were reading:

Transcript 8. 24 - Listening is important

170	C	CK was in that group and everyone else wasn't listening

	J	to it and nearly got in trouble. Nearly got in trouble. What do the teachers do when they find that other children aren't listening do they say anything to them?
175	B	Sometimes they do.
	J	What would they say?
	B	Listen.
	J	OK, so they tell them to stop fidgeting or whatever they're doing and look at the person that's talking to
180		them yes?
	C	If they're talking to another person when they're meant to be listening Mr P tells them to dry up. ((laughs))

As was discussed in the previous section, the students explained that the teachers wrote notes about their reading during this activity, which they did not discuss with them even though they were sometimes visibly accessible to the students. All of the students said that they would have preferred the teachers to discuss these with them so they could figure out ways to improve their reading:

Transcript 8. 25 - Teachers' feedback

	J	Do you get to see the comments?
	C	Yes sometimes when Rowena does it you can just look at it…
265	A	Yes
	J	Does she actually show it to you?
	A/C	No.
	J	Would you like her to talk about it to you?
	A/C	Yes, yes
270	C	Because then you'd know how you get better and where to fix up your problems.

Finally, the students said that they preferred to work out unknown words themselves rather than someone else correcting them. The data suggest that 'sounding out' was the preferred strategy:

Transcript 8. 26 - Sounding out

	C	They just correct us when we read words [wrong.
	J	[OK=
100	C	=And uh just tell us (.)ah she says ex -ce - p- t ((sounding out a word))=
	J	=So you sound them out?
	C	Yeah

Carla added that she liked to "sound out" words herself because she got it "right eventually". Greg, however, said that he did not like it when teachers asked him to sound out words in front of other students because he felt that they would "tease" students who made mistakes. The only positive comments made about this particular activity were that both Ann and Bryce said that it gave them more time to read independently. Ann commented further that she like the activity because it did not involve doing any "work".

Reading aloud versus reading silently

As in previous interviews, students discussed the differences between reading aloud and reading silently:

Transcript 8. 27 - Silent and oral reading

	J	So do think that may be there's a difference between reading and reading out loud?
	All	Yes, Yes.
305	J	What sorts of things do you think you have to do when you're reading out loud and also when you're just reading to yourself?
	C	Keep your voice nice and loud.
	J	Ah, anything else? (.) What you said to slow down somebody said that before.
310	A	When you're like stumbling and=
	J	=So not to stumble over words yes anything else?
	G	Well when you're mumbling.
	J	Mumbling OK.
	C	Concentrating on your words.
315	J	Concentrating more. (.) OK, so may be it's a different thing this reading out loud do you think?
	A	Yes, yes it's different.
	ALL	Yes.
320	G	You don't sort of follow the story as well when you're reading out loud.
	J	Why?
325	A	Because you're kind of like trying to not make mistakes and then you don't know what you're reading, you are just reading the words and it's not going through your brain.

As the data illustrate, students referred to the various oral-reading skills that they needed to be conscious of such as reading loudly, not "stumbling" over words, not "mumbling" and being "expressive". They also suggested that comprehension was more difficult when they were reading out-loud because

they were trying so hard to avoid making mistakes. As is shown in the following data from the individual interviews both Bryce and Carla suggested that when they were reading silently they had more time to figure out unknown words. Further, Carla suggested that she learnt more when reading silently:

Transcript 8. 28 - Learning about reading

Example 1

| 40 | B | Because um I don't know you can like if you miss a word you can go over it again, then because if it doesn't make sense you can go over it again instead of reading out loud you just miss it altogether [   ]. |

Example 2

	C	Because sometimes you you're say the word (.)you're
140		reading it in your head and you stop at a word. "Oh what's that word? Oh" and you just think about it for awhile. When you're reading out loud you have to keep going straight. You can't go um "Once upon a time um um um um" and think about it. And then they say the
145		word straight away. So it's sort of rushes you. So you can't learn. But you learn more when you reading it yourself.

Finally, Ann suggested that reading to herself allowed her to have a greater imagination than when she was reading out-loud.

Making changes

Unlike the Year 3 cohort, these students did articulate ways their teachers might improve reading in school. The following examples from the group interview highlight some of their ideas:

Transcript 8. 29 - Change

Example 1

490	A	That everyone has to be quiet when you read to them.
	J	So insisting that people listen to you?
	A	Yes.
	J	What else?
	B	And um like so you know how G said um you know
495		about being last in line.

	J	Uh hum
	B	Well um
	J	Letting you do that?
500	B	No, but they should like make other people do work and then they call you up…
	J	So you're saying not to let all these children sit here waiting?
	A/B	Yes.
	J	Is that what you mean?
505	A	And mucking around.

Example 2

	J	OK, anyone else got some suggestions about what we could change in school about reading to make it better for you?
	G	The teacher listening.
	J	The teacher listening to you OK?
525	C	What time we do it like not straight after library because we normally see so many books like we're sick of reading.

Example 3

545	C	We could read on a proper seat, not like on the floor.=
	J	=So more comfortable.
	A	Yes, yes.
	C	Miss R makes us stand most of the time.

They suggested that both students and teachers should listen to them when they were reading. Bryce suggested the "waiting" aspect of the oral reading activity was not necessary. He felt it would be better to have students work at their desks and then have the various teachers call them up when it was their turn to read. He said this would help with the problem of others being able to hear them read and it would minimise inappropriate behaviour. Carla suggested changing the time when they did the oral reading activity and they all said that they would like to feel more "comfortable" when they were reading by being able to sit on a "proper chair", cushions or a "bean bag".

Assessment

Again, there was a great deal of discussion in the interviews centred on assessment. The students rated themselves and others as readers, identified areas that they needed to improve, discussed the ways their teacher assessed reading and described the characteristics of a good reader from both their own and their teacher's perspective.

Teacher assessing students

All of the students in both the individual and group interviews suggested that their teacher assessed their reading by listening to them read. Further, they said that their teacher grouped them according to their ability based on these assessments. The following two examples from the data illustrate this:

Transcript 8. 30 - Ability grouping

Example 1

360	A	Well um firstly we just had to read and then they'll put us in groups see if we read well.

Example 2

	G	They write down comments and how well we're doing and then see if we're making [progress throughout the year.
	A	[progress
440	J	OK, how else do they know C?
	C	Being nice and clear and not being scared of what you say.
	J	OK, so how do they find out that ?
	C	They listen.

The students did not suggest any other ways the teacher assessed their reading.

Students assessing themselves and others

All of the students rated themselves as readers during the interviews. Both Greg and Carla believed they were an "average" reader, Bryce said that in the past he had not been very good but that he had improved and Ann believed she was "fairly good".

In addition, all of the students identified areas they felt they needed to improve. Ann said that she would like to reduce the number of "mistakes" she made, Bryce said that he would like to be able to read with more "expression", Carla said that she would like to have more "confidence" and Greg said that he would like the words to "come out of his mouth right". Many of the areas that students identified related to the skills needed to read out-loud effectively.

Carla also rated herself against other readers in the class. In particular, she talked about a friend who she believed read at the same level she did. In the

following data, she explained how they both had competitions with each other to see who could read the quickest. She also suggested that these competitions helped to alleviate the boredom associated with the activity of reading:

> **Transcript 8. 31 - Competing with your friends**
>
> 25 C =And if that if Mr P said we have to I wanted to do a
> study on it and he said OK but you've got to read the
> whole book first. So me and Sasha started to do it. She's
> one of my friends. We're both pretty good readers. We're
> both exactly the same. I'm at exactly the same page and
> 30 the same word=
> J =Oh alright=
> C =Except I'm ahead of her now because she's been away
> the last two days sick. So I've been reading ahead of her.
> J Yeah
> 35 C And also whenever we do reading it's like we do
> competitions like little competitions that helps us read
> them cause we it gets boring just the same thing like oh
> you [   ] moving your eye [   ] your head. We do little
> competitions. Like one of my competitions was Ok the first
> 40 person to read both of these two pages wins and
> then we like on your mark get set go! ((silence)) Done!
> It's like we both said it at the same time.

Whilst none of the others spoke directly about other students or compared themselves to them they were very knowledgeable about the "graded" nature of the groups in their class and knew who was in what group and also who had been either promoted or demoted from one group to another.

Describing 'good' readers

The students described what they thought characterised a 'good' reader from their own and their teacher's perspective. Students referred to a number of skills associated with reading out-loud. These included reading at the right speed, not "mumbling", speaking loudly and clearly, using "expression", accuracy, confidence, being "enthusiastic" and "enjoying" the task:

> **Transcript 8. 32 - 'Good' readers**
>
> *Example 1*
>
> J If I asked you to describe a good reader how would you

		describe that?
	A	Well, not too slow, doesn't get too many words wrong, and[ ] I don't know.
355	J	What else?
	A	Doesn't stumble and stuff.

Example 2

	B	They would like read it with you know um confidence and they would like read it aloud and all that and they would like actually say it like it's happening to them.
	J	You mean like they're using some expression or something like that?
175	B	Yeah.
	J	Is that what you mean?
	B	Yeah, expression.

Example 3

	C	Um not making too many mistakes, being secure on her word or his words. Always trying to be enthusiastic to other people, being kind, not teasing. Trying to help people and having fun.

Example 4

430	G	Um (.) They're loud.
	J	Yes?
	G	Um not mumbling. And not very getting words wrong like um not getting words to come out wrong as it is now.=

Example 5

425	A	If you not too slow and if you don't stumble and stuff.
	J	OK, what about you C?
	C	Having a nice clear voice and not starting REALLY LOUD and just going softer=
	G	=And expression [ ]
430	A	And you know when and he…and then stabbed in the front ((quietly))…and STABBED IN THE FRONT ((LOUDLY)),
	J	Instead of going he stabbed him the front ha ha ha!!
	C	In stead of going and then he stabbed in the front and he said OW ((laughter)).

In the first four examples taken from the individual interviews, it was interesting to note that the points raised by the students were also the areas of self-improvement they identified. For example, Ann claimed that she would like to make fewer mistakes in her reading and in her description of a 'good' reader she talked about the qualities of not being "slow" and not getting "too many words wrong". Bryce commented that he would like to be able to read

more expressively and when he described a 'good' reader he said that they would read it "like it was actually happening to them". Carla referred to wanting more confidence and she indicated in her description of a good reader that they should be "secure on their words". Greg wanted the "words to come out right" and in his description, he described a 'good' reader as someone who did not have the "words come out wrong". It is possible that during the times when these students were reading to others that there might be an over-emphasis on the areas they needed to improve rather than identifying their strengths or what they did well.

Students also discussed the ways their teacher might have described a 'good' reader. The only student who found this difficult was Bryce. All of the other students said that their teacher would describe a 'good' reader in a similar fashion to them. They needed further questions to prompt them to think about other characteristics as the following data examples show.

Transcript 8. 33 - My teacher thinks a 'good' reader is....

Example 1

365	J	How would your teacher describe a good reader do you think?
	A	Yeah the same as I did I think.
	J	Can you add anything else? So they just want you to be loud and not gets words wrong?
370	A	I don't know.
	J	Has your teacher given you any ideas about what he likes about what (.) you know when you might be hearing someone reading and he'll say "Oh that was good, I like the way that you did that". So what sort of things =
375	A	=Yeah, they'll read it with exaggeration and stuff.
	J	You mean with expression and stuff. Is that what you mean, with expression?
	A	Yeah.
	J	So expression, loud, not making mistakes and stumbling.
380		Anything else?
	A	Yeah, and not going too slow like I am [(gives an example)).
	J	[So just the right speed?
385	A	Yeah, and not mumbling.=

Example 2

| | J | How would you teacher describe someone who's good at |

		reading do you think?
180	B	(.) I don't know.

Example 3

	J	So how would how would Mr P describe a good reader?
400	C	Probably the same.

Example 4

	J	(.) How would Mr P describe a good reader do you think? What words would he use to describe someone who was good at reading?
440	G	Um (.) Loud not mumbling, again, and //.

This question proved a little more difficult than the previous one where they described a 'good' reader from their own perspective. Again, this may have resulted from the kinds of feedback given to them during oral reading activities.

Learning About Reading

In this classroom, students learned how to participate in the various oral reading activities they described. They knew the rules for these activities and were familiar about what was required of them. They had a limited understanding about why the teacher used these activities. They were aware of where they ranked in the classroom in terms of their reading ability, which was largely due to the graded nature of the groups. Further, this information was publicly available so they were also knowledgeable about the reading abilities of their peers. They learned what they needed to improve about their reading.

The students believed that teachers found out about their reading abilities and the progress they made by listening to them read. They described 'good' readers as those who had mastered the art of oral reading as they frequently referred to oral reading skills when describing them. They did not refer to 'understanding' what they have read apart from the fact that some suggested this was more difficult to do when reading out-loud.

They learned and could discuss the ways in which oral reading and silent reading differed. Further, they learned that most students preferred to read silently because it was less difficult and less public.

They learned that 'sounding' out was a good strategy to use when they were confronted with unknown words. However, one student did mention that he was able to use other strategies when reading silently such as 'reading on' since this was easier due to the fact he had greater time at his own expense.

Finally, students identified a number of ways to improve reading in school. Some of these included reading to the teacher on a one to one basis so that others cannot hear their reading, being able to choose and practice what they read, having enough time to figure out words for themselves and greater flexibility in how, when and where they read independently.

The Year 7 Data

The Students

Three students participated in the interviews. Again, each was interviewed twice individually and once as part of a group. Each participant has a pseudonym for the purpose of this discussion. Again, students answered a number of questions concerning reading generally and oral reading more specifically.

David

David's teacher described him as a "competent reader" who often chose novels that were too "easy for his year level". She said that his reading fluency was developing well but that he did not use enough "expression". According to his teacher, David's reading skills were appropriate for his year level and he had the ability to decode difficult words using sounding out strategies. She said his comprehension was good and that he often provided "good detail about specific parts of the story discussed".

David told me that he "sort of likes" to read though he often found it boring. He liked action and adventure stories and only read when it was for homework.

Kate

Kate's teacher described her as a very competent reader who often read "challenging" novels that dealt with "interesting, mature' issues". Further, she said that she experimented with a variety of different genres and that her comprehension levels were good. She was fluent and demonstrated above-average skills for her year level except for the use of expression when reading out-loud.

Kate told me that she liked reading and that her favourite authors were Robin Klein and Libby Hawthorn. She believed she was a 'good' reader and preferred to read to herself.

Harry

Harry's teacher described him as a competent reader who read a variety of different genres some of which were challenging. She said that he was a "fluent" reader but he needed to use more "expression" when he read. He used sounding out strategies to decode difficult words and his comprehension levels were good. She considered him to be slightly above average for his year level.

Harry told me that his reading was "Okay" and that he liked John Marsden as an author. He mainly read at school and preferred reading to himself.

Oral Reading Activities

The students discussed a number of reading activities in the classroom including novel study, comprehension activities and silent reading. They also discussed activities from previous years such as home readers and research reports. This section includes a discussion of the novel-based reading scheme.

Novel-based reading scheme

Students spoke about two different kinds of "novel studies" that they did. The first in a whole class novel study and the second an individual novel study. Both of these had an oral reading component attached to them.

In the whole class novel the whole class read and studied the same book. During the previous term, students studied a book called "The Cay" by Theodore Taylor. David explained some of the procedural aspects of this activity:

> **Transcript 8. 34 - Novel-based reading scheme**
>
> | | D | [Sometimes we do ah a class novel study where we get a book each and the teacher reads it out loud to us |
> |---|---|---|
> | 60 | | and we follow the class. |
> | | J | And does she ever ask the kids to read out loud when you're doing it?= |
> | | D | =Yes |
> | | J | And do you have to do that when she asks you? |
> | 65 | D | Yep |
> | | J | Yes and does everyone get a turn at doing that? |
> | | D | Yes |

Following this, the students completed activities connected to the reading. During the reading, it was a requirement that others listened. Apparently, some students "yelled out" when others were reading. If this occurred, they lost contract points:

> **Transcript 8. 35 - Contract points**
>
> | 120 | J | What does she say to kids that are yelling out? Anything? |
> |---|---|---|
> | | D | Punishes them. |
> | | J | Punish them? How does she punish them? |
> | | H | Take contract points. |

In the individual novel studies, students completed a contract on a novel of their choice. Students read the book, did various comprehension-based activities and then presented their work to the class. In addition to this, they had reading conferences with their teacher. During these, they read a page or two to the teacher, followed by questions about the text:

> **Transcript 8. 36 - Conferencing**

	J	So how does the conference work tell me what happens exactly.
	D	Well we just get up with your novel study book and you give the teacher the novel study book and she read and
450		she'll flick through it and read bits and then she'll and she'll ask you questions about characters or what happens here so then she knows really if you've read the book or not.
	J	OK. Does she ask you to read from it too?
455	D	Yeah you
	K	Yeah you read it read a page from the book.

During the conference, the teacher listened to them read, wrote notes on their reading, gave feedback, assisted with pronunciation and checked their understanding of the text.

I asked students how they figured out unfamiliar words. In the individual interviews, Harry suggested that he tried to sound them out in his head. Kate said she used a dictionary or asked the teacher. As the following data from the group interview show they were encouraged to use a dictionary if they did not understand a word's meaning or ask the teacher if they needed help with pronunciation:

Transcript 8. 37 - Unknown words

350	J	OK so what sorts of things do you guys do you do now if you don't know a word how do you figure it out?
	H	We have to use a [dictionary.
	D	[Dictionary
	H	Or ask a teacher or a friend.
355	J	Yeah what if you can't say it or something? What do you do?
	D	Can't pronounce it?
	J	Mm=
	D	=Oh we just go to this teacher and she
	J	She tells you?
360	D	Yeah=

In the group interview, I asked the students if they asked the teacher questions during the conference:

Transcript 8. 38 - Asking teachers questions

	J	Do you get to ask your teacher questions at the conference?
	D	Ah

	H	<u>No</u> ((laughter)).
495	K	Not really (.)
	H	No cause she hasn't read the book. ((laughter)

This was an interesting response. The students were somewhat surprised by the suggestion that they might ask their teachers questions. Harry initially gave a very strong negative response accompanied by laughter. After thinking awhile, he commented that his teacher would not be able to answer the questions in any case because she had not read the book.

Students' Perceptions of the Activities

Similar to the other groups of students there were particular aspects of each activity that they liked and disliked. Throughout the interviews, students highlighted some differences between reading silently and reading out-loud. Students made limited suggestions about how to improve reading in school.

Novel study

Both David and Kate said that they do not mind doing novel studies, however Harry said that he did not like the writing associated with the activity. Despite this, all of the students said that given a choice they would prefer to read silently rather than out-loud. They did not mind reading out-loud to their teacher in the reading conference but did not like to do it in the whole class situation during the whole class novel study. In the individual interviews, Kate said she found it "embarrassing" to read out-loud, Harry commented it is "not all that great" and David simply claimed he preferred to read to himself:

Transcript 8. 39 - Reading to yourself versus reading out-loud

95	H	It's OK but [not really.
	D	[Sort of
	J	Not really? Do you?
	K	Ah not really
	J	What is it about reading out loud. If you had the choice
100		would you rather read out loud or read to yourself?
	H	Read to myself=
	D	=read to myself.
	J	What's the [difference between
	K	[Depends what you're reading. If you're
105		reading like (.) a weird book that you can't really
		understand some most of the words you don't want to

<pre>
              read it out loud.
       J   Why?
       K   Cause you might keep stuttering and people yell at
110   you.((laughter))
</pre>

The students suggested that reading out-loud was not so difficult if the text was easy and you knew it well. Finally, Harry claimed that he only liked listening to others read if they were "pretty good readers". In the group interview, the students reiterated this saying they did not like listening to a "boring" book or to someone who was not a "very good reader" because they often "stutter" and have "no expression".

Reading aloud versus reading silently

All of the students claimed they found it easier to read silently than to read out-loud. Harry suggested it was slower to read out-loud and more difficult to pronounce the words. Kate also indicated it was much quicker to read to herself. David claimed it was easier because you did not actually have to "talk" when reading silently.

In the group interview Harry expressed the frustration he experienced when reading out-loud because of the difficulty associated with pronunciation:

Transcript 8. 40 - "Like you know what they are. Sometimes you just can't say them"

<pre>
       H   Like what David said about stuttering kind of
              thing.((laughter)) Not really stutterling [stuttering.
       J   [So you don't
              have to worry about other people thinking about the way
              that you talking is [that what
              H   [Not necessarily but you know what
              the words are straight away like you know what they are
              sometimes you just can't say them they don't come out
              kind of thing.
</pre>

Making changes

This group did not offer many suggestions for change when asked apart from the fact that they felt silent reading could be for a longer time period and that they did not believe it was necessary to read out-loud. They suggested that

teachers could find out how well they could read by asking them to do more written activities similar to the ones in their novel contracts.

Assessment

During the interviews, the students rated them selves and others as readers. Some identified areas they needed to improve and they discussed the ways in which their teacher assessed their reading. Finally, they described the characteristics of a 'good' reader both from their own and their teacher's perspective.

Teacher assessing students

The students discussed their perceptions of how the teacher assessed reading. In the individual interviews, David claimed that teachers listened to students read and looked at the kinds of books they were reading. Harry commented that his teacher did this through their oral book presentations. He added that during the reading conferences when they read out-loud the teacher checked whether the reading "flows", that is, that they did not "hesitate" or "stumble" too much. The students expanded on these ideas further in the group interview:

Transcript 8. 41 - Assessment

Example 1

	K	In novel studies we have to read to the teacher and she (.)
190	J	What happens when you read to the teacher during novel study?
	K	Uh she judges what you're like and.
	J	She does and what does she use that information for do you think?
	H	On our reports.
195	K	Reports
	J	For your reports so she thinks that's why she's listening to you read?
	H	Yeah. Also we do comprehension activities.
	J	OK how does that work?
200	H	We get a sheet of information and a sheet of questions.
	J	Yep
	H	And we read the information and answer the questions.
	J	OK So do you think that helps her work out how good you are at reading?
205	K	Yes=

	J	=What does she learn about your reading by doing that?
	D	She learns (.) how (.) well how loud you are and how confident you are in reading.
	J	Not in the comprehension though?=
210	H	=Oh no we read that out loud sometimes.=

Example 2

	D	They and um book conferences.
	K	[ ]
435	J	What's a conference?
	D	When you read a bit of the book and they [ask you questions
	H	[ask you questions
	D	about it.

In these examples, the students claimed that the teacher assessed their reading during novel studies, oral and written comprehension and reading conferences. They suggested that she not only checked their ability to read out-loud but also their understanding of what they had read. Further, David suggested in another section of the interview that this was also a means for the teacher to check whether they had actually done the reading:

Transcript 8. 42 - Accountability

	D	Well we just get up with your novel study book and you give the teacher the novel study book and she read and
450		she'll flick through it and read bits and then she'll and she'll ask you questions about characters or what happens here so then she knows really if you've read the book or not.

Students assessing themselves and others

When asked how they rated themselves as readers Harry thought he was "Okay", Kate felt she was "pretty good" and David did not really comment apart from the fact that he said he didn't really like reading.

This group did not identify areas needing improvement in their reading, though Harry did mention that his teacher claimed he mumbled too much in

both the individual and group interviews and David suggested that sometimes the teacher asked him to read louder and with more expression:

Transcript 8. 43 - Feedback

	H	Oh they don't mumble.((laughter))
	J	They don't mumble. Who's been accused of mumbling here?
235	H	Me ((laughter))

Students did not mention any other students in their class but were able to identify the characteristics of a 'good' reader from both their own and their teacher's perspective.

Describing 'good' readers

All of the students except Kate described the characteristics of a 'good' reader from their own perspective. David said that a 'good' reader was "fast", "confident" and "used expression" and Harry said that they had a "clear voice", spoke "loud" and did not "mumble". Kate mentioned the fact that her teacher liked students to be able to read out-loud well. This was interesting because when I asked Kate what sort of help her teacher gave her during the individual oral reading sessions in the reading conference she said that her teacher did not really say anything to her but rather just listened. This might account for the fact that she found it difficult to describe a 'good' reader since she claimed her teacher did not need to give her help or advice during these conferences:

Transcript 8. 44 - Reading conferences

85	J	How does your teacher help with your reading?
	K	Um I don't know what she does with everyone else but she just listens to me.
	J	Just listens to you?
90	K	Yeah
	J	Um does she sit down and give you help with your reading?
	K	Uh (.) if you go up to her and want help [ ]
95	J	Uh huh. Um Does she talk to you about what she writes down at these meetings?
	J	No so she just writes that down.

On the other hand, Harry mentioned that his teacher told him quite frequently to speak louder and not to mumble which might account for why he saw speaking "loudly" and "not mumbling" as characteristics of a 'good' reader:

Transcript 8. 45 - Feedback

	J	When you're doing those conferences what sorts of things does she talk to you about?
240	H	Um if you mumble .((laughter))

Similarly, in the individual interviews David claimed that his teacher told him to speak louder and use expression and these were the characteristics he identified to describe a 'good' reader.

This is similar to the data from the first group of Year 4/5 students where they identified characteristics of a 'good' reader as those areas that they needed to improve in their own reading. The students could have learned this from the feedback and advice given to them by their teacher. The following data from the group interview indicate how the students collectively described a 'good' reader from their teacher's perspective. A number of these comments echoed the comments given by their teacher in the conferences during the individual interviews:

Transcript 8. 46 - 'Good' readers

	D	More confident.
230	H	Yeah=
	D	=And they don't stutter all the time on all words.
	J	Yeah what else?
	H	Oh they don't mumble.((laughter))
	J	They don't mumble. Who's been accused of mumbling
235		here?
	H	Me ((laughter))
	J	Oh that's right you do you're a mumbler. OK anything else?
	D	Ah (.) they like speak clear.
240	J	Speak clearly? They don't [mumble?
	K	[They read quickly
	J	They don't speak too quickly or not too slow just the right speed [do you think?
	K	[And they don't really (.) oh they're not they
245		don't really talk like (.) oh - and - he - did this. ((talking in a monotone))
	J	So you mean boring [like kind of?
	K	[slow [ ]

```
          K       Yeah
250    J       [OK
          D       [Expression
```

Learning About Reading

Students learned about what was required of them in the reading activities they described. They knew the rules for the various activities and the consequences of not following these. They did not explain the purpose of the activities but believed that they were sites where the teacher assessed their reading and checked whether they had in fact done the required reading. They were not as knowledgeable about others in their class and this was probably because of the ungraded nature of the activities and texts in this particular class.

The students learned about how the teacher assessed their reading although they did not specifically talk about what she assessed. They learned what constituted a 'good' reader from both their own and their teacher's perspective and this was probably due to the feedback and advice they received during reading conferences and whole class reading.

They learned that sounding-out; using a dictionary and asking the teacher were good strategies to figure out unknown words. They also learned that the ability to read fast, clearly, loudly, with confidence and expression, and without mumbling were important characteristics of 'good' readers. They understood the importance of comprehending what they read. Presumably, students have learned this by participating in the various reading activities they described.

Students articulated the differences between oral and silent reading and preferred to read silently because of the greater emotional and cognitive difficulties associated with the activity of reading out-loud. Students were unclear about the benefits of oral reading in relation to an improvement in their own reading.

The following chapter uses a similar structure and reports on the interview data from Gunn Primary.

CHAPTER 9

Students Speak: Gunn Primary

This chapter follows on from the previous chapter. It discusses the student interview data from Gunn Primary. Again, it includes a number of issues raised in the interviews relating to the nature and use of oral reading and students' feelings about oral reading activities. It divides into four main sections. The first examines the Year 3 data, the second, the Year 4/5 data, the third, the Year 7 data and the fourth, a summary that compares the data from both school sites.

The Year 3 Data

The Students

Three students participated in the interviews. I conducted two individual interviews with each student and one group interview with all three. They answered a number of questions concerning reading generally and oral reading more specifically. I have given students pseudonyms for the purpose of this discussion. They are Lyn, Dane and Rowena. All of the students were around nine years of age at the time of the interviews.

Lyn

Lyn's teacher described her as a "bright, energetic student who always displayed a positive attitude towards her reading." She said that she was an example of an "average to lower" reader.

Lyn told me that she liked to read and that she read both at home and at school. She enjoyed reading "easy novels" and liked "Roald Dahl" as an author. She believed that she was much better at reading at the time of the interviews because she had struggled in previous years. Lyn preferred to read silently.

Dane

Dane had only arrived in the class at the beginning of Term 3. His teacher said that he often displayed "hasty traits" and tended to "rush his work". His reading also reflected this. He was a "confident" reader who applied good strategies during group work. She described him as an "average to high reader".

Dane told me that he liked reading and that he did most of his reading at home. He enjoyed the "Goosebumps" series by RL Stine and his parents bought most of his books from Big W.

Rachel

Rachel's teacher described her as an "extremely confident" reader who had "very good reading strategies". She often read in between lessons and enjoyed reading to the class. Rachel was one of the "higher readers in the class".

Rachel told me that she enjoyed reading and read both at home and at school. She occasionally read to her Mother and believed that she was a 'good' reader. She also liked the "Goosebumps" series and her favourite story was the "Adventures of Captain Underpants". She also told me that she liked to read to others.

Oral Reading Activities

This Year 3 group, unlike the Farrer Primary group, identified two activities when they did oral reading in school. These included a reading group activity and taking readers home. Similar to other groups they also discussed aspects of silent reading.

Reading groups

Another activity described by the students, involved students reading in small groups and then answering a number of questions related to the reading. This activity happened every Tuesday and Wednesday after recess. There were four different reading groups named "Lions", "Cats", "Sharks" and "Dolphins". Each group was reading a different book and the activity started with the

children reading the book in a "round robin" fashion. Following this, the students read the text individually. After this, they had a number of questions they needed to answer about what they had read. Lyn referred to sometimes doing "nouns". Rachel described the activity:

Transcript 9. 1 - Reading groups

Example 1

	R	Well first Ms P gives out the um sheets and the books to
115		go with the group and sometimes while the Crackers
		have to go get their own books cause they're up on the shelf.
	J	Yeah
	R	And we don't have sheets we've got our reading books.
120	J	Uh mm
	R	So the Crackers use their reading books most cause we read on
		our own about three or four chapter books a term. And (.)
	J	So when you've read the books so Mrs um P reads it
125		with you first doesn't she? Talks to you about the book?=
	R	=Mm=
	J	=And what do you do after that?
	R	Well we set off on our um questions.

Further discussion on this activity suggested that groups were ability-based. Rachel talked about the graded nature of the groups and the texts they read:

Transcript 9. 2 - "Different types of level books"

95	J	Four groups or three groups?
	R	Four
	J	Four? OK=
	R	=But one doesn't come that very much. Um we each we each
		read a different book.
100	J	Yes so do you all read the same book in your group?
	R	Yep
	J	Yes OK
	R	And (.)we each read different types of level books like
		we've got Crackers which are like half novel books and
105		we've got some information books that other groups can
		be doing and just play books.

During the activity, there were two teachers working in the room and they offered assistance to the various groups. The students were also encouraged to ask each other for help. The teachers helped them with the

questions, helped them with their reading by showing them what page they were meant to be looking at and assisted them with the meanings of words and sounding out of unknown words:

Transcript 9. 3 - "They help us find the answers"

	J	Yeah what happens when somebody works with your group?
	D	Mm they help us find the answers.
	J	Yeah do they do reading with you?
	D	Yep
	J	Do you read to them?
100	D	Mm yes.
	J	OK what happens then?
	D	(.) They (.)show you what page you're meant to look on.
	J	OK do they help you? Doing that?
	D	Yep
105	J	And how do they help?
	D	They help you with your spelling.
	J	Uh huh=
	D	=And your reading.
	J	And your reading. How do they help with your reading?
110	D	They explain what it means.

When asked about the strategies they used when they came across an unfamiliar word all of the students explained that they used sounding out strategies. Only Lyn mentioned reading on in the sentence to see if it made sense:

Transcript 9. 4 - Sounding out

280	J	What do you do when you don't know a word?
	R	I try to sound it out. Or um I try splitting it into groups.
	J	Uh huh.
	J	What do you do when you don't know a word.
	L	I sounded it out or I read just go one I do the sygables [ ]
285		and then I think I know what it is and I or I just um I go
		with the I um I read the sentence with the word I think it
		is or if it isn't the right I try again.
	J	OK what do you do?
	D	With what?
290	J	If you don't know a word?
	D	Sound it out.

Unlike the previous group, these students had some ideas about why the teacher used this activity. Lyn claimed that it helped them to become "better with words and saying them and all that." Dane suggested it helped them to both read and spell although he was unsure how it did this. Rachel commented

that it helped with words they did not know and to learn "reading skills" and
that it allowed them to progress to texts that were more difficult:

Transcript 9. 5 - "Like first we start off in little picture books"

	J	OK and she helps you out? Yep that's good. Um how else does it help you with your reading?
	R	To learn our re. To learn our reading skills.
160	J	OK what sort of reading skills are you talking about?
	R	Like first we start of in little picture books.
	J	Mm
	R	For um like little and then um we go on to sort of medium hard books.
165	J	Uh hum
	R	Then we each time we go up a level and the last level I would have to say second last level I'd have to say would be a chapter book and the first last level would have to be a very thick chapter book.

Whilst the students did not identify any specific rules for this activity it
would seem that "listening to others" when they were reading was a
requirement. The students spoke about the teacher "telling them off" when they
became "fidgety and start doing their writing". When the teacher was not
present, students employed their own management strategies within the group
to deal with others who were not listening:

Transcript 9. 6 - Managing others

Example 1

D	Except when um the they um start writing when you're not meant to and=
J	=Oh so you meant they're supposed to be listening but they get a bit fidgety and start doing their writing is that what you meant?=
D	=Yeah and the teacher tell them off when you lose your pages.

Example 2

225	J	Don't they what do they do?
	R	They like mess around and talk to other people.
	J	Do you like kids doing that when you're trying to read to them?
	R	No
	J	You don't so does the teacher get cross with them?
230	R	No just one of my classmates tells me tells them to stop it and they tell me to stop reading until they'll stop.

Home readers

In the group interview, similar to the previous group, all of the students spoke about taking readers home and reading to their parents. There was also a signing process connected to the activity. Lyn claimed that she did not read to her mother but that she did the reading on her own and then asked her mother to sign it. Rachel indicated that her mother still listened to her read and Dane said that his mother "sort of" did:

Transcript 9. 7 - Taking readers home

	J	(.) Do you take readers home still?
135	D	Yes
	L	Yes
	J	Do your parents have to read to you?
	ALL	No
	R	We
140	L	I read by myself and I get my Mum to sign them.
	J	OK so you read it by yourself and your Mum just signs your reading. Whose Mum still listens to them?
	R	My Mum
	J	Whose Mum=
145	D	=sort of
	J	What does Mum do when she's listening to you read?
	R	She corrects me sometimes and my sister annoys me sometimes

It was not clear how their parents assisted them with their reading apart from the comment made by Rachel where she suggested her mother corrected her.

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Students' Perceptions of the Activities

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The students did not express a dislike for any of the activities however both Dane and Lyn said that they did not particularly enjoy reading aloud to others. They also said that they found silent reading annoying because it was often difficult to concentrate in the room.

Lyn explained that she preferred to read in her head because she often "mixed up" her words. She also claimed she was often shy:

Transcript 9. 8 - Oral versus silent reading

Example 1

	J	Who likes prefers to read to their selves? Tell me why you like to read to yourself Lyn?
	L	Because I I just want to I get shy sometimes. But when I know the book off by heart it [ ] but when I read it to
250		the book I when I practice reading the book home when different book Dr Seuss but it was mine one of my first ones I have I think I have two at home... and I um I like reading to myself because then cause I when I'm on some other things people are just like looking around and not
255		listening and I just like looking at the book and then reading it to myself and get another one and on like that.

Example 2

312	L	Yes because then I don't get shy. Most of the times I get shy I get I put [ ] have these blue and red veins on me and I shiver and I get distracted and I just want to go home because I'm really shy.

It is interesting to note that Lyn felt more comfortable when she was familiar with the text. Similarly, Dane also preferred to read to himself. When I asked him why he replied, "I am used to reading in my head". Differently, Rachel claimed she liked to read aloud to others because she believed it helped them with their listening skills:

Transcript 9. 9 - "To help other people listen"

215	R	I'd rather read to other people.
	J	You like to do that why do you like to do that?
	R	To help other people listen and and=
	J	=So you think it helps others listen?
	R	Yeah

However, she added that she did not enjoy it when others were not listening to her and as was explained in the previous section she employed her own management techniques to help overcome this. Further, she explained that other students often laughed when students "muck up" on words and this upset her:

Transcript 9. 10 - "Cause we muck up on some words"

270	J	=What do you mean they laugh?
	R	Well
	J	Do some kids laugh? Why do they laugh?

	R	Cause we muck up on some words.
	J	Yeah and what do they do?
275	R	They start cracking up laughing.
	J	Do you like it when they do that?
	R	No not really.
	J	Why not?
	R	Cause it hurts my feelings.

The students expressed their dislike for the inappropriate behaviour of others during the various reading activities. Dane suggested that it often was difficult to concentrate when others were "bugging" him and Rachel highlighted the problem of others not listening:

Transcript 9. 11 - "She tells em to be quiet"

110	D	Outside.
	J	So you prefer not to be in the room. Are there kids who are a little noisy?
	ALL	Yes
	J	What does the teacher [do?
115	L	[Mainly the boys except for Dean.
	R	And Makio
	L	[ ]
	J	So what does the teacher do?
	L	Um she um tells them to be quiet=
120	D	=Sit down=
	L	=to be quiet=
	D	=cause its bad at reading

The students clearly attributed the inappropriate behaviour to the boys though they carefully excluded Dane and Makio from this. This is not the first time the students blamed the 'boys' for inappropriate behaviour. They referred to the behaviour of some boys during reading sessions.

Oral reading versus silent reading

Lyn discussed the differences between reading aloud and reading silently. She thought that reading aloud was more difficult and gave the following explanation:

Transcript 9. 12 - Oral verus silent

	J	Why do you think it's harder?
	L	Because you have to actually say the words and then
165		figure it but when you're in your head the head your

brain knows the word because [ ]=

Dean also believed that he found it much quicker to read silently. Both Dane and Rachel expressed a preference for figuring out unknown words themselves. Lyn said that she preferred someone to tell her:

Transcript 9. 13 - Unknown words

300	J	What do you prefer? Do you prefer to work it out yourself or have someone tell you?
	L	Have someone tell you most of the time.
	J	What do you prefer? Do you like to work it out or someone to tell you?
305	R	Work it out.
	J	Work it out. What do you prefer to do?
	D	When I get the chance if its really hard get help.

Assessment

Students responded to a number of questions related to assessment. Again whilst most of the students were not able to discuss how and when their teacher assessed their reading they did talk about their own and others reading ability and they were able to describe the characteristics of a 'good' reader.

Teacher assessing students

Only one of the students described a time when they thought Mrs N assessed their reading. Rachel claimed that she asked people to read to her for the report cards and that she told them whether they had "done good or bad":

Transcript 9. 14 - Assessing reading

| J | =You're obviously very good at reading so how does your teacher know you're good? |
| R | She us Mrs P usually um asks people to read to her for their report cards and um they tell them like if they've done good or bad in after they've finished. |

Students assessing themselves and others

All of the students felt they were good at reading. Both Dane and Lyn did not explain why, however Rachel gave a detailed explanation of why she considered herself a good reader:

Transcript 9. 15- "I go to my room, shut the door and look through all my books"

	J	Do you think you're a good reader?
	R	Yeah cause um (.) I guess I never stop reading nearly
		every afternoon when I get home I go to my room shut
50		the door and look through all my books.

Lyn also seemed very knowledgeable about the better readers in her class and went as far as naming them:

Transcript 9. 16 - "Because we have separate books"

	L	R is um very good because she's really fast at doing work
		and reading. I'm third best and I haven't well you know
115		D well he's best after R because R knows heaps of words.
	J	So you guys the three top readers in the class.
	L	But some of the because the people um the rest of the
		people still are learning how to read.
	J	How do you know that you're the best?
120	L	Because um just because we have separate groups. Two
		are the same. People don't really know how to say words
		that properly.
	J	Yeah
	L	So I know because we normally read to each other in in
125		the groups and then I'm noticing that some people are
		very good and sometimes they are bad at it.
	J	How do you know they're bad though by listening to them?
	L	Because they have to sound out the words and try=
130	J	=So they don't know many words?
	L	Um and they have to really sound out the words. Quite a
		few do that.

Interestingly she was talking about herself, Rachel and Dean. The graded nature of the groups appeared to be problematic for Lyn. Throughout the interview she tried to convince all of us that she was one of the better readers in the class however, she was careful to rank herself below both Dane and Rachel. The conversation revealed that both Rachel and Dane were in the same reading group but Lyn was in another. In one part of the group interview when the

others were talking about the graded nature of the groups, Lyn insisted that the groupings had nothing to do with levels:

Transcript 9. 17 - "It's not the level"

	J	Now how do you know? What's the groups have you all sort of how are the groups named do you think?
170	R	Um by um how they're reading levels are.
	J	OK
	L	No
	J	Do you [think? Is that what you think
	D	[Cats got rid of one
175	L	My mum said he should be in that one
	J	Your Mum did why?
	L	I don't know but my teacher just writ off something and its not the level.
	J	Ok you don't think it's the level.
180	L	Yep. How good you are do you think it's that?
	L	No
	J	What do you think it is then?
	L	Just I just think that they write it in.
	J	OK so it means nothing you're just all in different groups
185	L	Yep. Mixed up from your friends.
	J	OK so you think its levels
	R	Mm
	J	What level do you think you're in?
	R	Um I think I'm in to chapter books.
190	J	Into chapter books. What does that mean?
	R	Mm I read nearly I read big page um lots of writing books=
	J	=Mm=
	R	=And (.) sometimes seven chapter books.
195	J	OK what level are you in do you know?
	R	Probably novels cause I have read most of the Roald Dahl books.
	J	OK Um what about you what level do you think you are?
200	L	Same as Rachel .
	J	This one OK. Are you in Rachel 's group?
	L	No

The other students did not name students but were able to name some attributes 'good' readers. This group had greater difficulty with this question than the previous group.

Describing 'good' readers

Dean believed that 'good' readers read "lots" of books. In fact, he explained how he was in a reading competition and won prizes because he had read "lots" of books. Rachel suggested that 'good' readers were not "lazy" and

that they read when they were "supposed" to. She added that 'good' readers also needed to "know the words".

When I asked them how their teacher might describe a 'good' reader, they added the following. Dane noted they should be "confident" though he did not understand what the word meant. In the group interview, the students explained that the teacher would describe them as "very good" and "excellent". They would also "try hard" and be able to read words with "ten" or "twelve" letters in them.

Learning About Reading

The talk throughout the interviews provided some insight into what the students had learned about reading in school. Through participating in the various oral reading activities, they learned that a good strategy to figure out unknown words was to sound them out. They also learned that reading involved some understanding of what they had read since "answering questions" about their reading was an important component of the group reading activity. They also learned that it was important to listen to others when they were reading. They did not discuss particular oral reading skills throughout the data, which suggested it was not a high priority in this particular classroom. One student commented that 'good' readers were "confident". However, he did not understand what the word meant and did not know whether he was in fact a "confident" reader. He admitted to hearing the word used in the classroom.

The students also learned about the rules associated with the various activities and relied not only on the teacher to enforce these but employed strategies within their own groups to deal with students who did not adhere to the rules.

Similar to the other group the students were unsure about how their teacher carried out the assessment of reading but were able to identify those students who were "good" at it. They acquired this information by listening to each other in their groups. The graded nature of the groups and texts that they read, also served to reinforce this. The graded nature of these groups was

particularly problematic for Lyn as she was keen to position herself as a 'good' reader in the classroom. The fact that she was not a member of the "top" reading group and that the other students were aware of the graded nature of these groups created some tension for Lyn.

The Year 4/5 Data

The Students

Three students participated in the interviews. Again, they answered a number of questions about reading generally and oral reading more specifically. Like the other groups, students have pseudonyms for the purpose of this discussion. They were Emma, Helen and Sam. There were six individual interviews and one group interview.

Emma

Emma's teacher said that she really enjoyed reading but that she lacked "the skills to read at year level". He described her as a "quiet" student who "lacked confidence" when reading "in front of the class". She read a variety of different texts during silent reading time.

Emma told me that she liked to read and that her Mum made her read each night. She was currently reading the first book in the "Harry Potter" series. She chose her books for school from the classroom bookshelf and sometimes the school library. She said that she was a "slow" reader and did not like reading to others.

Helen

Helen's teacher described her as a "capable" reader who would only read when "required to do so". She did not read much at home and did not appear to enjoy reading. Her comprehension skills were good and she had a reading ability "at year level".

Helen told me that she liked to read and that she sometimes read at home before she went to bed. She got her books for school from the classroom shelf and sometimes from the school library. She preferred to read to herself.

Sam

Sam's teacher described him as a "very confident" and avid reader. He was willing to read anything but particularly enjoyed the "Goosebumps" series. He often read up to three novels per week. His reading ability was "above year level". Sam told me that he liked to read and that he read quite a "lot" at home. He preferred reading at home to school because there were fewer distractions. He did not mind reading to his peers.

Oral Reading Activities

This group identified three different reading activities. These included silent reading, "round robin" reading and reading groups. The following is a discussion of those activities with an oral reading component.

Round robin reading

Each Thursday after recess, the whole class read a novel together. The students sat on the floor in a large circle, each with a copy of the text. At the time of the interview, the students were reading the first novel in the "Wicked" series by Paul Jennings. Each student had a turn at reading. According to the students, the teacher nominated each turn, according to where students were on the class roll:

Transcript 9. 18 - Round robin reading

	J	OK. Tell me about the other reading activity. You know I've come in and I've had a look at it. OK the one where you read around in a circle? You're reading a book. What
210		happens with that? (.) First thing is that everyone sits in a circle=
	H	=Yeah [and then
	S	[and then Mr C
	E	Cause he's got his own book. He's got his own "Wicked"
215		book and he writes (.) he does this thing. He goes down like that [ ]=
	H	He writes who reads=
	E	=and he writes down who reads.
	J	Oh OK=
220	H	=And um=
	S	=he goes around in a circle. Doesn't go around whoever and then once Mr C finished like two chapters=
	J	=Mm=
	S	=or something um he reads a little bit the last chapter

225   and then we just do an activity.

As the following data illustrate, the teacher also posed a number of questions to check students' understanding during the reading. He also did this on other occasions when he read to the students:

Transcript 9. 19 - Listening

	E	(.) Well when we listen he knows when we're listening. Sometimes he reads a book to us and he asks us what happens and sometimes [ ] or something [ ] Kyle.
	S	And C listens sometimes
520	E	Yeah
	J	You like to answer the questions don't you? Who doesn't like to answer questions?
	E	Me ((laughs))
	J	Why?
525	E	Um in case I give the wrong answer.
	J	And what about you?
	H	Um I'm the same as E because (.) um cause if I say the wrong thing then I get real embarrassed.

Both Emma and Helen said they preferred not to answer the questions in case they gave an incorrect answer. Sam on the other hand liked to answer the questions. My observations of this particular event revealed that only a small number of students engaged in discussions about the text.

Following the reading, the students completed a written activity connected to the reading. Students did not discuss any specific rules for the activity apart from the fact that they needed to follow the text so they knew where to read from when it was their turn. Their teacher told me how he often changed the reading order as a strategy to ensure students followed the text and to prevent them from figuring out their turn.

Again, students were less able to articulate why their teacher did the activity. As the following data show, both Helen and Emma suggested that it was useful because it helped them to learn new words and to read "better":

Transcript 9. 20 - Learning how to read

Example 1

| | J | So how do people learn from what you were doing this |

morning? What sorts of things do they learn?

H   Uh like they're learning how to read properly=

J   =Yeah how does that help?

110   H   To cause if they cause if they read a bit they're stuck on a word and then the word comes up again and its their turn to read they'll say it.

Example 2

190   J   Why do you think teachers um do reading activities like group reading? What's the reason for doing that?

E   To help us read [better.

J   [OK how does it help you?

E   Cause you learn new words.

In addition to nominating the next reader the teacher assisted students with figuring out unknown words by either telling them or encouraging them to use sounding out strategies. Students also assisted each other by helping them find their place and by supplying unknown words. During the teacher interviews, their teacher informed me that he encouraged students to do this:

Transcript 9. 21 - "I think they don't like reading at all"

J   I noticed there were a couple of kids who didn't have their place that means they weren't following the story=

345   H   =Yeah they were just talking. Because they really don't like to read.

J   So do you think they don't like reading out loud?

H   I think they don't like reading at all.

J   OK they're not watching the story. So I noticed you kids

350   were helping them find where they were up to.

E   Yeah

J   Yeah do kids do that all the time?

E   Yeah

J   What happens when you don't know a word what do

355   you do?

E   Some people might whisper it to you or Mr P will say it.

Students detailed the procedural aspects of this activity well, however they found it more difficult to discuss its instructional benefits.

Group reading

Students detailed an activity that occurred in the previous term. There were four groups formulated according to ability. The fourth group comprised

the better readers. Connected to this activity was some sort of "novel contract", which the students had to complete after they read their text. The following data from the group interview details some of the procedural aspects of this activity and the graded nature of the groups and texts read:

Transcript 9. 22 - Small group reading

	H	Group one was reading (.) something.
	J	Yeah they'd have one book.
	H	Yeah. Group two was on the [ ] story
290	J	Yep
	H	And I was in Group three=
	J	=Yep=
	H	=and we had to sit and [ ] was about. Eight or nine people=
295	J	=Uh huh=
	H	=and Mr C would come and sit on the chair and read with us and we had to read it out to him=
	J	=so you didn't mind that?
	H	Oh=
300	J	=Was that better than the whole big group=
	H	=yeah.
	J	OK=
	S	=And Group four. I was in Group four and they just got this novel thing and had to read it and then they [got
305		hard work.
	H	[yeah.
	S	It had to be a novel not a blue spot. Novel that you have to read on your own whatever time and when you finished there's a sheet and you have to complete (.)
310		seven.
	J	What's a blue spot?
	H	Um a book what's easy to read=
	J	=Oh OK so some books got spots on them. Is that what you're saying?
	H	Yeah

The students again found it difficult to say why the teacher did the activities apart from the fact that it helped them to learn new words and to read better. Sam mentioned that the novel contracts were set up in a way to ensure that the students had actually read the book and understood what they had read. There was no discussion about any rules associated with this activity.

Students' Perceptions of the Activities

Students discussed the different aspects of the various activities that they liked and disliked. Again, they suggested ways to improve the various activities.

All of the students claimed they enjoyed reading to themselves although they all commented that they preferred to do this at home rather than at school. Sam explained that the other students at his desk were often too noisy and he found it difficult to concentrate. Emma wanted more opportunities in school to read to herself.

The choice of books in the classroom was also problematic for the students:

Transcript 9. 23 - Choosing books

75	H	=They're just looking at the pictures.
	J	How do you know that?
	H	Because they just flick through the pictures.
	S	Yeah but some books have lots of writing. Oh just information books.
	J	So how may kids out of the class say wouldn't read during silent reading?
	H	About [a quarter.
85	S	[half

The students also suggested that many of the students did not read during this time but rather "flicked" through the books. When I asked the students if they read, Sam said he did and both Emma and Helen said they did sometimes. This was largely dependent on whether they had their own book from the library or whether they had to read the books made available to them in the classroom. According to the students, the teacher chose the books for the classroom based on the thematic content of the work they were doing in class.

All of the students expressed a preference for reading silently rather than reading out-loud to others. For both Emma and Helen reading out-loud was problematic because they often got nervous and they felt embarrassed when they made mistakes. They also felt that there were others in the class who experienced this:

Transcript 9. 24 - Oral versus silent

240	J	OK are there kids who don't like to read?
	S	Yeah sometimes=
	J	=Yeah=
	S	=cause they can't read it properly.// They're a bit shy.
	J	Does any one here get shy?
245	E	Me
	J	You do what about you?
	H	Um sometimes (.) like //
	J	It's OK
	H	Um like when he finish someone and then he starts
250		talking and then he chooses me I get like really
		frightened. I don't want to read.
	J	So how do you feel? (.) A bit shy?
	H	Yeah
	J	You don't get nervous do you?
255	S	Not really.
	J	Do you like reading in front of other friends?
	S	Not really.

Differently it was a problem for Sam because he found it difficult listening to other students read particularly if they were not 'good' readers. During the group interview, both Emma and Helen added that they did not enjoy listening to students who experienced difficulty reading:

Transcript 9. 25 - "They um stutter a bit"

410	H	Yep someone who is good at reading?
	J	Why don't you like listening to someone who's not?
	H	Because they don't talk very loud [ ]
	J	They what
	H	They um stutter a bit=
415	E	=Read a bit quiet=

Both Helen and Sam preferred to work out unknown words themselves whereas Emma liked someone to tell her. Helen explained that it was much better to work it out for her self as it helped her to remember the word next time you saw it. She also commented that often others told students the word before they had the opportunity to work it out for themselves:

Transcript 9. 26 - Unknown words

	J	Who likes to work out words for themselves?
	H	Me
380	S	I do

	J	Does anyone here prefer someone else to tell you first?
	E	Sort of
	J	Sort of. Why do you like someone else to tell you first?
	E	Um (.)
385	J	Why do you prefer to work it out yourself?
	H	Cause they might think they're better than you.=
	J	=OK=
	H	=And they start being all snobby.=
	J	=OK=
390	H	=Like it would be easier if you see that word again if you work it out for yourself and you see that one again you'll know it.
	J	Right so you think you'll know it better by [working
	H	[Yeah
395	J	it out for yourself. What about you?
	S	Sometimes like I well like [ ] because when people tell you like they you feel like they're better that you and you like really embarrassed because they told you the word.
	J	OK so you're sort of the thing like you know I can work
400		this out for myself I don't need you to help me.
	H	Sometimes if we're reading and we just take a bit long and then they say the word. Some people tell us before we say it=

The preferred strategy for working out words was to ask someone or sound them out. None of the students described any other strategies:

Transcript 9. 27 - Sounding out

	S	Oh sometimes I ask Mr P or I um solve it out into gaps=
	J	=Gaps?
115	S	Like confidence. Like con - fi - dence=
	J	=So like into syllables=
	S	=Yeah like syllables yeah.

Group reading

All of the students said they preferred this activity to the whole group "round robin" reading though Emma said she would prefer one to one help from the teacher rather than working in a group.

Reading aloud versus reading silently

Students did not articulate any differences between oral and silent reading apart from the fact that they all expressed a preference for reading silently. Further, Emma in particular, believed she was better at reading in her

head. Sam mentioned the fact that he found it more difficult to comprehend the story when reading out-loud.

Making changes

I asked the students about changes they would like to make to the various activities discussed. As the following examples from the data show they felt that silent reading could be improved if they could "pick the books" for the classroom, if they had a longer time to read and if their teacher turned the radio off:

Transcript 9. 28 - Change

Example 1

	J	How could you perhaps what could you do to make it better choice of books. How could you guys help?
155	H	We could pick the books.
	J	OK so who picks the books.
	S	Mr P=

Example 2

185	J	It's OK you'll think of it in a minute. What else do you think we could do to improve silent reading? (.) Anyone else got any [other ideas?
	E	[Get Mr P not to put on the radio.
	J	OK well maybe he thinks that's good for you though.
190		You should ask him why he does it?
	S	He thinks we like it.

In relation to the whole group round robin activity, they all felt they liked the smaller group reading activity in the previous term better. All of the students said they would rather just listen to the teacher read rather than to their peers. Emma suggested that it would be better if the teacher worked with them on a one to one basis, as it would be more beneficial to her reading development.

Assessment

During the interviews students discussed both their own and others reading ability. They identified some of the ways their teacher assessed reading and they described a 'good' reader from both their own and their teacher's perspective.

Teacher assessing students

All of the students identified ways in which their teacher assessed reading. In the individual interviews, both Emma and Sam claimed that the teacher did this by listening to them read. Sam added that he also figured this out through their reading contracts:

Transcript 9. 29 - Assessing reading

	J	So how does he find out whether kids are good at
75		reading. What does he do to find out?
	S	Um makes them read out to him and=.
	J	=So do you think he does that when he's listening to you
		in the morning?
	S	I think so.
80	J	What other times would he find out?
	S	Um when we do our reading contracts=
	J	=Uh huh=
	S	=cause we do them as well in reading. And he looks at
		our stories and cause most of them he's read and he
85		chooses the books that we sometimes at the library and
		he gets these like thick books and I can read them and
		his he hasn't read them but he knows that I have read
		them cause some people just like they seen the movie
		and they grab the book and they just read and they don't
90		read it=
	J	=Yeah=
	S	=so I think he makes people read make them read it and
		then and make the contract and he'll know that if they're
		making it up or not.

As Sam suggested the reading contracts were also a means for the teacher to check whether students had actually done the reading. In the group interview, the students spoke about a "reading test". The way in which they described the activity suggested it was some sort of "miscue analysis":

Transcript 9. 30 - Miscues

```
485    J        Do you ever read to Mr P on your own?
       H        Yeah he [had this
       E                [he's got these sheets and=
       J        =OK=
       S        =It's a of the "Three Little Pigs"=
490    E        =and you have to read it to him=
       J        =OK what's the [   ] for=
       H        =It's kind of a test of something to see who to mark our
                where we are in reading.
       J        OK do you like [doing that?
495    H                      [and he crosses the word what we
                stumbled on=
       J        =stumbled on=
       E        =we're doing it now because I haven't read it yet.
       J        Oh OK and does he talk to you about it after or do you
500             just go and sit down.
       S        No he talks about a little bit and we just go sit down.
       J        Yeah what does he talk about?
       S        I just said um that word [   ]
       E        On this sheet I went to ask Mr P something and I saw the
505             sheet that we're supposed to be reading and the words
                that we got right he ticked=
       H        =Yeah and if we [   ]=
       E        and if we got it wrong he just left it.
```

During the teacher interviews, Mr P explained how he conducted running records at least once or twice each year.

Finally, the students believed that their teacher found out about their reading and listening skills by asking them questions about a book he had read to them

Students assessing themselves and others

Students rated both their own and others reading ability in the interviews. Emma did not believe she was very good at reading. She thought she was too "slow" and that she made too many mistakes. Helen felt she was average and Sam rated himself as a "good" reader. All of the students expressed the view that they read better silently than out-loud.

The students claimed they knew who the 'good' readers were in the class. They worked this out by listening to others read and via the comments their teacher made. The students described 'good' readers as confident, fast expressive and accurate. Occasionally students included "understanding" as an

attribute of a good reader, however, it was not clear how a student knew that other students understood a text.

Describing 'good' readers

All of the students discussed characteristics they thought constituted a 'good' reader. In the individual interviews, both Emma and Helen claimed they were "fast" and made few "mistakes". Sam and Helen both noted they could "understand" words. Further, Sam described them as "confident" and avid readers who read "lots of books". In the group interview the students claimed 'good' readers read with "expression" in the same way their teacher did. In addition, they could recall or retell the story quickly:

Transcript 9. 31 - 'Good' readers

Example 1

	E	They hardly make any mistakes and they fast at reading.

Example 2

	S	Um they read a lot=
	J	=Yeah=
	S	=and they can understand words and they can have confidence in themselves reading out loud.

Example 3

	H	Well like they don't make much mistake and they know what the words are=
	E	=they can read faster
	H	B she's a really good reader [ ]
535	J	How do you think you would describe someone good at reading?
	S	Um same as H. They're really good at (.) um of pronouncing the words and um they normally (.) tell about the story. Like just quickly.
540	J	Now how would Mr P=
	H	=They like do it how Mr P does it because like Mr P usually reads with like if someones like if it's like and give expression. Yeah.
	J	Makes it more interesting?
545	H	Yeah
	S	Like if someone is dying he ends up yelling ((laughs)) On the chair he falls over.
	J	Does he? So you like listening to him then?
	H	Yeah
550	J	Do you think he's a good model for kids?
	S	Yes

> J   Would you like to learn to be like him?
> S   He's like a big kid. That's probably why he wanted to be
>   a teacher.

Students found it more difficult to describe a 'good' reader from their teacher's perspective. In the group interview, they suggested that he seems more interested in the 'good' readers and that he tended to give more help to those who found reading difficult:

Transcript 9. 32 - "Mr P actually looks at the person and not the door"

> | | J | Um. How would he describe someone good at reading? |
> | 560 | E | Like when it's there turn to read Mr P actually [   ]. If someone walks in the door Mr P actually looks at the reader not the person at the door and= |
> | | J | =Oh OK so he looks interested. If they're not good what do teachers do? |
> | 565 | S | Um they just said um he helps them on the way if they don't sound very good but [   ] excellent. |
> | | E | Last time when [   ] K read [   ] and Mr P said that it was good reading. |

This was not the first time that the students referred to K in the data. It would seem that K was not a particularly 'good' reader and what the students were highlighting here was the fact that their teacher praised K for his reading last time he read.

It is possible that the students misunderstood my question during the interview. They have answered in a way that suggested they were not describing a 'good reader' as their teacher would but rather telling me what their teacher does to signal whether someone was 'good'.

Learning About Reading

Students learned about the procedural aspects of the various activities they described. They also learned about the rules associated with each of these. They learned that they must participate in each of the activities, although with activities such as silent reading it was easier to choose not to participate by simply "flicking" through the books rather than doing the reading. They admitted that a number of students chose not to read during this time. In the "round robin" reading activity, participation was mandatory and public.

Again, these students too had a limited understanding about why the teacher used the activities. They assessed themselves and others due to the public nature of some of the activities and the graded nature of the groups and texts they read. They knew about the areas they needed to improve.

They learned about how their teacher assessed their reading and they described what they believed constituted a 'good' reader presumably by listening to others read and by listening to the advice and comments made by their teacher.

Similar to the previous group oral reading skills such as speaking loudly, not making mistakes, confidence and reading with expression featured as important characteristics of a 'good' reader. These students also mentioned the fact that 'good' readers needed to comprehend what they read. This knowledge probably resulted from the comprehension activities they did after their reading, the questions the teacher asked them and the novel contracts they had to complete. They learned that 'sounding' out and asking others were good strategies to use when figuring out unknown words. Similar to the previous group they made suggestions to improve the various activities they discussed.

The Year 7 Data

The Students

Three students participated in the interviews and answered a number of questions about reading generally and oral reading more specifically. There were six individual interviews with each child interviewed on two separate occasions. There were two group interviews with all three participants. The students have pseudonyms, which are Hayley, Riana and Sarah. Both Hayley and Sarah were twelve at the time of the interviews and Riana was thirteen.

Haley

Haley had been at the school for two years. She enjoyed music and dance. She enjoyed working with younger children. She was a below average reader who according to her teacher, needed to develop her confidence.

Haley told me that she "kind of likes to read" and that she did most of her reading during English at school. She acquired her reading material from the school library and thought that she was getting better at "reading out-loud".

Riana

Riana's teacher described her as an, "intelligent young lady" who was "eager to learn". She was a keen BMX rider and enjoyed netball, music and dance. She was in the "top" reading group and an above average reader.

Riana told me that she did not read at home and that she did not enjoy reading very much. She was in the "top" reading group in her class and preferred to read to herself.

Sarah

Sarah's teacher described her as a very "social" person who enjoyed all "aspects of school". She too was in the "top" reading group and was one of the better readers in the class at the time.

Sarah told me that she liked to read and that she did most of her reading at home. She was reading the "Harry Potter" books at the time of the interviews. She preferred to read to herself and occasionally read to her mother.

Oral Reading Activities

Students identified a number of different reading activities they did in school both in the class they were in and in previous years. These included a reading group activity, silent reading, home readers, the teacher reading stories and comprehension. This discussion is limited to a discussion of the reading group activity and aspects of students' comments about silent reading, particularly when they used it as a means to compare oral reading.

Small group reading

Each day the students in this class spent one hour doing group-reading activities. There were three groups based on ability. The top group worked with students in the class next door, the second group with Mrs S and the third

with Miss R. Each group read a different text. Riana and Sarah were in the top group and they were reading "The Diary of Anne Frank" at the time of the interviews. Haley was in the second reading group and they were reading "Two Weeks with the Queen". Each student in the group had a copy of the text. In the top group, the students began by reading one or two chapters of the text. They chose to read the text themselves or join a group where they read it together. In the group-reading situation, the students could elect to read or simply listen to others. The teacher also read the text to the students during the reading time. After the reading, students did some vocabulary work where they had to find meanings of some words in the text. At the end of each week, the students completed a written comprehension test on their reading:

Transcript 9. 33 - Reading groups

	J	Now your reading groups how are they formed?
25	R	I think its the level of how your ability of reading.
	J	Alright then so you're actually in the top group of reading Anne Frank is that right?
	R	Yes
	J	So how do these groups work? Tell me how a lesson
30		might happen.
	R	[ ] We (.) sort of have a group whether you can either choose to read orally or by yourself.
	J	uh huh
	R	And I go into the oral where we read aloud and
35		everything.
	J	Yep and what do you have to do. You read a little bit.
	R	Yeah sometimes we read aloud but mostly Miss [ ] reads it.
	J	The teacher reads to you?=
40	R	=Yeah
	J	Right and then what do you do after the reading?
	R	It usually to the end of the lesson when we finished reading.
	J	Oh OK so do you have any written work to do after the
45		reading?
	R	Yeah um we do vocabulary.
	J	OK so vocabulary what does that mean?
	R	Um there's words that we have to find in the book.
	J	Uh huh=
50	R	=Yeah we find the meaning of it and where it is and sometimes we do a test on what we've been reading about.

The second group operated differently as Haley explained:

	J	OK. Right and how does it work?
70	H	We usually. In Miss S's group we usually just read a book.
	J	Right so you're reading the book and=
	H	= then we get sheets
	J	How do you read it? Read it on your own or
75	H	Um (.) all of the people read it.
	J	All together? Like all at the same time or separately?
	H	We (.)um (.)we just read it out loud to each other and then the next person reads the next paragraph.
	J	OK so you take turns? Is that what you're saying? OK
80		and then you talk about what you've read and that sort of stuff?
	H	Yeah=
	J	=Cause I noticed Ms S was asking questions about what you were doing? And when you've done your reading so
85		you do that for a little while and how long would [you do that for?
	H	[One chapter.
	J	One chapter?
90	H	Or usually two if there's =
	J	=And then what do you do after you're finished the reading?
	H	We get a sheet.
	J	Uh huh=
95	H	=And we have to do um (.) do the questions.

Students read for about half an hour or one to two chapters of the book. They read the text out-loud and each person in the group had a turn at the reading. There was an expectation that all students read. During the reading, the teacher stopped from time to time to ask questions to check students' understanding of what they had read. After the reading, the students completed written activities related to the reading.

None of the students described how the third reading group led by Miss R operated. The students did not discuss rules for this particular activity but did articulate some of its instructional benefits both in the individual and group interviews. In the individual interviews, Haley commented that the activity of reading out-loud was to help her to read better and that the written work was to help with students' understanding of the book. She also believed it was a means for the teacher to test students' reading. Sarah said that the group reading helped to learn about "stories" and punctuation and that they were a means to "catch up" on what students might have "missed during past years". Riana also said that the activities helped to "improve your reading". The

students said that the teachers did the group-reading activities because they were "in the curriculum", that they helped with their understanding of words and spelling, and that they assisted students with punctuation and the use of expression:

Transcript 9. 34 - Improving skills

	J	OK um why do you think your teachers do these different kinds of reading activities like the reading groups?
	R	It's in the curriculum. ((softly))
280	H	So we learn reading more.
	J	OK how does it help you. How does it actually make your reading better?
	S	Maybe [ ] with our [ ] understand the words.
	J	Helping your understanding of words.
285	H	Um to spell.
	J	Spell? What about the actual oral reading how does that help you with your reading?
	S	Punctuation and we have.
	J	Yeah what do you mean by punctuation?
290	S	Sort of like stopping at commas and
	J	So it teaches you to stop at commas and that sort of stuff.
	S	Expression as well.

Sarah also suggested that the written test, which was part of her groups' activities, was a means for the teacher to "check" that they had actually done the required reading. However, during the group interview the students explained to me that some managed to do the tests without doing all of the required reading by seeking assistance from others in their group:

Transcript 9. 35 - "They look at other peoples or ask em what to do"

	J	What do they do? How do they get away with that?
	R	They look at other peoples or ask em what to do. ((laughs))
	J	So they actually just they're pretending to read is that
230		what you're saying?
	S	Yeah
	J	Yeah. Have you ever done that before?
	S	No
	R	I haven't
235	H	I have ((laughs))
	S	I haven't I go in the reading group.
	J	But there's kids that do that.
	S	Yeah
	J	And actually the teacher doesn't know then.
240	S	No

	R	Miss D knows about me.
	J	No that's OK
	R	She looks at me.
	J	So these kids just pretend they're reading?
245	S	Yeah
	R	It gets boring

The teacher assisted students with pronunciation, figuring out unknown words and the written activities during these sessions.

Students' Perceptions of the Activities

All of the students expressed a preference for reading silently, however they found silent reading time in school problematic. First, they felt there were timetabling problems. All of the students said that after lunch was not a good time because it was too difficult to "settle" because students came in "excited from lunch". They said that everyone was trying to talk and that this was often distracting. Second, they felt their choice of reading material was too restrictive. All of the students said they should be able to read the same sort of material they read at home:

Transcript 9. 36 - Choosing books

	H	Well just let em read what they want to read and if they're interested.=
	J	=OK this is the first thing you're saying is um (.)make the choice a little bigger.
290	H	Yeah
	J	Yeah and how is your choice restricted? What sorts of things can't you do?
	H	It mainly has to be novels like [ ] we weren't allowed to read Where's Wally books or nothing. Had to be novels.
295	J	So you think you should be able to read the type of recreational stuff you read at home.
	R	Yeah
	H	And the boys at home they always read playstation books anything like that they don't really read novels.
300	J	Uh huh OK What else what else makes it difficult for you guys to read in silent reading?
	R	Your friends disturb you. ((All laugh))

Similar to the students Mrs S acknowledged during the teacher interviews that students were often "tired", "hot" and "sweaty" straight after lunch and that it was difficult to motivate some students to read. Mrs S claimed

that students had "free" choice of reading material thus contradicting the students' voices, however, she may have been referring to free choice of novels available in the school. .

None of the students suggested they disliked this activity but there were a number of aspects, which they disliked. All of the students stated a preference for reading silently rather than out-loud to their peers, although Haley believed that her ability to read out-loud had improved because of oral reading activities. Haley said that some people in her group preferred silent over oral reading because it was embarrassing reading in front of their peers. Sarah preferred to read to herself because she found it much quicker to read silently. She also found the group discussion on the vocabulary annoying because they often spent a great deal of time discussing words she already knew. Riana also preferred reading silently or listening to others read. She said she often "stutters", did not read fluently and felt "uncomfortable" reading in a public forum. She also believed there were other students who disliked reading out-loud for similar reasons.

Another aspect of this activity they disliked was the choice of reading material. This was particularly a problem for both Sarah and Riana who were reading "The Diary of Anne Frank" at the time. Neither of the girls found the text enjoyable and all of the students felt that teachers often chose "boring" books.

In addition to not liking reading out-loud, the students also disliked listening to others who did not read well:

Transcript 9. 37 - Listening to others

	J	Does does it make a difference who reads ?
195	S	Oh yes
	R	Yes
	H	Sometimes yeah
	J	Ok so would you prefer um some kids over others at reading.
200	S	Uh hum
	H	Yeah
	J	And why's that usually why because
	R	Cause they can we can understand them
	J	So there easier to follow these other kids?
205	S	Yeah and you can hear them.

Finally, both Riana and Haley preferred to work words out themselves. Sarah on the other hand preferred someone to tell her straight away because she had difficulty with pronunciation. Haley sounded out unfamiliar words and Riana looked at the words around it and tried to figure out a word that made sense:

Transcript 9. 38 - Unknown words

300	J	=Do you prefer someone to tell you or do you rather figure it out?
	S	Probably someone to tell you because um I can't um (.) pronounce words properly sometimes.
	J	OK and how do you work words out?
	H	I just pronounce em out.
305	J	Sound them out? And what do you ever have words you don't know?
	H	Yeah and then I pronounce them if I get em wrong C or someone tells me the word.
	J	So do you prefer someone to tell you or do you prefer to work it out?
310	H	Work it out.
	J	You prefer to work it out. Why?
	H	Cause I'd rather work it out.
	J	Ok what do you do when you don't know a word?
315	R	I look at the words around it and try fitting the word.

Reading aloud versus reading silently

As is stated in the previous section all of the students preferred to read silently rather than out-loud, although Haley did mention that the oral reading made her "do" the reading. When I asked her what she meant she explained that when she read independently and she found it difficult to concentrate. All of the students said it was much quicker to read silently and they suggested that it was much easier to comprehend when they read to themselves. Riana added that when she came across an unfamiliar word she actually had the time to figure it out when she read silently. Finally, students claimed that reading out-loud was more difficult than reading silently.

Making changes

The students suggested some ways that teachers might change reading in school. First, they suggested that teachers should find out what sorts of books students like and then group students according to this. Second, they said the distractions in silent reading could be minimised by allowing students to spread out more. Third, they suggested that teachers assessed their comprehension of what they had read rather than their oral reading skills. Fourth, they thought that testing their comprehension would be a fairer and more accurate way of testing their reading skills as opposed to oral reading. Finally, they suggested someone writing animated books for older readers that they could read on the computer, similar to the "Living Books" for younger readers.

Assessment

The students discussed a range of issues relating to assessment during the interviews. They identified ways in which their teacher assessed reading, rated themselves and others as readers and described the characteristics of a 'good' reader

Teacher assessing students

All of the students claimed that when they read out-loud to others that teachers were testing their reading. Sarah added that teachers used this information for their reports. During the group interview, both Riana and Sarah said that their teacher checked both their understanding of what they had read and whether or not they had done the reading through the weekly comprehension tests. Later on in the group interview they told me about a folder where the teacher stored information about them:

Transcript 9. 39 - Assessing readers

	R	UM [ ] she from the recent reports and like she writes
475		that's the folder she writes down stuff.
	J	What's the folder?
	R	She's got stuff in it like from us and your reports and stuff.
	J	She writes things in there?
	R	And she puts it in our folders like when we go to high-school and stuff.

	J	When does she do that?
	R	While we're reading.
485	S	At the end of a term.
	R	Probably at home.
	R	Yeah
	J	You actually don't see her doing that?
	R	No
490	J	No but you know about it?
	S	Yeah
	J	How do you know about it?
	R	She told us.

It is interesting that the teacher informed the students about the folders existence but did not share the contents with them.

Students assessing themselves and others

Both Sarah and Riana believed they were 'good' readers. Sarah had recently moved from the second to the highest reading group. Haley who was in the second group was positive about her reading and believed there had been improvement that year.

They did not specifically identify and rate the ability of others in the class though they did say that Sarah was the best reader. Riana also claimed she knew this because she was in her group and she had heard Sarah read. Nevertheless, they did describe the characteristics of a 'good' reader. Haley commented that 'good' readers read fast and they could pronounce the words. Sarah indicated that 'good' readers took notice of punctuation when they read, had a clear voice and read adult novels. Riana described a 'good' reader as someone who was fluent, used punctuation and understood what they read. None of the students described a 'good' reader from their teacher's perspective, however as the following data illustrate, in the group interview, they said that they had learned what a 'good' reader was from their teachers:

Transcript 9. 40 - 'Good' readers

	H	Read a lot.
375	R	Well they practice reading yeah.
	J	So read a lot but how can you tell? Say you've got one person standing up reading and then you've got another person stands up reading. You say hey he's a
380		better reader that that one. How do you know?

	H	Cause some people are clearer.
	J	Clearer? OK so you know you need to be clear is that what you're saying?
	H	Yeah=
385	J	=What else do you need to do//
	R	//and loud.
	J	Loud? OK what else?
	S	Not miss you're full stops and
	J	Not miss you're punctuation?
390	S	Speak like you're just normally talking [ ] you have the words and a dog. And - a - dog.
	J	So speaking fluently?=
	S	=Yeah=
	J	=So it runs together? What else? //
395	H	I don't know.//
	J	What else so all those things. So how do you know you have to do those things. Who told you that?
	R	The teachers

In this conversation, the students added that 'good' readers read a lot and they read loudly. Again, it was interesting that some of the characteristics identified were ones that they suggested they needed to improve throughout the interviews. In the individual interviews, Haley admitted that she was "slow" and often had difficulty pronouncing words and she identified a 'good' reader as the antithesis of this. Similarly, Sarah who moved from the second to the highest reading group said that punctuation was important and this was what she needed to work on before she moved to the higher group.

Learning About Reading

Similar to previous groups students have learned about what is required of them in the various reading activities they described. They understood the rules associated with participation in each of the activities. They had some understanding of what the activities were for and again believed that the group reading activity in particular was a site where the teachers assessed and checked their reading. They knew who the 'good' readers were in their respective groups and understood that the groupings were ability based. Further, they worked out ways of not participating in the activities without being penalised. They talked about how students did not read in silent reading and they discussed how it was still possible to do the reading activities in their groups without actually "doing" the reading.

Students understood some of the ways in which their teacher assessed their reading and could describe the characteristics of a 'good' reader. Whilst they did not describe a 'good' reader from their teacher's perspective, they did learn about what constituted a 'good' reader from their teacher's perspective. They have learned also about various strategies for figuring out unfamiliar words such as sounding out, reading on and asking others. However, only one student used a variety of different strategies. Students had learned about the differences between oral and silent reading and preferred to read silently because it was easier, faster and less public.

Comparing the Data

Year 3: Farrer and Gunn

Both groups of Year 3 students identified various oral reading activities that occurred in their classrooms. The second group found this easier than the first. Both groups of students explained in some detail how these activities worked but they were less articulate about why the teacher used them. It would seem that the teachers did not inform the students in an explicit way about the purpose behind their teaching in respect to some of the oral reading activities described.

Students understood the rules for each of the activities and the consequences for not adhering to these. The second group felt empowered to devise strategies to cope with inappropriate behaviour without assistance from their teacher.

Students drew on a limited number of strategies, including sounding out, reading on and asking others when figuring out unknown words. There appeared to be an over-reliance on the use of graphophonic cues.

Few students were able to describe how their teacher assessed their reading, which suggested that similar to the reasons for conducting the various activities, these practices were not visible or explicit in the classroom. Despite this, the students described the different characteristics of a 'good' reader. The data from the Year 3 Farrer group suggested that oral-reading skills were very

important in that context. The Gunn Primary group did not emphasise these in the same way.

Finally, all of the students were comfortable talking about themselves as readers. They knew who the 'good' readers were in their respective classrooms. The various oral reading activities in which they participated helped them to make these judgements about the reading abilities of their peers. The group from Gunn Primary found this easier due to the graded nature of both the groups and texts used.

Year 4/5 - Farrer and Gunn

Both groups of Year 4/5 students identified a number of reading activities in their respective classrooms. The students found this easier than both groups of Year 3 students interviewed. In fact, they also discussed other reading activities from previous years. They explained the procedural aspects of the various activities and the rules associated with each of these well. However, similar to the Year 3 cohort they were less able to articulate why their teacher used them. Again, this suggested that teachers did not make the reasons behind their practices explicit to students.

The data suggest that most of the students interviewed relied heavily on graphophonic cues when figuring out unknown words with only two out of the six students suggesting that they accessed both the semantic and syntactic cueing systems.

The Year 4/5 Gunn Primary group appeared more knowledgeable about how their teacher assessed their reading although neither group were explicit about what exactly their teacher assessed. They believed their teachers assessed reading during oral reading activities. Students were clear about what they thought constituted a 'good' reader and were comfortable in rating themselves and others in the class. The graded nature of the groups and texts used and the public nature of the activities made this easier for them. In the Gunn Primary group, it was interesting that the areas they suggested needing improvement in their own reading rated highly in their individual descriptions of a 'good' reader. This suggested that the teacher might have focussed more

on their areas of need rather than strengths when giving feedback to students. Both groups identified oral reading skills as being important characteristics of a 'good' reader though the Year 4/5 Gunn Primary group suggested that comprehension was also important.

Most students said they preferred to read silently and found oral reading more difficult for two main reasons. First, many found the experience stressful because of its public nature and second, many claimed that they found it more difficult to understand what they were reading because of the need to concentrate on oral reading skills such as accuracy, expression, clarity and punctuation.

Similar to the Year 3 groups, the listening component associated with the activity of reading out-loud featured throughout the interviews. Students did not like it when others were inattentive whilst they were reading. The first group also suggested that they felt there were times when the teacher was not listening to them. Similarly, the second group indicated that they knew who the 'good' readers were because their teacher maintained good eye contact with them when they were reading. Both groups explained how they did not like listening to others who had difficulty with reading and preferred either listening to their teacher or a 'good' reader.

Both groups of students figured out ways to minimise their participation in some of the activities and to deal with some of the uncomfortable aspects associated with reading out-loud. In the first group the students told me how they tried to get to the end of the line so there were less students around to listen to them read. The second group described how many students chose not to read during silent reading simply by "flicking" through the books. They also told me about helping students find their place when it was their turn to read and telling them unknown words. Finally, both groups made suggestions about ways to improve the various activities they discussed.

Year 7 - Farrer and Gunn

Both the Farrer and Gunn Year 7 students identified and discussed a number of different reading activities in their classrooms. Similar to the Year

4/5 groups they also discussed activities from previous years. They described the procedural aspects of each of the activities well and knew the rules for participation. They had some ideas about why the teacher used the various activities such as assessment, curriculum requirement and to improve their reading. One group in particular concluded that oral reading was teaching them to read out-loud rather than to read. Again sounding out was the preferred strategy when figuring out unknown words with only two students suggesting they accessed other cueing systems.

Both groups were knowledgeable about how their teacher assessed reading. They did not specifically detail what they assessed although both groups mentioned that their teacher checked their understanding of what they read by asking questions and giving them comprehension activities. Further, they suggested that this was also a means to check whether they had actually "done" the reading. Both groups described a 'good' reader and oral reading skills featured in their descriptions. Students assessed themselves and others' reading ability. The second group were more knowledgeable about this because of the graded nature of the groups. In these cases, oral reading has provided a window for children to learn about their own and others' reading ability.

All students said they preferred to read to themselves because it was easier, less stressful and quicker. Similar to the Year 4/5 cohort, students said that comprehension was more difficult when they read out-loud. Unlike the Year 4/5 students, they did not discuss "listening" as being an important component of the activities.

Similar to the Year 4/5 students these also figured out ways to minimise their participation in the various activities and made suggestions about how teachers might improve them.

All of the students interviewed suggested that oral reading was a means for teachers to assess reading. Further they suggested it was a means to learn new words and to improve their expression and other oral reading skills. Again most of the discussion related to instruction centred on code breaking practices.

In the following chapter the discussion of these various oral reading events continues. This time it centres on observations of the various events. In Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 teachers and students discussed their perceptions of the various events. These discussions were largely descriptive as I wanted to present the data in the participants own words. The following chapter discusses observations of these various events from the researcher's perspective.

CHAPTER 10

Looking on: A Researcher's perspective

This chapter discusses video data pertaining to six different oral reading activities recorded in each of the six classrooms already discussed throughout this thesis. The oral reading activity recorded in each classroom was one highlighted as an important or current oral reading activity in that particular classroom by both students and teachers during the interviews. The shortest recording made was 10 minutes and 50 seconds and the longest 24 minutes and 7 seconds. The recording sessions took place after the interviews. I conducted two classroom observations. On the first visit, I interacted with the students where possible asking them to share their work with me. I also assisted various children as they worked. I did not video the activity during this visit but the teacher and I explained the research to the students and asked whether they would like me to video them working in the following week. I explained that they would need to take a note home to their parents and bring it back signed in order to participate. The initial visit before recording helped to minimise possible disruptions caused by having a video camera in the room by allowing the students to become more familiar with me and to gain a greater understanding of why I was in their classroom.

The entire recordings were not transcribed; rather transcriptions of short excerpts from the data lasting from 1 minute and 45 seconds to 10 minutes and 55 seconds serve to illustrate particular points. Two criteria guided the selection of the excerpts for transcription. First, they had been identified by teachers and students as being regular and representative oral reading activities in that particular classroom and second, they offered different perspectives on the management of oral reading activities in different classrooms and different year levels.

Both my observations of classrooms where oral-reading activities occurred and the video recordings inform the following discussion, which uses the researcher's perspective to describe some of the various oral-reading activities discussed throughout the interview data.

Farrer Primary

Year 3 - Reading recounts

I observed an oral reading activity that occurred every day in the Year 3 class. Each student read at least once a week and had a rostered day for doing this. The teacher displayed this information on the classroom wall for the students. At the beginning of the activity, students who were reading on this day retrieved their weekend recounts from their trays. All students wrote recounts of their weekend activities but on this particular week, students had attended the school fete, which accounts for the similarities in the texts read by the students. All of the students including those who did not have to read on that day sat on the floor facing a chair at the front that was for the reader. The teacher sat at the back of the room on a nearby desk. There were 22 students present. Normally around six students read each day, however on this occasion, the teacher asked two groups of students to read for the purpose of the video. I transcribed the data from the first 11 students who read. These included seven girls and four boys.

At the start of the activity, the teacher nominated the first female reader to read. She read for one minute and nine seconds. The reader paused 13 times less than a second and three times for one second or longer. She experienced difficulty pronouncing two words, "fete" and "Sunday". The reader received no assistance during the reading. Most of the class were attentive during the reading, however a student in the front talked on two occasions. The teacher either did not hear or chose not to remind this student to be attentive. When the reader finished, she looked at the teacher and told her she was "finished" as the following data illustrate. The student received no feedback on her reading.

Transcript 10. 1 - Recounting experiences

1	G1	I went to my Nanna's (.) place (.) and watched TV (.). I asked my Pop if I could go to the (2) ffffete and he said "No". (.) Then (.) Mum and Dad came ((turns page. Student in front talks to student next to him)) and took
5		us home. On Saturday ((student coughs)) I (.) got up and had a shower. Then I (.) had breakfast. Then I went (.) to the (2) waterslide and I ((same student talks again)) and went went on (.) there. The I (1) tigged for Julian. On Ssssunday I gave my Dad (.) a (.) card (.) and a present.
10		Then Josh and I went to crocodile croc-o-dy-lus Park. (.)
((1 min 9 sec))		Finished. ((looks at teacher))

The teacher called the next male reader who began to read three seconds after the first reader finished. He read for 52 seconds. During this time, he paused or hesitated on seven occasions. Three of these pauses were three seconds long. He also found it difficult to pronounce "Sunday". A student laughed when he said he "went to school" on Sunday. Again, the teacher either did not hear or chose to ignore this behaviour. The reader received no assistance or feedback either during or after the reading. When the student read the second last sentence, he hesitated on the last word due to the fact he had to turn the page. Another student called out the word "won" before he had a chance to say it:

Transcript 10. 2 - Reading recounts

	Ms D	Calls next reader ((3 seconds between readers))
	B2	On the [ ] September (.) I went to school and ((student laughs)) played. I went home because it was home time.
15		Then I went to school again because it was the fete. On Saturday the 2nd of Sssseptember I went (3) [ ] and played. Then (.) Ned came (.) over. I went to his house and played. On Sun Sunday the 3rd September I went to soccer and=
20	B?	=won
	B2	((turns page)) won. Then I went home and went in the [ ] I
((52 sec))		went (3) and got (1) out.

There was a 14 second delay between readers. The next reader started to read but there were a number of others not paying attention. The teacher reprimanded Steve. At the same time, the reader began the sentence again. She paused three times in the first sentence and realised her book was not open at

the right place. She turned back a page and commenced reading again. There were three other disruptions during the reading with other students talking. Intervention occurred during the third episode with the student asked to be quiet. The reader took 11 pauses less than one second and 6 pauses one second or longer during the reading. One of the pauses lasted six seconds. This occurred at Line 42 when other students were talking. The reading was difficult to follow, the reader had difficulty with the reading and other students had difficulty listening. During the reading, the student received no assistance or feedback apart from the intermittent management of other students displaying inappropriate behaviour:

Transcript 10. 3 - Reading recounts

	Ms D	Calls next reader. ((14 seconds between readers. A great
25		deal of talking and restlessness))
	G3	On [Sunday the
	Ms D	[Steve ((number of students not paying attention))
	G3	[On Sunday (.) the 3rd of September (.) I went to school (3) school and we ((turns back page)) On Friday
30		the 1st of September [I
	Ms D	[Steve
	G3	[went to school and (.) I went somewhere then I went ((turns page)) home. Then I went to tennis and there I had (.) fun (.) there. Then I (.) went (2) the fete. On
35		Sunday the 2nd of September ( ) I had my breakfast and (.) I went (.) to the shop and (.) bought some [ ]. (2) Then I brought a friend over and had fun. ((student in middle talks to student behind)) Then I ((student talks)) had my book and I went to (1) [ ]. On Sunday the 3rd of
40		[September
	Ms D	[Ssh
	G3	(6) 3rd September I went to soccer and (.) we won and the score was one three. The (2) the (3) then Alex brought two friends over and then I got a Nintendo game and
45		Alex got one too.
	B?	((speaks to her as she gets up to leave - inaudible))

The reading continued in this fashion throughout the activity, which lasted for ten minutes and fifty-five seconds. There was only one occasion where the students received advice about their reading. This occurred at Line 115:

Transcript 10. 4 - Reading recounts

Ms D   =Bit louder and bit [slower
G8   [then I went to athletics. On
        Saturday the 2nd (.) of September I played with my dog
        (.) and it was fun. Then I went to music and played the
        recorder.
120   After that I went to (.)church and played under the
        sprinkler. On Saturday the 3rd September I woke up and
        had breakfast. (.) Then I went to tennis and had (.) a good
        time. After that I went home and had lunch.

The teacher asked the student to speak more loudly and to slow her reading. The teacher's role was to listen, summons the next reader and manage the behaviour of the other students. The student's role was to listen and read when required.

There were a number of disruptive behaviours throughout the session. I observed or heard students talking on 13 occasions whilst others read. They talked and were restless in between most readers. The teacher managed these behaviours on eight occasions by saying "Sssh". On another ten occasions, the teacher reprimanded students for other behaviours. During six of these, the teacher named the student. The remaining four occasions were inaudible. One of these episodes is quite serious and ongoing. At Line 61 the behaviour of a group of boys became quite disruptive as the following data illustrate:

Transcript 10. 5 - Reading recounts

Ms D   [Steve ((number of students not paying attention))
G3   [On Sunday (.) the 3rd of September (.) I went to
        school (3) school and we ((turns back page)) On Friday
30   the 1st of September [I
Ms D   [Steve
G3   [went to school and (.) I went somewhere then I went
        ((turns page)) home. Then I went to tennis and there I
        had (.) fun (.) there. Then I (.) went (2) the fete. On
35   Sunday the 2nd of September ( ) I had my breakfast and
        (.) I went (.) to the shop and (.) bought some [   ]. (2) Then
        I brought a friend over and had fun. ((student in middle
        talks to student behind)) Then I ((student talks)) had my
        book and I went to (1) [   ]. On Sunday the 3rd of
40   [September
Ms D   [Ssh
G3   (6) 3rd September I went to soccer and (.) we won and
        the score was one three. The (2) the (3) then Alex brought
        two friends over and then I got a Nintendo game and
45   Alex got one too.

	B?	((speaks to her as she gets up to leave - inaudible))
	Ms D	Jemma
	Class	((general talking))
	Ms D	Who's next? ((talking continues)) Steve ((27 sec delay
50		between readers))
	B4	On Friday the 1st September (.) I went swimming and [ ]
		after we went to [the
	Ms D	[Jacob=
	B4	=school fete and we had [fun ((looks up))
55	J	[I didn't do anything=
	B4	=[ ] then (.) we [played tip and I lost (2). On Saturday
		2nd
	Ms D	[Ssh
	B4	= September we played (.) the (.) Sony and I got [ ].
60		After we watched T.V and it (1) was a [ ]. After we went
		to (.) bed and played. ((student plays with velcro on
((54 sec))		sandal)) (2) On Sunday we had two meals and I was

fat.

	B?	I was fat. ((5 seconds between readers))
	Ms D	Right those boys that I've spoken to. They're asking for it.

The behaviour started with the teacher reminding Steve at Line 27. He ignored two further warnings at Lines 31 and 49. Then James joined in. When the teacher spoke to him he said, "I didn't do anything." The episode ended with the teacher's ultimatum.

In addition to the incidents of students talking during the oral reading session, another child provided a noisy disruption by playing with the velcro on his sandals over an extended period of time and students laughed at readers on five separate occasions. The laughter was usually associated with readers making a mistake or saying something that did not make sense. For example at Line 151, the reader said that he "went to bed and had tea." Students laughed after this, then another child repeated the sentence. More laughter followed. There were three other examples of behaviour where other students set out to belittle the reader. These occurred at Lines 63, 93 and 111.

During 12 of the incidents, the students' behaviours interrupted the reader. The reader paused for a long period, looked around, repeated what they had said or lost their place.

In total, there were 34 examples of inappropriate behaviour ranging from not listening and talking to students getting up off the floor during the session, which averaged one incident every 20 seconds. Intervention from the

teacher occurred on 19 of these occasions. These activities on the part of the students and the teacher distracted whoever had the task of reading out-loud at that particular time.

Learning about reading

There appeared to be no instructional benefit in this oral reading event, apart from the students having the opportunity to re-read their writing and practise reading out-loud to a large group of people. Students were primarily working in the code breaker role (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Students were given some instruction about oral reading skills, for example, students were asked to speak "louder" or "slow down" by the teacher, however, they were not provided with particularly 'good' models to follow. Participation in this event was non-negotiable. Some children appeared to be uncomfortable with the task. They were encouraged to display good listening skills during the activity, however, the large number of disruptive behaviours suggest students had difficulty with this aspect of the activity. Students learned that reading was a public performance that was open to public scrutiny. Finally, they learned more about themselves and their peers as readers. They acquired this information by listening to others read, comparing themselves to others, by listening to the quiet comments made by others and enduring the inattentive behaviour from their audience as they read.

Gunn Primary

Year 3 - Reading Groups

My first impressions when I walked into the room were that students appeared motivated and on task. There were four different groups. The first group comprised three girls and one boy, the second, five girls, the third, three boys and the fourth, five boys and one girl. Initially all of the students sat around tables in their respective groups. Some students were reading, others were writing and some were talking to each other. There were two teachers present in the room, one worked with the group of three boys and the other rotated around the various groups providing assistance where necessary.

After wandering the room and talking with some of the students, it was clear that students were very familiar with the task. Each child knew what they had to do and had obviously participated in these activities on previous occasions. Those who were writing were involved in either grammar or comprehension type activities. It was also clear that each group was reading a different text and that these differed in their level of difficulty.

The activity of group reading comprised a number of sub-activities including individual reading with and without the teacher, group reading with and without the teacher and written comprehension activities.

I transcribed two of the different sub-activities from the video data. These included a teacher reading individually with one of the three boys in her group and the classroom teacher reading with another group in a round robin fashion. The following discussion is of the 'paired reading' activity between a teacher and student. This particular teacher provided extra assistance on a regular basis during 'reading groups'. She worked with one group of children. One student referred to this group in the student interviews as the group that "doesn't come that very much". On this occasion, I observed only three boys present.

Paired reading activity with Miss T and Ben

The student sat on a chair next to the teacher whilst the teacher held the book out in front of him pointing to the words as he read. The student was a beginning reader who was struggling with the task. During the reading, the teacher assisted the student. There was a heavy reliance on picture and graphophonic cues to help the reader figure out unknown words. The reading lasted 3 minutes and 40 seconds. There were 25 turns and the teacher assisted the reader on 16 different occasions. The reading did not flow well and the student hesitated frequently taking brief pauses between most words:

Transcript 10. 6 - Paired reading

	MsT	What starts with L?
	B	Lol lollies. And a (.) pack (.) of (.) chewing (.) gum (.) please.
5	Ms T	Fantastic reading. Now he's going to get the chewing

gum [   ] ((turns page))

The teacher encouraged the student to use graphophonic cues or 'sounding out' strategies on three separate occasions in the first six turns:

Transcript 10. 7 - Paired reading

1	B	The [ ]
	Ms T	What starts with L?
	B	Lol lollies. And a (.) pack (.) of (.) chewing (.) gum (.) please.
5	Ms T	Fantastic reading. Now he's going to get the chewing gum [ ] ((turns page))
	B	And (.) a (.) lolly (.) pop (.) and (2) a (2)
	Ms T	pp pp ((teacher makes two p sounds))
	B	Piece of
10	Ms T	What's that? ((points to picture))
	B	Chewing (.) gum
Ms T	Chewing gum.	
	B	(3)
	Ms T	aa aa ((teacher makes two a sounds))
15	B	And [ ] a [ ] of

In the first example at Line 2, the teacher asked the student what started with 'L". The student proceeded to sound out the word in Line 3. The second example occurred at Line 8 where the teacher made two "pp" sounds. The student followed this by saying "piece". The third example occurred at Line 14 where the teacher assisted the student when he indicated he was having difficulty by hesitating for three seconds at Line 13. She made two "a" sounds and the student used this to help him figure out the word "and".

On three other occasions, the teacher encouraged the child to use the pictures to help him figure out unknown words:

Transcript 10. 8 - Paired reading

10	Ms T	What's that? ((points to picture))
	B	Chewing (.) gum
	Ms T	Chewing gum.
	B	(3)
	Ms T	aa aa ((teacher makes two a sounds))
15	B	And [ ] a [ ] of
	Ms T	((shows picture))
	B	Choc-o-late (.) bar
	Ms T	Ah! Excellent reading.

	B	And (.)
20	Ms T	Now he's got his manners
	B	Please
	Ms T	((turns page))
	B	And (.) a (.) lolly-pop (.) and (.) a (3)
	Ms T	Pack
25	B	Pack of (1)
	Ms T	What's this? ((points to picture))
	B	Gum
	Ms T	Chewing gum

The teacher encouraged the student to use pictures cues at lines 10, 16 and 26 to help him figure out the words chewing gum and chocolate bar. It is interesting that the child continued to have difficulty with the word "chewing gum" throughout the reading:

Transcript 10. 9 - Paired reading

35	B	And a (.) lolly pop and a (.) pack (.) of (.) gum
	Ms T	Chewing gum=
	B	=chewing gum
	Ms T	What word says chewing?
	B	((points to word))
40	Ms T	That's gum. Which word says (.) chewing gum. (.) Can you see the ing I - N - G?
	B	((shakes head))
	Ms T	Can't you see that?
	B	No
45	Ms T	Pack of chewing gum.

The teacher encouraged the student to use the pictures to help him figure out the word, however he continued to call it "gum" rather than "chewing gum". The teacher became quite concerned about this toward the end of the reading as the data above illustrate.

At Line 38, the teacher asked the student to point out the word "chewing" in the text. The student still pointed to the word "gum" and ignored "chewing". She then asked him if he could see the "ING". The student insisted that he could not see this and so she repeated the phrase again, "a pack of chewing gum". When the teacher pointed to the picture of chewing gum the student repeatedly read the word as "gum". This was probably because he drew on his own personal or cultural knowledge to help him make sense of the picture. The term "chewing gum" is likely to be unfamiliar since use of the term is rare during everyday talk or in the popular media. The teacher may have

benefited by encouraging the student to use a combination of pictorial and graphophonic cues to assist him with figuring out the word. The teacher began to work out the problem when she asked the student if he could see the "ING". However, she still had not realised that he did not connect the word "chewing" with "gum" since she focussed on the ending or second syllable of the word rather than the first. If she had focused on the first syllable "chew", she may have been able to help him make the connections between "chewing" and "gum" by discussing what he does with gum. The student was accessing "text participant" practices whereas the teacher provided instruction based on "code breaker" practices.

On two other occasions when the student encountered an unknown word the teacher encouraged him to access semantic cues. For example, at Line 20, when the student is unsure of the word "please", the teacher assisted him by saying "Now he's got manners". Similarly, at Line 30, when the student was figuring out the second syllable of the word "peanut", the teacher assisted by telling him "It's got a special word".

The teacher used a strategy of pointing to the word and mouthing the beginning sound of the word twice during the reading. This occurred at Lines 49 and 56. For the six remaining corrections, the teacher simply supplied the unknown word. Pauses of one second or longer seemed to cue the teacher to prompt and assist the student with his reading. This occurred in nine places, at Lines 7, 13, 23, 30,32,46 and 48.

In addition to assisting the reader, the teacher gave encouragement three times, during the reading. This occurred at Lines 5, 18 and 33. At Line 5, the teacher told the student that his reading was "fantastic" and at Line 18, she told him it was "excellent". The only time the teacher explained why this was the case occurred at Lines 33 and 34 when the student was told his reading was "great" because he actually "looked at the word" to work it out.

The teacher also modelled making predictions about the text. This occurred at Lines 5 and Lines 52. In the first example, the teacher said "Now he's going to get the chewing gum" and in the second example she said, "Oh he's got to pay for it all now."

Reading with Ms N, Amy, Lyn, Jen and Ben

Three of the students sat on chairs and the fourth sat on the floor in a circular fashion. The teacher sat at the front in a comfortable chair.

Figure <u>39</u> - Year 3 - Group reading activity
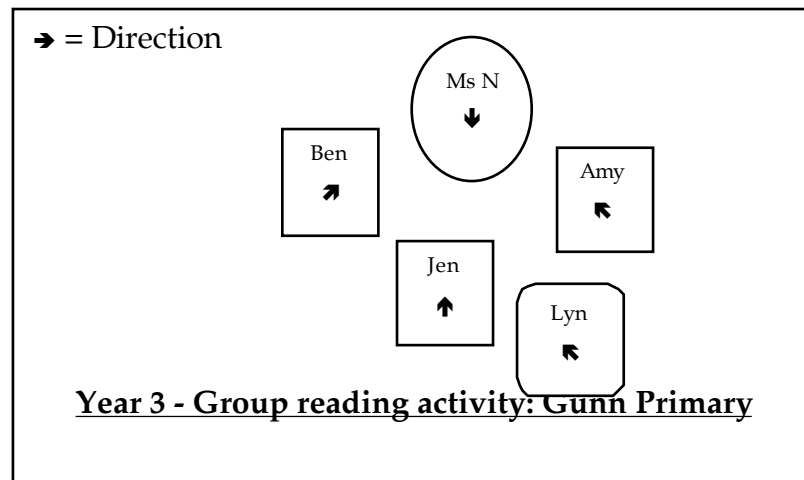
As Figure <u>39</u> shows each student faced the teacher. Lyn was the only child who sat on the floor. The teacher held the book initially. The first student to read was Amy who sat on the teacher's left. The teacher passed the book to Amy before she read. The second reader was Lyn and the third was Ben. At the beginning of the session when students volunteered to read Jen declined. The entire sub-activity lasted for 5 minutes and 29 seconds.

Unlike the previous activity discussed, the teacher did not correct the students at any time during the reading. The students also had the opportunity to read the text beforehand during their group activities and so were already familiar with the text before reading it out-loud.

The first reader read only hesitated briefly at words in Lines 9 and 13. When the reader had finished, the teacher asked the students at Line 17 if there were any words "we didn't understand." This was an interesting use of the pronoun "we" since it suggests that any words identified were misunderstood by the 'whole' group rather than 'individuals' in the group:

Transcript 10. 10 - Small group reading

	Ms N	Were there any words we didn't understand?
	J	Ah there's one. It was a D word.
	Ms N	A D word. ((teacher looks at book)) Door? ((laughs))
20	J	No

	Ms N	Gasped? (.) Destructed? (.) That was a good word. Digital? (3) Sure it was this page? ((2 other students get up and start looking too)
	J	Yeah cause it was [ ] ((child looks closer)).
25	Ms N	That's a D word. I thought you might of got it mixed with gasped'. No not in here. Alright Brianna. Must have been another page. Ok big voices. I'm having trouble hearing.

At Line 19, the teacher looked at the book to search for the "D" word. She said the word "door" in an exaggerated way followed by laughter, suggesting that it was a joke and implying that these students would not have difficulty understanding the word "door". She then asked if it were "gasped", "destructed" or "digital". Following this, she commented that "digital" was a "good" word, however she did not explain why. Two of the students felt comfortable to go over and help the teacher find the word. Eventually they gave up and the teacher prompted the next reader, Lyn, to read. At Line 27, the teacher said, "Ok big voices. I'm having trouble hearing." Similar to the comment in Line 17 this is also interesting. Ms N did not direct the comment at any particular reader but rather talked about the group collectively as she said "voices" and not voice. She also said that they needed to do this because she was having trouble hearing. In this way she suggested that the problem was her "difficulty hearing".

The next reader was more hesitant than the first, although once again the teacher did not interrupt her. She paused briefly eight times during the reading and twice for longer periods of two seconds. Towards the end of the reading at Line 43, the student suggested that she showed some understanding of the story as she said "Ah its Greg". Following the reading the teacher made a comment, which was inaudible. The third reader who read for 47 seconds was also inaudible. At the end of the reading, the teacher asked two questions to monitor the students' understanding of what they had read. The students received no feedback during the reading apart from the comment to all of them about using "big voices".

During the reading, the teacher also monitored the behaviour of other students in the room. At Line 6, she clicked her finger twice with her hand high

in the air as she made eye contact with another group of students who were not on task.

Learning about reading

The two sub-activities were quite different from each other both in their procedural and instructional aspects. In the paired reading situation there appeared to be an expectation that the student read to the teacher. The teacher held the book for the student, pointed to the words and turned the pages. The pointing of the words seemed to be the sign used to prompt the child to read. The teacher's role was to keep the student focussed, prompt where necessary, assist the student to access strategies to figure out unknown words and to give periodic praise and encouragement.

The teacher instructed the student using "code breaker" practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). She encouraged the student to use various strategies such as graphophonic, semantic and picture clues to help the reader figure out unknown words. A pause of one second or longer was a sign for the teacher to assist. The teacher did not discuss any of the various reading strategies with the student.

There was minimal instruction using "text participant" practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003) except for the association made between pictures and words and in the teacher making predictions about the text on two separate occasions. Instruction in both "text user" and "text analyst" practices did not occur during the reading.

The student's role was to read when required, to decode words, to follow advice, given by the teacher and to answer any questions directed at them.

In the group "round robin" reading activity the students elected to read. Each reader read a page or two of the text which was passed around the circle The teacher's role was to organise the reading order at the start, to listen to the students read, to direct questions aimed at monitoring the students' understanding, and to manage the behaviour of other students in the classroom.

The teacher did not assist the students with their reading during the activity. All of the readers however, were very familiar with the text. The teacher did not offer praise or encouragement to individual students. Despite the fact that the activity involved reading by individuals, one gained a sense that the reading belonged to the whole group. There were six examples of this. First, the students elected to read at the start of the activity. There was no expectation that they must read. Second, the group shared the same book. The students passed the book on to the next reader after they had finished. There was no requirement that students followed the text or kept their place. They simply listened to the reader. Third, when the teacher asked the students if there were any difficult words she used the pronoun "we" so as not to suggest that any one student had difficulty. Fourth, when she looked for the "D" word that they did not understand two of the students felt comfortable to get up from their seat and assist the teacher find the word without asking for permission. Fifth, when the teacher commented that the students needed to read louder she used the plural form of "voice" thus directing the comment at all the readers and not just the reader who was about to read. This served to take the pressure off the individual reader. Finally, at the end of the students' reading the teacher asked the students if she was going to have a turn suggesting that they all owned or had a stake in the activity. Students received minimal instruction throughout the activity apart from a couple of questions designed to monitor their understanding of the text. Whilst students practiced their reading during their activity and listened to others, there was little evidence of any explicit teaching, although students would have been accessing both code breaker and text participant practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003).

Farrer Primary.

Year 4/5: Paired reading with teacher

In this Year 4/5 class, I observed a reading activity that happened twice a week after lunch. On entering the room, the students broke up into three groups. The students knew what group they were in as the teacher displayed this information on the cupboard door on different coloured paper. One group

of six students sat on the floor next to their classroom teacher who sat at his desk on a chair. There were three adults in the room so that each child had an opportunity to read.

The second group of seven students sat on the floor near Mrs M. These children were not visible on the video. The third group did not have a teacher on this day, as she was ill. The third group normally read to Miss R. Apparently the groups rotated around the three teachers each week so each group read to each teacher once every three weeks. There were seven students in the third group and they sat away from the other groups. Five of the boys sat on the floor, two sat on chairs and the girl sat on the floor away from the boys. I have only transcribed one short section of the video data, as the remainder of the tape was difficult to decipher. Instead I have described what I saw happening in each of the groups. Following this is a more detailed discussion on the transcribed section of the tape.

Group 1: Reading to Mr W

As stated earlier six students sat on the floor next to the teacher's desk. The teacher called each reader to his desk who either stood or knelt next to him as each read. When they finished the students returned to their desk where they continued reading or worked on their book reports.

The first student read for 1 minute and 10 seconds. Students did not have to answer questions either during or after the reading. The student received assistance with two unknown words. The teacher glanced at the rest of the class on four different occasions. The reader received no praise, encouragement or feedback either during or at the end of the reading.

The second student (section of the data transcribed) read for 1 minute and 45 seconds. The teacher corrected the student seven times. He glanced at the remainder of the class on three occasions and again gave no praise, encouragement or feedback. During the reading, the child whose turn it was to read next was looking at and listening to the reader.

The third student observed read for two minutes. The teacher corrected the reader once by supplying the correct word. He did not ask the student any

questions and gave no praise, encouragement or advice. During this reading, the unattended group became increasingly disruptive. The teacher glanced in their direction four times for less than one second, once for two seconds and once for five seconds. At the end of the reading the teacher said, "Jessica, Jessica get away from them" ('them' being the group of unattended readers). I did not observe or video the remaining three readers. At this point, I moved on to the second group.

Group 2: Reading to Miss M

There were seven students seated near the teacher on the floor, although they were not visible on the video. The teacher sat on a chair. The first student observed read to Miss M for 1 minute and 45 seconds. Miss M corrected him twelve times. Generally, she told the student the word and did not encourage him to work it out himself.

The second reader observed read for 2 minutes and 50 seconds. Before he commenced reading, Miss M asked him if he was enjoying the book. Again, the teacher corrected the reader twelve times. In addition, she read the entire sentence for the reader on three occasions. The background noise from the third group made it too difficult to transcribe this section of the video.

Group 3: Reading to Miss R

As stated earlier the teacher was not present on this day. A group of six boys and one girl sat away from the other groups on the far, right-hand side of the room. There are two excerpts of video footage of this group lasting for three minutes.

During the first excerpt, five of the boys sat on the floor, two on chairs and the girl on the floor. The boys talked constantly and none of them read. The girl appeared to be reading the entire time.

The second observation was similar. None of the boys read and they were constantly talking. This behaviour deteriorated further as the activity progressed.

A paired reading activity: Mr W and Lucy

I transcribed the video data representing the second student who read to Mr W. She read for 1 minute and 45 seconds and stood next to the teacher as she read. The student pointed to the text, which she placed flat on the teacher's desk.

The teacher supplied an unknown word on one occasion and corrected pronunciation on four others. The student repeated the corrected word after the teacher said it. On one occasion, the teacher asked the student to repeat the word a second time as the following data illustrate. There was no discussion of specific strategies to assist the student figure out unknown words:

Transcript 10. 11 - Paired reading

```
       L      (2) "You know," Margaret said politely (.). She wiped (.)
              her hands on the legs of her jeans and hel held (.) held
15            them both up. Inviting a toss. "I'll play frisbee with (.)
              with you for a (.) little while," she said. "Ok," Casey said
              without enthu (.)=
       Mr W   =with enthusiasm=
       L      =enthusiasm=
20     Mr W   =try it again. Enthusiasm.
       L      enthusiasm. He walked slowly (2) to around (4) slowly
              over (.) the (1) to [trieve
       Mr W                       [to retrieve
```

The reader took 20 short pauses throughout the reading and 7 longer pauses. As in the previously discussed paired reading situation a pause prompted the teacher to assist the reader:

Transcript 10. 12 - Paired reading

```
1      L      The frisbee hit the ground and skipped a few times
              before landing under the (.) hedge at the back of the
              house. "Not today, I'm busy," Mr Boyd said and (1)=
       Mr W   =abruptly=
5      L      =abruptly (.) turned and elooped (.)
       Mr W   eloped ((points to word))
```

Throughout the reading, there was no advice or feedback given to the student and oral comprehension did not occur. At the end of the reading, the student received no indication about the quality of the reading performance.

The teacher simply summonsed the next reader. Again, the student mainly accessed "code breaker" practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). and it was difficult to ascertain whether the student accessed "text participant" practices, as there was no discussion about the text with the student.

Learning about reading

Students learned that reading involved accurate word recognition and pronunciation. They did not get a sense that it was important to have an understanding of what they read. They learned that it was good to figure out words for themselves though they only had a couple of seconds to do this before receiving assistance. There was no explicit teaching about the different strategies that the reader could use to assist in decoding or other aspects of the reading process. Students neither asked for nor received feedback on their reading. They learned about the rules and procedural aspects associated with the activity such as reading while they were waiting their turn, working at their desks after reading and sitting quietly. However, it was clear from the video data that students needed a teacher nearby to help them adhere to these rules as the unattended group displayed a number of inappropriate behaviours.

Gunn Primary

Year 4/5: Round Robin Reading

I entered the Year 4/5 classroom before recess to observe an oral reading activity, which occurred twice weekly. Figure **40** shows the layout of the room, the names of the children, their position in the circle and their reading order.

Figure 40 - Round robin reading
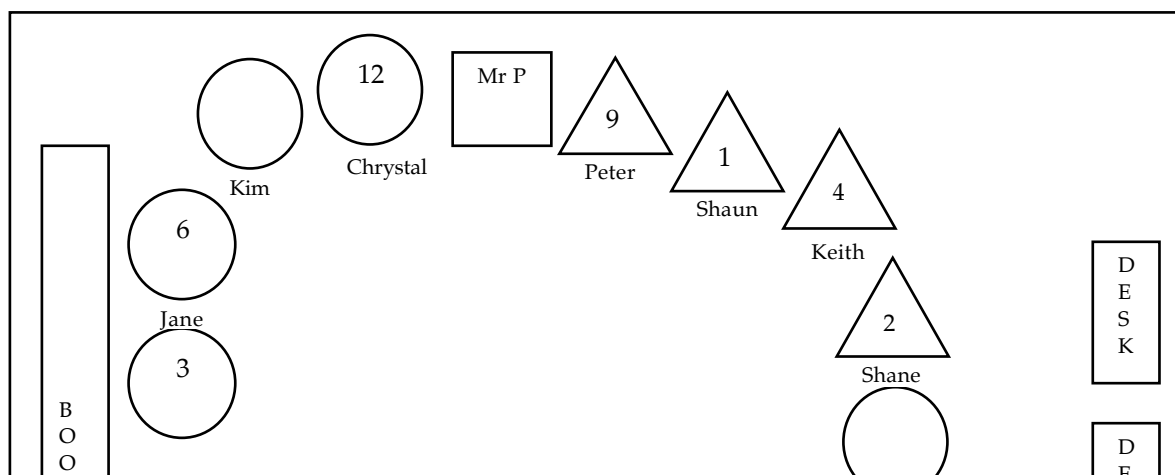
Ann

As Figure <u>2</u> shows, students sat in a clear space in a circular fashion. The teacher sat at the head of the circle in a comfortable chair and the children sat cross-legged on the floor. I sat between Shane and Amy, and my research assistant videoed the activity from outside the circle. There were 21 students present on this day comprising seven boys and fourteen girls. Four boys - Peter, Shaun, Keith and Shane sat at one end of the circle near Mr W and the other three boys - Kurt, Sam and Matthew sat together at the opposite end of the circle. Eighteen of the students read on this particular day.

The activity began with the teacher posing questions to assist student to make connections to the previous day's reading. He then proceeded to nominate readers in a random fashion who read anywhere between 23 seconds and 1 minute and 20 seconds. There were two students absent on the day and the teacher read for them. The first reader was Shaun who read for 1 minute and 5 seconds. He paused a number of times during the reading and sounded out an unfamiliar word. The teacher supplied him with another unknown word. Disruptive behaviours were minimal although the video data suggest

that Peter and Sam had some difficulty following the text. After the reading, the teacher made a brief comment and then proceeded to read for 23 seconds, as Raymond was absent. A brief discussion followed the reading:

Transcript 10. 13 - Round robin reading

(23 sec)		the sheep grinned. (1) Anyone ever seen a sheep smile?
	Class	General talking ((inaudible))
	Mr P	((Kurt puts up hand)) What are your hands doing up? I've never seen a sheep smile before (.) On TV maybe.
30		Alright. Yeah so (1) but remembering ((Chrystal talks to Kym)) also you gotta keep I want you to keep this thought in your head ((points to head)). That sheep (1) had Rory's (1) bloody finger (.) after it had been licked by the slobberers up his nose=
35	Class	((general noises suggesting the comment was disgusting))=
	Mr P	It may not be a normal sheep but we might find that out later. Alright And its come up again. Remember we talked about feelings and that earlier. (2) She hates Rory.
40		She doesn't like him at all. He's her stepbrother (1) and he said it one time. What did she say?
	Shane	Um I'm just glad that I have someone=
	Mr P	=Glad that I have someone. And same thing she just said (.) He was as hopeless as a stepbrother she could get but
45		at that moment she really wanted it to be him. Because being alone (.).It's better especially in this situation its better its better to have someone than being all by yourself.
	Shane	especially slobberers
50	Mr P	So yeah alright
	G	Angry [ ] things that lived
	Mr P	Alright thankyou (1) So they started off where they fit in this tiny little appleman ((shows with fingers)) and now there like this ((demonstrates with hands)).
55	Shaun	Cause they suck it up.
	Class	((others talking))
	Shaun	They get bigger and bigger
	Mr P	Bigger and bigger. But you've only seen three things [ ] so they must have been eating things ((Chrystal talks to
60		Kym)) all along the way just as they go crashing through [the
	Belinda	[And the possum and the bats=
	Mr P	=there was the possum there was the bats and stuff.
65		Yeah. right <u>Shane</u>

The discussion began with the teacher posing a question at Line 26 and the discussion generally followed the elicitation- response- feedback, routine common to interactions between student and teacher (Heap, 1985,p.249). The

teacher asked students if they had seen a sheep smile. Kurt put up his hand. He then asked them why their hands were up and said that he has never seen a sheep smile. Kurt lowered his hand and he did not have the opportunity to explain why he raised his hand initially. The teacher then reminded students about some information in the text they needed to remember. He then made inferences about the story. Following this, he refocussed the students on the relationship between two of the main characters and at Line 41 and asked them to recall some detail from the story. Shaun answered with the correct answer. At Line 52, he instigated discussion about why the "slobberers" have grown so much. He ended the discussion by calling the next reader, Shane in a firm voice.

Shane read for 52 seconds and took relatively few pauses. Shaun, the first reader, did not follow the text during the reading. He had had his turn at reading and he knew that the teacher allocated only one turn per reader. Shaun and Peter talked at Line 68 and Chrystal's attention diverted towards the end of Shane's turn. Shane read the last sentence incorrectly as he said "another" instead of "other". The teacher corrected him and Shane repeated the word "other". Again, a short discussion followed the reading. This time the teacher encouraged the students to make predictions about the text.

The discussion ended again with the teacher calling the next reader, Karen in a firm voice. She read for 46 seconds and had relatively few long pauses. At Line 105, she had difficulty with a word, which another student supplied. The video data showed that Karen had difficulty following the text. There was no discussion after the reading. Keith read next as the following data illustrate:

Transcript 10. 14 - Round robin reading

	Karen	Thank God Rory was OK. I sprinted in the same
100		direction (.) s soon I could see the shape of a figure up
		ahead. I tried to yell ((Chrystal not watching)) but I had
		no breath ((turns page))
	Mr P	[ ]
	Karen	[ ] He was (.) weaving and gasping his right heels
105		flopping. His [(1)
	?	[((says word))=
	Karen	= [ ] was rising and falling each step. My guts fell too. It
		wasn't very easy on the caretaker. "Wait," I yelled (.)
		sucking in air. "Rory's back there. You've got to help."

110		The caretaker ran away. I ((Karen not watching. Blows on leg)) forced my legs to go faster and caught him (1) at
((46 sec))		his car door as he fumbled (.) with (.) his keys.
	Mr P	Alrighty. So he's taken off (.) I don't want anything to do with these slobberers he's saying. <u>Keith.</u>

The reading continued in this fashion. When readers came across an unknown word, students tended to either sound it out or pause for a couple of seconds. This prompted others to supply the unknown word. On most occasions the teacher corrected students if they made a mistake and sometimes asked them to reread a sentence:

Transcript 10. 15 - Round robin reading

	Sam	was changing (.) even in the moonlight shadows (.) I could tell that (1) the bus was more si sick secrets to tell.
	Mr P	Have a look again Sam.
	Sam	Had more sick secrets to tell (.) The seats were no longer
385		torn ((Amy runs her finger across the page quickly and repeatedly) and (.) cracked (.) and the smashing smashed

Discussion was held after eight, of the 18 readers had completed their sections. The teacher instigated discussion in two different ways. He either posed a question to the students or made a comment about the text. The following two examples from the data illustrate this. The first shows how a question invited discussion and the second how a comment instigated discussion.

Transcript 10. 16 - Round robin reading

Example 1

	Mr P	=Who could that be? ((One hand raised))
	Class	Rory
	Shane	Or the sheep=
85	Mr P	Rory who else there's one other person still [...]=((3 hands raised))
	?	What about the big fat [caretaker?=
	J	[caretaker=
	Mr P	Right the big fat caretaker=
90	Shane	But he ran the other way (1)
	Mr P	That's right [cause he freaked out too
	Shane	[cause he ran
	?	((general noise))
	?	Cause then he had [ ]

95	Mr P	Cause he had a shotgun as well uh hm
	Keith	Ch Ch ((makes noise like a shotgun))
	Mr P	Things could happen. Alright <u>Karen</u>

Example 2

	Mr P	Alright. So she's given up on him hasn't she? She already presumes (.) that Rory's dead.
	Shane	What if the dog disappeared?
230	Keith	Yeah (1)What would you do with it?
	Mr P	Which ones?
	?	[ ] The spear
	Keith	The wooden spear.
	Shane	No no she's got this huge thing=
235	Mr P	=metal post
	Shane	thing

During the eight discussions held the teacher posed seven questions. Two of the questions asked students to make connections between their own experiences and information in the text. Three of the questions required the students to recall information in the story. One question asked the students to make inferences and one sought to clarify a question asked by a student. In addition to this, the teacher made 23 different comments about the story. Nine of these included brief summaries of the reading or highlighted important aspects of the story. The remaining 14 comments involved the teacher predicting possible outcomes of the story, making inferences about why things occurred in the story or making a personal comment:

Transcript 10. 17 - Round robin reading

Example 1 - Providing a summary

| | Mr P | Yeah. So guess remember that bus has been there (.) for I think it was for eighteen months or nearly two years |
| 410 | | since this since the bus crash. So all when they were on there before they described the bus. The windows were smashed there was a tree looking out. The seats were all torn (1) [and there were lots of other = |

Example 2 - Making predictions

| 160 | Mr P | Alright [   ] OK so <u>he's</u> gone (1) she's by <u>herself</u>. As far as she knows and <u>we</u> don't even know. Rory could be dead at the moment (1) so |

Example 3 - Making inferences

	Mr P	Bigger and bigger. But you've only seen three things [ ] so they must have been eating things ((Chrystal talks to
60		Kym)) all along the way just as they go crashing through [the

Example 4 - Making personal comment

	Mr P	=Glad that I have someone. And same thing she just said (.) He was as hopeless as a stepbrother she could get but
45		at that moment she really wanted it to be him. Because being alone (.).It's better especially in this situation its better its better to have someone than being all by yourself.

Finally, the teacher used the technique of calling the next reader in a firm voice to end the discussion. This served to dictate the length of each discussion. The following data illustrate how a student did not have the opportunity to respond to a teachers' comment.

Transcript 10. 18 - Round robin reading

	Mr P	And if the bus (.) if they're scared of the bus. She's nowhere near the bus. So she's got nowhere to go. <u>Amy</u>.
185	Belinda	Here it says she's [ ]
	Mr P	Sssh. Amy
	Amy	I screamed. A [ ] later and it swung towards me like a big vinally bag on (.) a luggage (2)

In the example the teacher suggested at Line 184 that Dawn, one of the characters had nowhere to go. At the end of this comment, the teacher called Amy, the next reader, signalling that the discussion had finished. Belinda found something in the text that she wanted to make known that refuted either what the teacher had said or added further information. The teacher silenced Belinda and called the next reader. Students participated in discussions 43 times. Shane and Keith tended to dominate the discussion with Shane participating 16 times and Keith 11 times. Shaun, Jane and Mary contributed twice each and Belinda once. There were nine other turns when students, contributed, but their identity was not clear on the video data. Even if each of these nine turns were a different student, it meant that at least eight students chose not to participate in any of the discussions held. When students answered questions, some raised their hands. However, if this was a rule it was not adhered to well by both

students and teacher. Students often called out and the teacher did not reprimand students for doing this.

Students received no feedback after their reading turn. Some had a general comment made about their reading. Three of the readers received thanks. Some received general comments about their reading such as "Well Done!"

Throughout the reading there were 35 instances captured on the video where students did not follow the text. In light of the fact that the video data did not capture the entire class all of the time but only those students seated in close proximity to the reader, it is possible that the video did not record other inattentive behaviours. The video also captured students talking to each other during the reading on six different occasions. The episodes of inattention increased as the activity progressed. In addition, the boys in particular were restless. They tended to change their seating position often. Some tried to lie down, others sat on their knees and two students got up on all fours. The teacher did not intervene until the end of the session when he asked Peter to "sit up". Most girls tended to remain cross-legged throughout the reading though there were one or two who displayed similar restless behaviours to the boys.

The teacher's role was to maintain order in the procedure by nominating the next reader, initiating and ending discussion. He modelled effective oral reading to students during the turns taken for absent students, provided assistance to students with unknown words, and corrected errors when necessary. He used longer pauses as an indication that students required assistance. Further, he summarised important aspects of the story and asked questions. The students' role was to read when asked, follow the text and to participate in discussion episodes.

Learning about reading

Students learned through this activity that reading out-loud was an important skill. They also learned that it was important to pronounce words correctly and to understand what they read. Further, they learned that it was

important to listen to others when they read and to follow the text. In this activity, students largely accessed "code breaker" and "text participant" practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). In this respect, it was similar to the "reading recounts" activity described earlier. Similar to the "reading recounts" activity students learned about the rules and procedural aspects associated with the activity, understanding that there was an expectation they would read when asked. Most learned that others will supply them with unfamiliar words and that they do not have a great deal of time to do this independently. Very few students chose to utilise other strategies such as sounding-out or reading-on to help them do this. Finally, students possibly learned more about themselves and others as readers due to the public nature of the activity.

Farrer Primary

Year 7 -Novel-based Reading Scheme

At Farrer Primary, I observed an activity that occurred twice weekly. When I entered the room, some students were sitting at their desks and working on written activities, others read quietly, one student read to the teacher and two students worked at the computer. The room was very quiet and most students appeared motivated and on task. The classroom appeared well organised and the walls displayed numerous charts. In particular, one chart titled "Speech Guidelines" detailed what students needed to consider when speaking publicly. The chart referred to stance, voice, eye contact, information, fluency and time.

Similar to the Year 7 and Year 3 reading groups activity, this activity comprised a number of sub-activities. The observed activities included paired reading with the teacher, written comprehension activities and independent reading. For the purpose of this discussion, I transcribed the paired reading sub-activity as it contained an oral reading component.

Paired reading: Meg and Ms E

Meg took her novel to the teacher's desk when called. She stood next to the teacher with her novel on the desk. The teacher sat in her chair. Meg began

to read and showed the teacher the book after the first sentence to check what she needed to read. Ms E instructed her to finish off the chapter. Initially the teacher did not watch the student read. She began to do this at Line 12. The student's reading flowed well and she only paused twice in the 62 seconds she read. Meg did not encounter any difficult words and the teacher did not intervene in the reading:

Transcript 10. 19 - Paired reading

```
          Ms E   Just finish the chapter
          Meg    But she couldn't forget the nasty evil look in his eyes. It
5                tormented her all afternoon. Who else could it be? Was it
                 possible that it was someone who wasn't even on camp (.)
                 someone who sneaked on to the property. Nervously she looked
                 (.) over her shoulder. Nothing but trees and the shimmering
                 reflection of the moon. If it was someone
10               outside of the camp Holly realised there'd be no way for
                 her to find out so she had to concentrate on the people in
                 camp but [   ] ((teacher coughs; begins to look at reader))
                 Past the street light by Cabin 14 which Nick shared with
                 Stuart. the door was open and the cheery yellow lights
15               glowed out on to the path. Curiously Holly glanced and
                 saw Nick on the chair at the table writing. She was about
                 to go when her eyes saw something else something red.
                 She stopped instead. There hanging on the wall above
                 Nick's table was a set of colourful rattles held together
20               with a twisted yarn. On the handle of each rattle was a
((1 min 2 sec)) [  ]decoration [   ] eyes.
```

At the end of the reading, the teacher initiated a discussion about the text by asking Meg a question. The teacher asked eight questions during the 4 minute and 27 second discussion. Six of the questions required Meg to recall information from the story. One question asked Meg to think about why the author named the book "Lights Out" and the remaining question asked Meg to detail her favourite part. Again, these interactions followed the" elicitation, response, feedback" pattern (Heap, 1985). Throughout the discussion, both the teacher and student listened to each other and the student had plenty of opportunity to express herself. The teacher often summarised what the student had said to clarify points and to check she had understood:

Transcript 10. 20 - Paired reading

```
          Meg    Cause um um she [   ] given to her that day so she [   ]
```

25		((teacher nods)) and um in the end they (.) go away (.) on this trip and he he pretends he's in love with her ((teacher nods)). Takes her on a cruise. And then he gets too far. He starts saying things ((teacher nods)) and then he also said nothing that he was an only child but he
30		isn't. He finds ((teacher nods)) out that she knows too much and (.) he tries to kill her.
	Ms E	((Nods))

At the end of the reading, the teacher gave oral feedback on the students' oral reading skills and written feedback on the conference. She then checked that the student had another book to read that was both a different genre and author.

As the above data indicate the student was praised for good "fluency" and a "nice clear" voice. It was the teacher's role to listen, provide feedback and to ask questions. The student's role was to read and answer the teachers' questions.

Learning about reading

In this activity, students learned that to read well orally was important. They also learned that it was important to have an understanding of what they read. Further, they gained some understanding that they should enjoy what they read. They learned this through participating in the activity. Miss H asked questions about the text, she asked Meg to describe her favourite part and she gave Meg feedback on her oral reading performance. Students also learned that they should read from a variety of different authors and genres indicating the students had an understanding of this term.

The teacher showed a genuine interest in listening to Meg read and so Meg willingly shared her knowledge of the text. Miss E did not suggest that the text was inappropriate because of the violence but asked the student "why does a person do all these things." 'Things' referred to the acts of violence in the text. The teacher suggested that someone would need a very good reason to commit these acts.

My observations suggested that the paired reading oral reading activity was only one small component of the "novel based reading" scheme that

appeared to have a greater focus on students understanding and enjoyment of reading. Students worked largely in the "code breaker" and "text participant" roles, although their understanding of 'genre' is relevant to "text user" practices This activity shared similarities with both the Year 7 and Year 3 group reading activities at Gunn Primary.

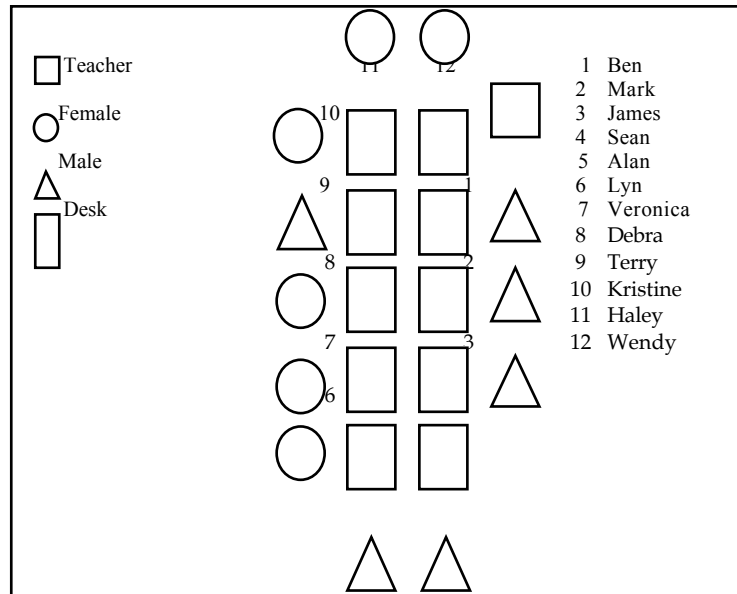## Gunn Primary

Year 7: Reading groups

On entering the room, it was clear that there were three separate reading groups in operation. The first group read in the adjoining room with some of the students in that class. They read "The Diary of Anne Frank". Some students sat at their desks and read whilst others read with the teacher in a group. Those not reading completed written vocabulary tasks. I am not certain how many students were in the top reading group, as I did not have permission to video in that particular classroom. Conversations with the teacher suggest that the two teachers streamed their students for both English and Mathematics. The second group sat around ten tables in the other room with Mrs S. They read the novel "Two Weeks with the Queen" by Morris Gleitzmann. The third group worked with another teacher who came in to assist with the activity in an area next door to the classroom. Similar to the other class, it was not possible to observe this group because they worked in another classroom.

I obtained 18 minutes and 55 seconds of video data from the group who worked with Ms S. I transcribed 7 minutes and 28 seconds of this recording. Similar to the Year 3 reading group activity at Gunn Primary this session comprised two different sub-activities. The first involved a round robin type reading activity and the second a small-group comprehension type activity. A discussion of each of these activities follows.

Small group oral reading: Mrs S's reading group.

There were twelve students in the group. The students sat around 10 desks as the following diagram illustrates.

Figure 41 - Small group oral reading

Teacher
Female
Male
Desk

1	Ben
2	Mark
3	James
4	Sean
5	Alan
6	Lyn
7	Veronica
8	Debra
9	Terry
10	Kristine
11	Haley
12	Wendy

Each of the students had a copy of the text "Two Weeks with the Queen," by Morris Gleitzmann. At the beginning of the reading, the group discussed what they had read on the previous day. This was similar to the Year 4/5 ""round robin" reading activity and served to help students make connections with previous reading and discussion. They discussed Alistair and Colin (two of the characters in the novel) jumping the fence at Buckingham Palace, which had "spikes" at the top of it. One student said that this would not be a problem, as the thickness of their clothes would protect them. The teacher asked the students to think about the possibility of there being alarms. There was no discussion of this idea apart from one student saying "spark, spark" and another agreeing "yeah, yeah". Instead, Mark had a different idea and talked about using razor sharp wire. At this point, the teacher reminded him there was "no razor sharp wire". She refocussed the students' attention on the text and asked what it said. Debra replied, "It says spikes." The teacher answered, "Good girl," and then asked Haley, one of the students interviewed, to read:

Transcript 10. 21 - Small group reading

```
1       A       Yeah but Miss sometimes there's [   ] ((B2 Puts up hands))
        M       [   ]
        Ms S    Hang on Michael's talking.
        A       [   ] They have a lot of clothes on they can just jump over
5               it (2) cause you got the spikes but you can can fit a foot in
                there (.) and just jump over it.[   ]
        M       No Miss=
        Ms S    =Do you think in today in our modern society when
                you've electric alarms that we have probably got an
10              electric alarm as well?
        ?       Spark spark
        ?       Yeah yes
        M       No
        M       No but you think if they get razor sharp wire (.) and they
15              go [   ] ((makes long zooming noise and then hits table
                with hand))
        ?       [   ] escape ((Noise. Teacher looks away))
        Ms S    There's no razor sharp wire [   ]. What does it say?
                ((points to text))
20      ?       Shut up
        D       It says spikes=
        Ms S    =Spikes. Good girl.
```

As the transcript indicates, Mark tried to explain his idea from Line 2. His first attempt was inaudible as he spoke over another student, which the teacher reminded him about at Line 3. He then disagreed with Alan's idea at Line 7. Following this, the teacher spoke about the possibility of an alarm system which he also disagreed with at Line 13. When he had the opportunity to express his ideas at Line 14, the teacher dismissed them and refocussed everyone on the text. In this scenario, the teacher was trying to focus on students' comprehension of the text although at Line 8 she did make inferences about an alarm system. Mark wanted to read the text differently but this conflicted with the teacher's reading.

The teacher asked Haley if she would like to have a go at reading. She then cued the student by reading the sentence where she needed to start. Immediately following this, the teacher asked Terry to put his book down a little. Haley did not respond to the teacher's question but proceeded to ask Wendy to help her find the place. Kristine jumped in and assisted by pointing Haley to the right place. It is possible that Haley expected she would have to read even though she had the opportunity to decline.

Haley paused 21 times during the 1 minute and 16 seconds of reading. Nine of these were lengthy pauses from two to four seconds and show that she had difficulty with some of the text. On two occasions, she consulted the reader next to her to help her figure out unknown words:

Transcript 10. 22 - Small group reading

25	H	((Checks girl on left to find place. G10 points)) Oh! He looked up and down the road.(.) No cars. No people. He threw the lasso high up the wall. ((G8 not watching text)) It hit a spike (2) slipped off and tumbled down. "Hurry up," (.) hissed (.) Alistair (2) tremble trembling [ ]
30		"Pretend it's one of those cows your (.)always (2) ((Looks to girl on right for help. 10G whispers word)). [ ] Colin threw the lasso again and missed again (2). He wished he had more practice (.)with (1) daily (3) [ ]. He threw again. The lasso flopped (1) over a spike
35		and ((G8 taps pen on forehead, drops it and picks it up)) stayed there.Colin yanked it tight (1) pulled on the (.) rope. "OK" he said to Alistair, "Give me a leg up." Alistair obviously hadn't given anyone a leg up before ((child coughs)). It took awhile to (3) awhile to grasp (.) the (.)
40		concept (.) Then he started pushing Colin up the wall ((G8 writing in book))

At Line 30, she looked to the girl on her right who whispered the word to her. At Line 37 she read, "Give me a leg up." The teacher used this as a discussion point at Line 41:

Transcript 10. 23 - Small group reading

	Ms S	Why did Alistair have a leg up? ((G7 and G8 put up hands))
	M	[ ] Australia
45	D	[inaudible for 7 sec] ((hits chest)) He's probably never heard of it [ ] and probably yeah yeah [ ]=
	J	=Cause his Mum told him not to probably. ((G7 closes book))
	Ms S	Is leg up an Aussie work or is [it
50	A	[leg up yeah [ ] Aussie word for push up.
	Ms S	Would you say. Would you say leg up? ((demonstrates with hands))=
	A	=No Miss we just say get on my head. ((students laugh))
55	Ms S	Oh OK. (.) Go Haley

She asked the students "Why did Alistair have a leg up?" Students needed to make inferences at this point, however Mark replied with something that did not answer the question but rather redirected the discussion further on at Line 44. The first part of his response was inaudible, however it ended with the word "Australia". Debra gave a lengthy response, the first 7 seconds of which was inaudible, saying that "he's probably never heard of it before". Whilst this also did not answer the teacher's original question, it did relate to the next sentence in the text that said, "Alistair obviously hadn't given anyone a leg up before." James replied with an answer that related more directly to the teacher's original question. He said that Alistair probably had a leg up because "his Mum told him not to probably." Whilst this may appear to make little sense, it does within the context of the story. Alistair is a character who often disobeys his Mother's instructions and wishes. There was no feedback provided on this rather thoughtful response, which did relate to her original question. Instead, the teacher took the lead of the first student to respond and asked whether "leg up" was an Australian word. After this, she cued Haley to keep reading. In this scenario, the purpose of the initial question was to encourage students to make inferences and supply information not supplied by the text. The students had difficulty doing this as most tried to relate their answers to what was actually stated or implied in the text.

During the first part of Haley's reading Debra found it difficult to focus on the task that was to follow the text as she read. At Line 27, her eyes wandered from the text. At Line 35, she began to tap her pen on her forehead, which she then dropped and picked up. At Line 41, she began to write in her book. All of the other readers appeared to remain focussed.

Haley began reading again at Line 56. Debra continued to remain unfocussed. At Line 59, she began to talk to Veronica who was next to her. When Haley read Lines 61 and 62 that read, "We're breaking into Buckingham Palace," a number of students comment as the following data illustrate:

Transcript 10. 24 - Small group reading

55   Ms S   Oh OK. (.) Go Haley
           H   Colin called [ ] "Oh my God" said Alistair. Here we go,
                  thought Colin. This is where [ ] and where the [ ] "Oh

		my God" said Alistair again.(.) Colin climbs down (2) accepting ((G8 talks to G7)) (2) expecting ((G8 yawns)) to
60		see a face [ ] Instead he saw [ ] (4) ((looks to girl on her right))"We're breaking into Buckingham Palace," screamed Alistair.
	?	Alistair
	J	Brilliant
65	S	Shut up
	?	Sssh
	A	Come on start.
	Ms S	Ssh Ssh

As the data show a couple of students became excited about the fact that the characters were breaking into Buckingham Palace. Other students asked them to be quiet. Alan became impatient and said, "Come on start." The teacher intervened at Line 68 telling them all to be quiet. Haley commenced her reading again and Debra and James talked across the table. The teacher did not refer to Debra's inappropriate behaviour throughout the reading. However, it was possible that she was aware of the behaviour as she invited Debra to read next which was possibly a means to refocus the student on the reading:

Transcript 10. 25 - Small group reading

	H	He gave Colin an extra big kick [ ] Colin started ( ) to
70		climb (.) up the stand (.) over the rope (.) The soles (.) ((G8 and B3 talk across the table)) of his feet flat (.) against the wall (4) ((G8 still talking to B3))
	Ms S	OK. Keirra would you like to go? Up the top of page 69.

The teacher also told Debra where they were up to. Haley received no indication of the quality of her reading performance at the end of her turn. Debra took 27 short pauses and 4 longer pauses during the 3 minutes and 58 seconds that she read. This reader was more fluent than the previous reader, although she read very quickly at times. The behaviour displayed by Debra when Haley read continued. There were six separate incidents captured by the video involving five students. The first incident at Line 74 involved Kristina and Haley talking to each other. The second and third incidents occurred at Lines 83 and 84. Ben looked around and Mark started playing with his pen. The fourth

incident involved Alan at Line 96. He looked very disinterested and started flicking through his book. The fifth and final incidents were towards the end of the reading at Line 113. Sean started to look around and Haley and Kristina talked to each other again. There was no intervention from the teacher during these incidents.

At the end of the reading, the teacher praised the student saying "Well done." Following this activity the teacher explained the activity to follow. Students broke up into small groups. Each group had a large sheet with all the characters names on and a large selection of descriptive words written on smaller pieces of paper. The students' task was to place words that matched the various characters, under their names. I recorded one group of students involved in this activity. The following discusses this comprehension sub-activity that followed the oral reading. I have named it character mapping for the purpose of this discussion.

Character mapping: Ben, Mark and Alan

I began to video the boys at the beginning of the activity when they were attempting to negotiate how they would tackle the task. At this stage, the teacher was present and she gave the boys some advice:

Transcript 10. 26 - Character mapping

1	M	Warm hearted
	B	Sort it all out first
	Ms S	It doesn't matter there's over eighty words=
	M	=Wow!
5	Mrs S	So just pick up some and just say well which word would suit this character?
	M	Foolish ((reading one of cards))
	Ms S	Well who's foolish? Do you think

The teacher implied that it would be wasted time if the boys sorted the cards first. She suggested that they simply pick up one of the cards and figure out where it fitted best. Mark picked up a card and read out "foolish". The teacher then asked who was foolish. The teacher left the group at this point, leaving the boys to work independently.

The boys continued with the activity and discussed the various cards they chose. There were some disagreements over where some cards fitted best. There was a sense through the dialogue that the students worked together although they were not very organised in their approach:

Transcript 10. 27 - Character mapping

	A	Gentle would be um (.)what's his name [ ]
	B	It would be Uncle Bob
	M	Where's the one that was there?
20	A	Uncle Bob [ ] was there (3)
	B	Luke's Mum (2) Noisy
	M	Mrs Mudfy is gentle //
	B	Who's noisy?=
	A	=Miss what does brash mean? ((yells to teacher))
25	M	Court (.) What does that say?=
	B	=Courteous
	A	Um you don't know what courteous means
	M	No I couldn't read it [ ] Yeah (.) Mrs Mudford is Colin's Mum (.) and she's gentle.
30	A	Yeah courteous
	M	Yeah court who's courteous? (.) What does courteous mean?
	A	Courteous. The one who goes 'Oh you [ ] ((mimics one of the characters))

Each of the students had a different card. Alan had a card with "gentle", Ben had a card with "noisy" and Mark had a card with "courteous". At Line 17, Alan asked who was gentle. Ben suggested Uncle Bob. Ben then said his card "noisy". Mark did not respond to this but disagreed with his suggestion that Uncle Bob was "gentle". Ben asked again, "Who's noisy?" Alan by this time had another card with the word "brash". He yelled out to the teacher to ask what it meant. There was no response. Meanwhile Mark had a card with "courteous". He had difficulty pronouncing this and asked Ben. Ben told him how to pronounce the word. Alan then made a joke of the fact that Mark did not know the meaning of courteous. Mark responded by saying that "he couldn't read it". An interesting aspect of this exchange was that Mark suggested that if a reader had difficulty pronouncing a word it did not necessarily mean he had no understanding of the word. Ben who pronounced the word for Mark asked what courteous meant. Alan explained by mimicking one of the characters. At Lines 28 and 29, Mark restated his previous idea that Mrs Mudford was "gentle".

At this stage of the activity, the boys had come to little consensus about the cards they picked up.

In the final section of the excerpt, Mark picked up a card "at deaths door". He suggested this was Luke. Alan said that he was "not really at deaths door" because "he's only um suffering". Mark highlighted the seriousness of the situation by reminding them that he did have cancer. The boys then joked about having skin cancer:

Transcript 10. 28 - Character mapping

	M	Uh Mr Mudford (.) At deaths door. Luke.
	A	At a deaths door. At deaths door. Oh not really at [deaths door
40	B	[death
	A	[because he's only um [he's only um suffering
	M	[yeah but he's got cancer. He's dying [ ]
	B	I got cancer too=
45	M	=I got skin cancer=
	B	=sun cancer
	A	I've only got two [ ]
	M	It's easy

The boys tried to make sense of what it meant to be at "deaths door". They obviously found it difficult to relate to the idea of suffering and dying. It is interesting that the conversation resorted to discussing "skin cancer", something that they probably had prior knowledge of due to school health lessons or television advertisements on "sun safe" policies. The school insists that all teachers and students wear hats outside and bottles of sunscreen are readily available for student and teacher use. This reinforces the importance of cultural and social knowledge in order to interact with a text meaningfully. Socio-cultural and critical theories of reading recognise this as an important aspect of learning to read, however the reading out-loud activities detailed throughout this study do not appear to offer opportunities for the development of text user, text participant and text analyst practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990).

Learning About Reading

Both the small group oral reading activity and the character mapping activity that followed tended to compliment each other. In the first activity the role of the student was to read when required, listen to others, respond to teacher questions and join in general discussion. The students willingly contributed to discussions about the text although the students were not always clear about the type of responses the teacher was looking for whether it was literal, inferential, critical or imaginative.

The teacher's role was to nominate readers, pose questions to monitor students' comprehension and to manage the behaviour of other students. In this episode, the teacher did not assist students with developing their understanding of "code breaker practices". However, she did provide instruction enabling students to access "text participant practices" (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003).

The second activity required students to apply their understanding of the text in a different context. Students accessed both "text participant" and "text user" practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). The teacher's role was to design the activity, explain the activity, interact with the various groups and assist where necessary. The student role was to do the activity, work with others cooperatively and demonstrate their understandings.

These activities were similar to the Year 3 group reading activities described earlier. Students were generally motivated and on task. Further the activity of group reading comprised a number of sub-activities such as reading aloud to others and written comprehension activities. The differences in the two activities were first, in the number of disruptive behaviours evident in the oral reading sub-activity and second in the level of discussion around the text. There were disruptive behaviours and quite a lot of discussion centred on understanding the text in the Year 7 oral reading. Differently, disruptive behaviours did not characterise the Year 3 activity and there was not a huge emphasis on monitoring student understanding of the text. The Year 3 oral reading component appeared more relaxed and enjoyable.

Summary

A number of the procedural and organisational aspects of the various activities discussed by students and teachers in the interviews were evident in my observations of the various events. Students prepared for the activities before hand by having their texts ready, moving to their respective groups and sitting in the right place. Students took the teachers' cue and read when required. They understood when their turn had finished and students knew what signalled the beginning and end of discussions. In addition to the procedural and organisational work connected to each activity, there was also evidence to suggest that the rules discussed by students and teachers were an importance aspect of each activity. Students followed the text when they were listening to others read. They repeated incorrect words supplied by their teacher and some received reminders, about the importance, of listening to others as they read.

Some activities were characterised by inattentive behaviours. This was most evident in the activities where students read in front of a larger group. Whilst students read when required their participation in discussion periods between readers was low. A small number of students tended to dominate these discussions.

Teachers identified a number of instructional benefits of oral reading in the questionnaires and interviews. I observed little evidence to suggest that any explicit instruction took place. Teachers occasionally reminded students about speaking more loudly or slowly and they corrected their oral slippages. The paired reading events as opposed to the small group or whole class oral reading events were more conducive to teaching reading, however, most of the instruction during the paired reading events was centred on code breaking practices. In one paired reading event the teacher only corrected pronunciation and supplied unknown words. Students accessed text participant practices during the oral comprehension sessions held as part of some of the events, but again there was no explicit teaching related to the use of text participant practices. Furthermore, there was little evidence to suggest the use or teaching of text user or text analyst practices.

Similarly, there did not appear to be any assessment of students reading occurring during these events, although many claimed to make mental notes during the interviews. One teacher gave feedback to students on their reading performance and made written notes on the student's progress.

During the student interviews students claimed that others could hear them reading during these activities and that others often made negative comments about their reading. In all of the activities except two of the paired reading activities, other students were in a position to hear other students read. I also witnessed students who did laugh and make comments about other readers. This was more common in the small group and whole class reading activities. Some students also claimed that they found the activity stressful. I observed some readers who did appear to be uncomfortable with the task. Again, this was more apparent in the small group and whole class reading events. These students often read quickly, quietly and struggled with their reading.

The oral reading events observed that were part of a larger reading program such as the small group reading and novel-based reading scheme had a greater variety of reading activities and consequently would have been more conducive to the teaching of reading. The two events observed, where the oral reading comprised the entire activity were less conducive to teaching students to read. In both these events, disruptive and inattentive behaviours were more common. Further students read to a larger group of students and some would have found the activity stressful. Two of the main outcomes identified for the "reading recounts" activity were for students to improve their proofreading skills and gain greater confidence in reading to others. In this situation, it would have been more beneficial for students to proofread their written recounts during a conference with a peer or teacher. In the whole class "round robin" reading activity, it appeared that the main purpose was to read, share and understand a text together. In this case, it would have been more enjoyable and far less stressful for some students if the teacher had conducted the reading

CHAPTER 11

A Discussion

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This chapter is a discussion of three different perspectives on oral reading in the primary school. It brings all of the data together in order to create a more complete picture of oral reading as a practice in the primary classroom. The discussion highlights mismatches between the student, teacher and researcher's perspectives of the various activities investigated.

I used the MASS framework (Gee & Green, 1997) as described in the methodology chapter to facilitate the mapping of the data and the identification of matches and mismatches. The chapter divides into four sections - 'Maintaining Worlds'; 'Building Activities'; 'Constructing Identities' and 'Making Connections'

Maintaining Worlds

In all of the oral reading events observed and discussed, students knew when, where and how they occurred. Their knowledge of this matched both the teachers and researchers accounts of the activities.

In three of the activities observed oral reading featured as a sub-activity of other reading events such as reading groups or novel studies, whereas, in the other three activities oral reading featured as the sole activity.

All of the activities occurred either just before or just after recess and lunch. Activities that comprised a round robin sub-activity required students to sit on the floor in a circular fashion. The exception to this was the Year 7 reading group activity at Gunn Primary where students sat on chairs around a group of desks. In the paired-reading activity and reading conference, students stood next to the teacher's desk. In most of the activities, the teacher assumed a more comfortable position. Their seating position was higher than that of the

students, allowing them to more effectively monitor and manage other students in the room, and they often sat in a comfortable chair.

The oral reading events observed occurred at a particular time and place. Students needed to know this in order to participate, particularly where preparation on their behalf was a requirement. Each activity had a place on the weekly timetable with a specific amount of time allocated to it. The timetabling of these activities was important. Teachers decided the time; place and duration of each activity and students needed to prepare to participate. The activities also needed to fit within the school timetable thus contributing to maintaining the order and structure of the school day. In some cases, other teachers and teaching assistants came to the classroom to assist. The timing of the activities was also interesting. One teacher commented that it was a good activity to settle the children after lunch. Similarly, a small number of teachers who participated in the questionnaire indicated that oral reading activities were a useful management strategy. The reasons given included "keeping students on task", "keeping kids quiet" and to "gain their attention". Some teachers and students also spoke about "silent reading" in this way.

The oral reading events observed not only sat within the structure of the class and school timetables but also had organisational structures of their own. In four of the six oral reading events observed, teachers grouped students according to ability. These groupings determined whom students read with, what students could read and in some cases on what day they read. Students knew what groups they were in and what texts they could access. Some students also needed to know when it was their day to read. This information was usually displayed somewhere in the classroom. Teachers displayed the composition of the groups on classroom walls. Teachers named groups by using colours or animal names. This was an attempt to mask their graded nature. Despite this, students still referred to the groups according to the abilities of the students that comprised them. Texts, like the reading groups, were marked. Some had dots on them whilst others lived in particular places. Grouping students and texts for instructional purposes also reflects the organised nature of schooling. Schools group students according to year levels. Students learn within the boundaries of the classroom and the classroom sits

within the boundaries of the school. Working outside these boundaries is the exception rather than the rule. Going beyond these boundaries without permission constitutes being "out of bounds" and breaks school rules.

Teachers continued to maintain order during the enactment of each activity. The oral reading events observed followed particular procedures. In all of the activities, teachers afforded students little preparation before reading to their teacher or in front of their peers. In three of the six oral reading events, students had limited familiarity with the text read. Students in the Year 7 group at Parap were required to read the entire text independently before requesting a conference with the teacher, however, at the conference, the teacher chose the passage for the student to read. In the Year 3 "Reading Recounts" activity students read recounts they had written themselves. However, this was before any editing of their text and some students read their texts up to five days after writing them. Finally, in the Year 3 "Reading Group" activity students had read the text in their groups before reading to the teacher. In the remaining three oral reading events observed, the students had no previous familiarity with the text read. Students interviewed expressed the view that they would like the opportunity to practice before reading in front of others. One of the teachers interviewed also commented that she felt this was important if students were to read to others. In this situation however, students did not have an opportunity to do this. In reality, in adult life, there are not many instances where people are required to read out-loud to others without having rehearsed beforehand. Those who advocated methods for improving fluency emphasised the importance of the child choosing the passage they read and having the opportunity to rehearse before reading to others (Anderson, 1981; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).

Participation in the various oral reading events was non-voluntary in many classrooms. The methods used to nominate readers varied. In some activities, teachers randomly selected readers whereas in others the teacher nominated readers from a pre-determined list. One teacher used the class roll as a means to ensure each child had a turn, another used the students nominated reading day and another insisted that students establish a reading order before the activity by sitting in a line in front of the teacher. Teachers interviewed

commented that each child read at least once in each oral reading session, or at least once each week, and in one case at least twice each term. There was consensus that teachers felt it was important for all students to do this. There appeared to be only one activity where it was not a requirement for students to read. This occurred during the shared reading session in the Year 3 class at Gunn Primary. In this instance, the teacher asked which students wanted to read before reading. She then established a reading order with those students who volunteered. In the interviews this teacher commented that she did not expect students to read out-loud until they felt comfortable, although she did think it was important for all students to be able to do it eventually.

Teachers decided when the next reader should read. Generally, students read for around one minute. The teacher monitored this by selecting the passage for the student to read or by indicating to the reader that they needed to stop. Some teachers did this by either thanking the student at the end of a paragraph or by nominating the next reader in a firm voice. Others managed this by initiating some sort of discussion at an appropriate point in the reading.

In most of the oral reading events observed there was some discussion about what students had read either during the reading or between readers. The teacher initiated these discussions. According to the students interviewed, the teacher's questions served to monitor their understanding of what they had read. In addition to initiating these discussions, teachers also ended them. Some did this by nominating the next reader in a loud and firm tone and others did this by ignoring students' intentions to participate further in the discussion.

Teachers clearly managed these events. The organisational work before, during and after the activity was important. Students knowing about when it occurred, about when their reading turn began and ended, about where to sit, about how to prepare, about what they could read and about where they might find this was important to the playing out of the activity.

Oral reading events contributed to building a world that was reflective of the controlled and organised nature of mass schooling. Schools group students according to age and students work within these groupings. In this study teachers grouped students further according to ability. Other influences such as

timetabling and educational policy also affected when, where and how the various events in the classroom occurred. The groupings within and outside the classroom gave students a place within the system and served to dictate when, where, how and with whom they learned. Due to external time restraints, teachers imposed further time restraints within the event itself. Reading time was limited. On average students had around one minute to read. This was necessary since many teachers thought it was important to hear each student read. Time allocated to discussion was also limited. Teachers initiated and ended discussions and they made decisions about the nature of these. It was important for students to know about the timetabling of these reading events, as they often needed to prepare for them beforehand by finding books, moving to groups, locating their recounts and preparing for conferences. Teachers expected students to do this. Students needed to understand the various ways in which teachers initiated and ended reading turns and discussions. These events were just as much to do with maintaining order and appropriate ways of interacting, as they were about learning to read or reading out-loud.

Building Activities

In three of the activities observed the entire activity comprised oral reading. In others, it was a sub-activity of another reading activity such as reading groups. In all of the activities, students and teachers identified oral comprehension or asking the reader questions as sub-activities. I observed short discussion periods initiated by the teacher in four of the oral reading events

As mentioned in earlier chapters this thesis adopts a sociocultural view of reading. The Four Resources Model is a useful model for conceptualising about reading and implementing a balanced reading program in the classroom (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). Further, it is an effective means to "interrogate practice".

Students interviewed discussed some of the instructional benefits of the various activities. Most of the benefits identified by students involved "code breaker" practices. They included such things as learning to "sound out" and

learning "new vocabulary". Students interviewed also indicated that teachers' comments throughout the activity reminded them about using various oral reading skills such as using expression, punctuation and speaking clearly. Only one Year 7 group of students mentioned that it helped them to develop their understanding of what they read, although a few students said it assisted them with the meaning of individual words.

Teachers interviewed and surveyed reported numerous instructional benefits of oral reading. In fact, 49% of the responses supplied in the questionnaire data related to its instructional benefits. These responses related to the development and teaching of various reading and oral reading skills. They also developed what I have termed 'dispositions' which included such things as confidence, enjoyment and attitude. Some of the commonly reported learning outcomes included the development of decoding, comprehension and oral skills, public speaking, confidence and enjoyment. Similar to the students' responses the majority of these were code breaker practices. Students however, did not clearly articulate many of the learning outcomes identified by their teachers.

My observations of the various oral-reading events suggest that many of the learning outcomes identified were not realised. For example, the outcomes identified in the "Reading Recounts" activity included developing proofreading skills, "sounding out" strategies, oral reading skills, public speaking, fluency and confidence. The activity was also used to develop listening skills, respect for others and manners. These did not directly relate to the activity itself, but rather the ceremonial work connected to the activity. They were more to do with how to interact, behave and maintain order within the classroom. They were about ways of being in school. My observations of this event suggest there was little direct reading instruction. Students received no assistance with unknown words although one student did receive a reminder about speaking loudly and slowly. Students found it difficult to listen well and some made negative comments about what other readers said and how they read. The video data revealed 34 instances of disruptive behaviours with intervention occurring in 19 of these. The development of listening skills for some students was necessary. However, the reminders about not listening

were inconsistent. Many of the inappropriate behaviours were ignored and students often began reading when others were not listening. Another significant outcome identified for this activity was the development of proofreading skills. Whilst the reading of the recounts may have highlighted areas that needed editing to the students, others did not explicitly point these out to students. Further, after the reading students put their recounts away and were not encouraged to edit their texts. The strategy of reading writing out-loud to assist in proofreading has merit but the benefits of doing this under the guise of public speaking are problematic.

Most teachers identified the development of decoding skills, in particular the use of "sounding-out" strategies as a learning outcome in both the interviews and questionnaires. I observed one teacher who encouraged the use of sounding out strategies. Teachers tended to employ corrective strategies rather than direct instruction during these events. Teachers and other students often corrected readers' oral slippages. The student questionnaire and interview data suggest that the most commonly known strategies for decoding words were "sounding out" or "asking others". Whilst there was limited evidence of direct instruction in these strategies during events observed, the data suggest that students in this study relied heavily on them. Very few students identified semantic or syntactic strategies. A study conducted by Worthy (1996) that investigated classroom reading lessons on fluency found that teachers rarely provided feedback during these sessions except to correct mistakes and supply students with unknown words (2002). The National Reading Panel (2000) reported that during these sessions, students generally read a small amount of text and that "valuable" instructional time was wasted due to other students waiting their turn (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002).

Teachers also commented that oral reading aided in the development of comprehension. Only one group of students identified this as a learning outcome for the activity. Teachers often asked questions during or between readers. These discussions tended to concentrate on literal aspects of the text and few questions asked required students to infer or predict. None of the questions required students to think critically about what they read. Text analyst practices or critical skills are important skills for effective readers to

acquire, according to the Four Resources Model of reading. Further the type of response required by teachers sometimes conflicted with what they intended to teach. In one oral reading event the teacher indicated that she was attempting to develop the students' ability to make inferences. The framing of the question suggested that the group needed to infer. A student responded appropriately but this was clearly not the response sought. A student then answered with information taken directly from the text and was praised for her response. This was a very good example of a mismatch between the students understanding of what was expected and what the teacher actually expected. There was also a mismatch between what the teacher intended to do and what actually occurred. If the outcome were to develop the ability to make inferences then this interaction would only serve to give conflicting messages to the student about what it meant to infer. Cairney reports that these types of misunderstandings can often lead to confusion, inattentiveness and misbehaviour from the student (2000, p. 497). Again, in most of the events observed the comprehension instruction that occurred tended to be corrective rather than instructional. A study conducted by Emery (1991) found that during reading sessions involving comprehension the teachers' role was that of "comprehension repairman" and that teachers spent more time correcting students' misunderstandings about what they had read rather than teaching them strategies to help improve their ability to comprehend (Primeaux, 2000, p. 538).

Many teachers during the interviews and questionnaires suggested that the activity of oral reading facilitated the development of comprehension skills. However, a number of the students interviewed and surveyed expressed the view that comprehension was more difficult during oral reading. Thirty-eight percent of the reasons given from students about why students preferred silent over oral reading related to the fact they found it easier. They found it easier to understand what they had read, they had more time to labour over unknown words and they did not have to worry about making mistakes, using expression or any of the other skills associated with giving a public performance. In fact, some students also suggested that they were able to read more expressively silently. They discussed imagining what was happening in the story and giving the characters different voices in their heads. As stated in

previous chapters the literature also remains divided on the issue of whether oral reading does in fact improve comprehension (Allington, 1983b; Galbraith & Clayton, 1998; Pinnell et al., 1995).

Improving students' ability to engage in public speaking was another commonly identified outcome. Most of the oral reading events observed occurred in the presence of peers. In reality, those of us who find ourselves in the realm of public speaking rehearse before the event. Politicians have their speeches prepared by others, lecturers plan their lectures and priests compose their sermons. In the oral reading events observed, students did not rehearse the reading beforehand, although the literature points out that this is important (Anderson, 1981; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Teachers claimed oral-reading activities improved a students' ability to engage in public speaking. This is problematic since the oral reading events observed did not reflect the activity of speaking publicly outside of school in its true sense. Outside the school boundaries, there is a reason for speaking publicly and often others invite people to do this. An invited speaker has the right to decline and those who listen choose to do so. Finally, invited speakers have plenty of time to prepare adequately. Whole language pedagogy emphasises the importance of students being involved in "real" literacy events (Cambourne, 1988). The whole notion of "real" within the school context is problematic in itself. Students write letters that are seldom posted, write book reviews that are rarely published, compose stories without an audience, write newspaper reports about events that did not occur and speak publicly without practice, purpose and a willing audience.

Teachers felt that oral reading activities also developed oral reading skills such as fluency, expression and clarity. Students reported that teachers reminded them about using these skills. Again, I observed no explicit instruction in this area except for the occasional request for students to slow down or speak up. Teachers said that they also learned these skills through listening to other students who acted as role models. Good role models were rare throughout the reading events I observed.

Another outcome cited frequently was the development of confidence. Many students from Year 3 through to Year 7 felt they were lacking in confidence and the regular occurrence of these activities did not appear to improve the situation for these students. Students who lacked confidence in Year 7 said it had always been that way for them, although one student commented that she felt her confidence levels had improved. Twenty-one percent of the students surveyed attributed lack of confidence to their dislike for reading out-loud. Many of the students who lacked in confidence were also those who struggled with the task of reading, although this was not always the case. I believe that competence and confidence go together. Confidence will not improve unless students are able to improve their reading skills. I believe much of the lack in confidence is a result of their struggling with reading. A public forum, given students' lack of confidence, is not the ideal place to attempt to build students' confidence level.

Similarly, a number of teachers indicated that oral reading promoted reading enjoyment. This was another questionable outcome. Seventy percent of students surveyed indicated that they preferred to read silently. Given a choice between oral and silent reading all of the interviewees said they would opt for silent reading. Many students said they did not like listening to other students read out-loud particularly when they were poorer readers. Some also expressed a dislike for the books chosen by teachers to read. Given that many students were dissatisfied with the nature of the activity it is highly unlikely that the activity served to promote an enjoyment for reading. A study conducted in 1984 investigating how teachers emphasise attitudes toward reading found that positive activities included teachers reading to students, teachers assisting students find high interest level books and relaying the message that reading was a worthwhile activity. Activities promoting negative student attitudes toward reading included insisting children write extensive book reviews, read uninteresting books and read out-loud in front of their peers (Heathington & Alexander, 1984).

Teachers cited other outcomes that were more to do with "ways of doing school" or "ways of being" in the classroom than to do with learning to read. These included developing listening skills, increasing perseverance levels, using

manners and showing respect for others point of view. Students clearly articulated the requirement to listen to others during the various oral-reading events, however, they connected this to rules rather than learning. The Year 3 students spoke quite knowledgeably about the listening aspect of the activity. They discussed strategies they employed when others were not listening, the importance of listening and the consequences for not listening. A number of studies have shown how literacy events are as much about learning how to be socially competent within school and about ways of "doing school" as they are about literacy learning (Baker, 1991, 1997; Cairney, 2000; Fernie, Davies, Kantor, & McMurray, 1993; Judith Green et al., 1992). The ceremonial work that situates various oral reading activities, is important since each new event or situation calls on a history of other similar events and situations. The fact that Year 3 students highlighted the importance of listening to others suggest there was more work conducted on this aspect in these particular classrooms. The fact that students did not discuss this in great depth in the middle and upper grades suggests that these practices had become "naturalised" within these classrooms. Students simply spoke about them as rules and did not elaborate further.

The interview and questionnaire data suggest teachers viewed the development of the ability to read out-loud on a continuum. During the early years, teachers reported it as useful means to develop decoding strategies and confidence. Middle primary teachers indicated that they worked on developing specific oral reading skills such as expression and punctuation. Upper primary teachers expressed the view that students should be able to read out-loud well by this stage and that it was a precursor for effective public speaking.

The data also indicate that there were two curricula working side by side. One being the "ideal" curriculum which was reflected in the teachers' responses during the interviews and questionnaires and the other, the "pedagogy-in-use", reflected in the students' responses and my observations of the various events (Piper, 1983). When I asked one teacher how often her students read out-loud in her class she confessed that it, meaning oral reading, "didn't happen very often" and that she "wished she had more time".

My data suggest that the activity of oral reading has little to do with learning to read. At the very least it requires students to use "code breaker" practices and to a lesser extent "text participant" practices. "Text user" and "text analyst" practices were not overtly apparent during the activities. Whilst students used "code breaker" practices during their reading, there was little evidence to suggest the presence of explicit teaching of these practices. Most of the interactions were corrective rather than instructive. Similarly, students were required to use some "text participant" practices during the oral and written comprehension sub-activities but again there was little evidence to suggest these practices were taught. Using oral reading as a means to teach reading in these situations did not present a balanced view of what effective readers do from a sociocultural perspective. The activities related more directly to "bottom up" or phonics approaches to reading instruction.

Another frequently cited use for oral reading activities was to assess reading. Forty-two percent of the responses in the questionnaire data related to assessment with 30% of teachers surveyed claiming to use oral reading as an assessment tool. Similarly, all of the teachers interviewed reported that oral reading was a useful means to assess reading. In fact, one teacher commented that this was the only method she used. The data from the student questionnaires differed slightly. Fifty-eight percent of students surveyed, claimed that their teachers used oral reading as an assessment method. Similarly, most students interviewed claimed their teacher assessed their reading during oral reading activities. However, students found it difficult to articulate how teachers did this. They also found it difficult to discuss "what" teachers actually assessed. The literature suggests that students having a metacognitive awareness of what they do when they read, an understanding of how they learn and what they need to improve is integral to effective teaching and learning (Baker & Brown, 1984; Goodman, 1996; Hempenstall, 1998). If students are unaware of what they do and what effective readers do then they are going to find it difficult to make improvements to their reading.

Teachers identified a number of aspects of reading that they assessed during the activity. These included, decoding strategies, comprehension, gauging where students were at, fluency, punctuation, appreciation and

attitude. The Year 7 students from Farrer were the only group interviewed to discuss the nature of their teacher's assessment. They said their teacher looked at the kinds of books they were reading, that she checked their understanding through comprehension questions and that she noted their level of confidence, fluency and word accuracy through the oral reading in the reading conference. One student said that the questions asked in the conference were not only about assessment but they were also a means to check whether students had actually completed the reading. The other group of Year 7's mentioned their teacher used their weekly comprehension tests as well as oral reading, however they believed the main purposes of this assessment was again a means to check whether in fact they had done the reading. The Year 4/5 students from Gunn said that their teacher listened to them read and that he looked at their reading contract as a means to check whether they had actually done the reading. Similarly, Nick from the Year 3 Group at Farrer said that his teacher looked at his reading record chart to check his reading.

The data suggest that teachers in these classrooms did not make their assessment practices visible or explicit to students. My observations of these events did not reveal tangible evidence that assessment was in fact taking place. Only one teacher made notes during the activity, although others claimed to make mental notes. The teacher who did make notes also discussed these with the students. This teacher happened to be the teacher of the Year 7 group who were most knowledgeable about their teacher's assessment practices.

The characteristics of 'good' readers reported by both teachers and students also brings into question the criteria used by teachers to assess a students' ability to read. Expression, correct pronunciation, volume, speed, comprehension, fluency, motivation, enjoyment, perseverance, confidence and the type and number of texts read were some of the criteria against which readers were assessed. Many of these are oral reading or public speaking skills whilst others such as "enjoyment", "perseverance" and "confidence" are particular valued dispositions not connected to the act of reading. A recent study that reports on how two primary school teachers made judgements about their students' writing found they used a set of six main judgement indexes to assess a piece of writing. One of these indexes categorised as "first-

hand/in-class observations of students" included such things as motivation, on task behaviour, ability and personality. They found that whilst these were not explicitly stated assessment criteria informed by a fixed standard related to the quality of the writing they had a powerful influence on the judgements made by the teacher (Wyatt-Smith, Castleton, Freebody, & Cooksey, 2003).

Assessing students' reading through oral reading activities where students are required to read in front of their peers is problematic. Most students reported that the activity of reading out-loud was more difficult than reading silently. They found it more difficult to understand what they read, they found it difficult having to focus on expression, clarity, volume and other oral skills, they were not afforded enough time to figure out unknown words and some experienced feelings of anxiety as a result of having to read in front of their peers. Observations of the various events revealed that if students hesitated for two seconds or longer, then others supplied them with the unknown word. Teachers jumped on errors in pronunciation quickly and sometimes asked students to repeat whole sentences. Given the level of difficulty some students expressed concerning the activity it is doubtful whether it is a fair or accurate assessment method to use. At the very least it may reveal what decoding strategies students used and this would be on the proviso that others had not jumped in and supplied the unknown word before they had an opportunity to work it out. It would give some indication on how well students used various oral reading skills providing it was a reader who was confident and comfortable with the task. Finally, it would allow teachers to gain some sense of how fluent the reader was. The activity offers little information about reading practices other than code breaking practices and as such does not provide an accurate and complete picture of how well students can read. Oral reading activities do not give students enough time nor appropriate conditions to demonstrate their reading competence. If teachers base their assessment of a students' reading ability on their oral reading performance then this assessment is severely flawed.

Some teachers suggested that oral reading was useful in a diagnostic sense as it gave them information about a students' reading ability that assisted them with planning experiences for those students. Many claimed to use a form

of miscue analysis to detect student's reading errors. One group of students described an activity that suggested their teacher did carry out these forms of assessment.

Constructing Identities

This thesis argues that oral reading practices contribute to the construction of a readers' position in school. The public and graded nature of these events, teacher feedback, comments from students and rules of participation all contributed to how the students positioned themselves as readers in the classroom.

All of the interviewed students discussed participatory rules associated with each of the activities. In four of the activities, students read when required. Two of these activities involved students reading in front of the whole class. In the Year 3 and Year 7 group-reading activities at Gunn teachers said they did not insist students read although, they saw it important that they have a go. The students interviewed in the Year 7 gave the impression that they all read during these sessions by taking turns at the reading. During my observations of the event, the teacher nominated a reader and asked if they wanted to read. The student heard the question, did not answer, and began to read. It is worth noting that in other situations if the teacher asked students a question then there would be an expectation they respond. This was not the case in this situation.

Being a willing participant in school events is part of positioning oneself as a successful student. Student reports often refer to the degree and nature of a students' participation. Comments such as "Mary needs to participate more in discussions" or "John needs to read more during independent reading" are common. Schools expect students to participate and they value it. Non-participation is something that needs fixing. After all, if all students decided not to participate then the order and structure of the school would be in disarray. Students interviewed inferred that participation in the various events was non-negotiable. There were consequences for not completing the work, for non-participation and non-compliance. One teacher commented that she required

students to do the work to the best of their ability. Another commented that all students must "have a go". 'Having a go' is part of the discourse of whole language pedagogy (Cambourne, 1988). It does not matter if you make "mistakes" as long as you have a go.

The teachers' discourse of participation and "having a go" in oral reading events conflicted with the discourse constructed by the students who participated in these events. Teachers relayed the message that they should "have a go" at the reading, as practice would result in improvement of their reading skills, public speaking and confidence levels. Generally, teachers present mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. Students interviewed reported that others often laughed at them when they read and that they made negative comments about their reading, particularly when they made mistakes. Further, the activity of oral reading allowed others to make judgements about their reading ability. Struggling readers knew that others found their reading frustrating to listen to. "Having a go" when they were not competent and comfortable with the task was seen as a "shame job". My observations of the events revealed that in some instances readers did receive this type of feedback from their peers. There was tension between positioning oneself as a "successful student" by "having a go", positioning oneself as a successful reader through displaying competent oral reading skills and protecting themselves from ridicule from their peers.

Some students figured out ways to minimise the amount of exposure they had during these events. One group described how the teacher insisted they establish a reading order by sitting in a line in front of her. Some students explained how they tried to get nearer the end of the line so there were fewer students around when it was their turn to read. The teacher explained this behaviour differently. He said it was an indication of students' enjoyment of the activity as they were "fighting" to read first.

As discussed in the previous section, students and teachers identified listening as an important rule in each activity, although the degree to which teachers enforced this rule varied. One Year 3 group in particular felt empowered to enforce this rule themselves. They explained how they dealt

with offenders when the teacher was not present. In the interviews some students spoke about the frustration they felt when others were talking whilst they read. They also felt that teachers often did not listen when they read to them in a paired reading situation or reading conference. One student explained that the teachers' inattentiveness was often due to the inappropriate behaviour of other students. In a classroom situation it is unrealistic to expect teachers to give their undivided attention to one student when they are responsible for the whole group. Another commonly expressed rule was the requirement for students to follow the text as others read. Students discussed this as an accountability measure to make sure they were doing the work. A teacher described how he changed the order of the readers to ensure that each student was following the text. My observations of this suggest that students paid attention up until they had their turn at reading. After their turn, students did not routinely follow the text, as they knew there was no requirement for them to read again.

In all of the small group and whole class oral reading activities, students' reading abilities were public. The public nature of the activities made it possible for students to compare their own reading performance to that of others. Whilst students could not identify what teachers assessed during the activity, they were able to discuss the characteristics of a 'good' reader.

Both students and teachers described what they thought constituted a 'good' reader. Oral reading skills featured prominently in the ways in which students perceived how their teachers described 'good' readers. Forty-one percent of the characteristics identified included oral reading skills. Expression was the most frequent response, followed by volume, speed and clarity. It is interesting but not surprising that "posture" and "eye contact" featured in the responses. Students did not prioritise the ability to comprehend in their perceptions of how teacher might describe 'good' readers. Only three students alluded to the fact that it was important to "understand" what they read. During the interviews students needed to be prompted to include comprehension as an important aspect of reading.

Dispositions also featured prominently in the student questionnaire and interview data. "Confidence", "tries hard", "reads lots", and "enjoys reading" were common responses.

Twenty-one percent of student responses in the questionnaires included things such as "excellent", "very good" and "good". These students had great difficulty articulating what a 'good' reader might look like. During my observations of the various oral-reading events, I witnessed teachers giving feedback such as this. Teachers said, "well done", "great reading" and the like. An explanation of what was "excellent" or "great" about the reading was lacking in this feedback. Further information about the students' reading performance would have enabled them to better understand what constitutes 'good' reading.

Teachers' responses did not vary considerably from students. Thirty-five percent of the characteristics identified by teachers in the questionnaires related directly to the skills involved with oral reading. Dispositions also rated highly. Only 56 out of the 100 teachers surveyed mentioned "comprehension" or understanding as an important characteristic. It was also interesting that teachers measured a students' reading ability on their level of confidence, on the amount of reading they did and on the enjoyment they gained from the task. In fact, 24% of the responses related to these attributes. During my fourteen years of working in the primary setting, I have worked with a number of students who were very good at reading despite their lack of confidence, enjoyment for the task and/or infrequent reading habits.

During the interviews, students' descriptions tended to mirror those areas which teachers' identified as needing improvement. This suggested that when teachers did provide feedback it tended to focus on areas needing improvement rather than what readers did well. This made it difficult for the students to have a comprehensive understanding of what a 'good' reader might look like in their teachers' eyes. Construction of their reading identity centred on those aspects of their reading which were lacking. Few students articulated what they did well.

Comments and feedback from their peers also contributed to how individual readers positioned themselves. Inattentiveness signalled a message

that other students were not interested in listening to them. Many students in addition to expressing a dislike for the activity also discussed the frustration experienced when listening to readers who struggled with the task. Other studies provided findings consistent with these. They found that skilled readers became bored with the slow pace of the activity and that less skilled readers often read texts above their instructional level leading to high levels of frustration (Hoffman, 1991; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).

Many of the activities observed featured ability grouping of students. Membership of these groups was public knowledge. Students knew which level they were at, they knew which level their peers were at and were aware of the movement of students between groups. In one situation, students described the movement of a student from the 'middle' to the 'lower' reading group. The students name remained on the middle group with a line through it and was re-entered on the list of names for the lower group.

For one Year 3 student the grading of the groups was problematic as this prevented her from positioning herself as a 'successful' reader during the group interview. The group of students interviewed in this situation included two students from the "top" reading group and another who was in a different and "lower" group. During the interview, the student tried to convince all of us that the groups were not ability-based. It was also evident that her mother had given her reassurances about this. She quoted her mother as saying they were not ability-based groups. However, when she voluntarily ranked the readers in the interviewed group she was careful to place herself at the bottom of the list, as she knew that the others in the group, due to the graded nature of the activity, were knowledgeable about where she fitted within this group. This student wanted to position herself as a successful reader but was not able to do so because of the graded and public nature of the activity.

The graded nature of these activities had implications for the type of texts students read. Students described levelled books, some, which were marked, kept in different locations and differed accorded to their thickness. Students often described 'good' readers as those who read "thick" books. In one classroom, students in the top reading group had the extra responsibility of

collecting their own books before the activity commenced whereas students in the lower groups had the books distributed by the teacher. Students in the highest group were not only better readers but also had more responsibility.

Students openly discussed their feelings associated with the activity of reading out-loud during the interviews. All of the students interviewed said they preferred to read silently. Many talked about the embarrassing nature of the activity. Students did not like making mistakes in front of their peers and most admitted doing this more frequently when reading out-loud. One student in particular became very anxious when it was her turn to read. Some of the teachers interviewed also acknowledged that the activity was a "stressful" ordeal for some readers although many believed that the majority of students did not mind participating in the activity. The student interview and questionnaire data presented a different picture. The majority of students reported a preference for silent reading. I spoke to a range of different readers including fluent, average, and reluctant and those who struggled with the task. All types of readers reported experiencing anxiety, frustration or ridicule from their peers during the activity. Literacy biographies of pre-service teachers reflect on the same kind of feelings in relation to reading out-loud as experienced by the students in this study:

> Stacey: I felt that if I could read fast enough, the other kids wouldn't make fun of me. So while I was reading as fast as I could, I never focussed on the meaning. I think this happens a lot because there's such a focus on reading the words right.

> Lorraine: I don't remember anything about my first-grade reading experiences, but I do remember loving to read aloud in second grade. I also remember hating it when a few kids would read, because they were behind the rest of use and it took a long time.

> Charles: Whenever it was my turn to read I would get cold sweats, I was so frustrated because I could only figure out maybe three words of a sentence. So when I would try to read to the class *everyone* would laugh at me. I would always try to sound words out, waiting for the teacher to go ahead and tell me the word (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002, p. 334).

This particular study found that both experienced and less skilled readers had negative experiences of oral reading events in school (Worthy & Broaddus,

2002). It is interesting that these comments made by pre-service teachers mirror comments made by students in this study.

Students also expressed dislike for some of the discussions held between readers. Many students elected not to participate in these discussions and some said they would rather monitor their own comprehension by listening to the answers provided by other students. My observation of one event revealed that a small number of students dominated the discussions and that a large number of students elected not to participate. As discussed earlier at least eight of the 22 students did not participate in the discussion and two of the 22 students who dominated the discussion contributed to 63% of the turns held. I found that the participation rate for students increased as group sizes became smaller.

The nature of oral reading events, were detrimental to some learner readers. They served to help construct students' understanding of their reading position. In the case of struggling readers, these events only served to reinforce the negative perceptions these students had of themselves as readers. The public and graded nature of the activities meant they could compare themselves to other more able readers. They often endured negative feedback from their peers. It was difficult for students to keep their reading abilities private. Students knew who the good readers were and they knew how they ranked against other readers in the class. A study which examined students' perceptions of better readers in elementary classrooms found that by the second grade students rated their own and others reading ability in a manner consistent with that of their teacher. The manner in which teachers organised instruction influenced this. Students' ratings were more accurate in classrooms where there was high incidence of public performance both in large and smaller groups (Filby & Barnett, 1982).

Finally, the negative effects reported by students conflicted with some of the learning outcomes identified by teachers. Many teachers believed that the activities helped to improve a students' reading and in particular to develop students' confidence levels.

Making Connections

Despite the differences between the various events observed there were a number of similarities. All of the oral reading events involved students reading in front of others although the context in which this occurred differed.

Many of the activities observed resembled the recitation methods prevalent in the nineteenth century (Shannon, 1990, p. 4). They appeared to be modified versions of the heavily criticised nineteenth century practice of "round robin" reading where the whole class read a text or part thereof by means of individual students taking turns at the reading (Rennie, 2000). In some cases, the teacher included brief discussions following the readers and in others, students read in small groups rather than whole class contexts. The practice of "round robin" reading is criticised because it is boring, purposeless, often accompanied by disruptive behaviours; that it encourages subvocalization and excessive eye regressions and fixation durations and creates anxiety for less able readers (Hill, 1983; Lynch, 1987). Despite the variations from the traditional "round robin" model in the activities observed disruptive behaviours still persisted, some of the behaviours observed suggested students were bored and the less able readers displayed signs of anxiety. This was more evident in the activities where there was no discussion, limited instruction and when students read in a larger group. Despite this, many teachers in this study did not publicly admit to using "round robin" reading in the classroom. They spoke about the unnecessary stress reading in front of ones peers placed on learner readers. Some admitted they knew a few students did not want to read out-loud yet they told them participation was necessary as the task would become easier the more often they partook in the activities. Some of these events, whilst they were considerably modified versions of this nineteenth century practice still presented unnecessary stress and frustration for learner readers.

Teachers and students connected the various activities to assessment practices and measures of accountability. Students suggested that the main purpose of the activity was to assess their reading. Students saw the requirement to follow text, to record their reading and have this signed and to answer written and oral questions after their reading as a means for the teacher

to check whether they had completed the reading. Teachers and some students also connected the activity to public speaking although it had little resemblance to this activity. They made frequent references to expression, clarity, punctuation, volume, pronunciation and reading speed throughout the interviews and questionnaires. A similar study that examined the practice of news time from kindergarten to Year 2, concluded that some participants' perceived this activity as a forerunner to public speaking rather than an opportunity to tell a story (Cusworth, 1997).

Explicit reading instruction was not a common feature of any of these activities although some connected the activity to learning to read. Students and teachers reported that it would assist in the development of students' reading skills. Observations of the events suggest the observed activities had little to do with learning to read. Most of the instruction observed was corrective in nature aimed at improving students' pronunciation and graphophonic decoding skills.

Finally the various activities connected to ways of "being" and "doing" in school. Many of the rules described were similar. Rules common to most of the activities observed included listening, raising ones hand to speak, waiting for a turn, following the text and actively participating. A study by Cairney that examined the real-world literacy contexts in which children found themselves, revealed that there were four distinct constructions of literacy in the home and school contexts. These included literacy as knowledge, literacy as performance, literacy as negotiated meaning making and literacy as doing school (Cairney, 2000). The oral reading events observed were primarily about "literacy as performance" and "literacy as doing school." "Literacy as doing school" only presented itself in the school context and it emphasised students displaying classroom competence rather than competence in the literacy demands of the task (Cairney, 2000, p. 502).

Summary

The ceremonial aspects before, during and after the various activities investigated during this study assisted to maintain the controlled and organised nature of mass schooling. Teachers carried out the work connected to this.

Many of the practices such as the timetabling of events, participatory rules and the types of interactions were just as much about "ways of being in school" as they were about learning to read. The data presented some evidence to suggest that many of these practices had become "normalised" and "naturalised" within the classroom. Students in the middle and upper grades discussed "listening" during the activities as "rules", whereas the early childhood teachers and students spoke about this as a learning outcome of the various activities. When teachers in the upper primary area discussed rules associated with the various activities they referred to students following "general" classroom rules.

Both teachers and students discussed instructional benefits related to the various activities but students were less articulate about this. Students' discussions about instructional benefits largely centred around code breaker practices whereas teachers focussed on both code breaker and text participant practices. My observations of the various events suggest that little explicit reading instruction occurred and that it was largely corrective in nature. This related to both reading out-loud and the oral comprehension sub-activities that were a part of some of the activities.

There were a number of mismatches between the learning outcomes identified by teachers and how the students perceived the various activities. Teachers claimed that the activity served to enhance comprehension whereas students reported that comprehension was much more difficult during oral reading. Teachers claimed that it helped to develop word attack strategies whereas students reported others supplying them unknown words before they had an opportunity to work words out for themselves. Teachers claimed that oral reading served to develop confidence in learner readers whereas students reported that lack of confidence in their own reading ability only served to make the activity more stressful and difficult. Teachers claimed that the activity served to foster an enjoyment for reading whereas students reported that they did not find the activities particularly enjoyable.

Similarly, teachers and students reported that oral reading was a means to assess a students' reading. Students found it difficult to identify what teachers assessed during the various activities and often what they did identify matched

those areas needing improvement in their own reading. Again, in many of the activities observed I could find little evidence to suggest that assessment was taking place.

Teachers and more specifically students connected the activities to accountability measures. Students felt that teachers carried out some of the practices to ensure they had actually completed the reading.

Generally, there were mismatches between what the teachers intended to achieve through the various activities and what actually occurred. This suggests there were probably two curricula operating. The "ideal" curriculum and the "pedagogy-in-us" (Piper, 1983).

Students talked at length about how the various activities created anxiety and frustration for them. They talked about other readers and where they fitted within the hierarchy of readers in the classroom. Some students found the graded and public nature of the activities problematic as this made it impossible for them to position themselves as successful readers in the classroom. Teachers acknowledged that a "handful" of students found the task stressful but maintained that regular practice would alleviate this. The assurances from teachers that it was okay to have a go, that practice would make it easier for them and that there would be assistance if they required it created different tensions for readers. There was a mismatch between the discourse from their teacher and the discourse from their peers. Teachers told students it was acceptableto make mistakes and they should "give it a go" whilst on the other hand, their peers were making negative comments about their mistakes and displaying frustration at listening to them read.

Both teachers and students connected the activity to learning to read and the assessment of reading although I could find little evidence to suggest reading instruction or assessment was taking place. Finally, the activities I observed appeared to be modified versions of the recitation practices of the nineteenth century whereas many teachers did not connect the activities to these practices.

CHAPTER 12

A Final Note

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The findings from this study suggest that many of the oral reading activities observed were not an effective means for either teaching or assessing reading. Neither were they effective in improving students' confidence levels, attitudes to reading or reading enjoyment. One minute of reading time in a public forum did not allow for individual instruction, nor did it allow adequate time to gauge a students' reading ability. Further, this one minute of reading time was a stressful time for some learner readers and only served to reinforce the negative view they had of themselves as readers, irrespective of their level of comprehension. The negative consequences of having students read out-loud in a public forum are well documented in the literature (Allington, 1984; Dwyer & Bain, 1999; Gill, 2000; Heathington & Alexander, 1984; Hill, 1983; Hoffman, 1987; Ingram, 1985; Palardy, 1990; Reutzel et al., 1994; Worthy, 1996; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991)

Teachers suggested that participation in some of the events was voluntary whilst most students indicated that participation was strongly encouraged. Teachers reported that students did not mind participating in the event whilst students said given a choice they would not participate. Teachers discussed using texts that students enjoyed whereas students reported teachers often using uninteresting texts. One teacher commented that the reading material available for use in her classroom was uninteresting and that this was due to a lack of resources. Teachers suggested that students could choose their reading material although they still monitored the choice of genre, the suitability of the content and the level. Teachers and students reported that the activity was useful to assess students' reading although, during the reading, assessment generally was not acknowledged. Teachers recorded mental notes rather than written notes. When written notes were recorded these were not commonly discussed with the students. Teachers gave the impression that it

was okay for students to "have a go" and that this was more important than making mistakes. Students, on the other hand, reported being on the receiving end of negative comments and laughter from their peers when they made mistakes. Teachers gave ability-based groups names to mask their composition, yet students were very knowledgeable about their own and others' reading abilities. Some teachers attempted to renegotiate relations of power during the activity. They adjusted their language so as not to direct feedback to particular students, they voluntarily joined in the activities and they attempted to disrupt some of the practices often associated with the activity such as assessment and accountability. Despite this, students still spoke about the rules, the assessment practices and accountability measures that governed oral reading.

Reading out-loud is a sub-activity of reading in school. In reality, one cannot change the already inherent unequal power relations in schools. Constraints operating outside of the classroom impact on what teachers can do in classrooms. Assessment, standards, accountability, curriculum and timetables are just some of the constraints operating on teachers. What happens in school is what happens in school and to attempt to naturalise and normalise these practices only serves to heighten distrust between students, parents and the school. Similarly Heap (1991), and Mellor and Patterson (1994) suggest that perhaps it is time to stop deploring the normativity of reading in school and begin instead to examine in detail the ways in which these normative constraints operate in the classroom. Instead of trying to "naturalise" or "normalise" reading practices in the classroom we could begin to explicitly teach the students the functions and features of school reading. Students in this study were able to identify some of these constraints such as assessment and accountability because of their continual subjection to them throughout these various oral reading events.

The graded and public nature of some of the events observed was problematic to many learner readers. Students reported feeling uncomfortable, anxious and nervous. The other participants in the event, the listeners, reported being equally frustrated having to listen to readers lacking in confidence. There was limited enjoyment gained from the activity from both readers and listeners. Teachers felt that students learned about reading through listening to

good role models. As stated earlier 'good' role models were rare. Students reported enjoying listening to their teachers read. In some group reading activities, using a competent reader as a role model would have benefited readers more.

Luke explained how the pedagogies we value, the texts we use and the rules and procedures we employ can either give access or deny access to "particular literate markets" (Luke & Freebody, 1997a, p.5). By embracing one particular pedagogy or one particular text and by following one set of procedures we assume that our classrooms are "generic" when we know this is not the case. Many students interviewed for this study indicated that oral reading was not their preferred way of reading. The nature of the activity made it difficult for some learner readers. They found it difficult to pronounce words, comprehend what they read and often experienced anxiety and stress. These readers in particular did not benefit instructionally, neither were the assessments carried out during these activities accurate accounts of their reading ability. A sociocultural view of reading presents four interrelated practices in which effective readers engage (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003). The instructional benefits of oral reading are limited in that they mainly focus on one aspect of reading - cracking the code. Reading instruction during oral reading in the activities I observed denied students access to other more potentially empowering reading practices such as text participant, text user and text analyst practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003).

My previous work which involved students constructing a definition of "school reading" (Rennie, 1994) suggested that "reading in school" differed to "reading outside of school". This study suggests that "oral reading" is one way of "reading in school" and that it differs considerably from other ways of reading in school such as "silent reading". Further, it is markedly different from "reading outside of school". Students find the task of oral reading, particularly in a public arena, much more difficult than reading silently. The interview and questionnaire data suggest that teachers and students often talked about oral reading and reading interchangeably, however, they are very different practices.

Implications

The students who participated in this study have provided a different perspective of oral reading from that of their teachers. Students' voices often provide educators with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. Students are a valuable resource that is often ignored or dismissed by researchers, however, students in this study have provided useful information to assist in the improvement of reading instruction delivered in schools.

The oral reading activities investigated during this study had limited benefits in terms of learning to read. Teachers identified specific learning outcomes for the various activities although students found it difficult to articulate these and my observations suggest that little reading instruction took place in many of the activities.

Students reported finding the activities stressful and said that they generally found it more difficult to read out-loud than read silently. This difficulty increased when they were required to read to a large group. The data suggest that providing reading instruction in a context where students are required to read in front of their peers is problematic, particularly for those readers who struggle with the task.

Teachers reported that most students did not mind reading out-loud and they felt it was important for students to be able to do this although they did acknowledge that there were some students who preferred not to. This study suggests that most children preferred to read silently rather than out-loud.

According to recent texts on reading pedagogy, effective readers do more than decode text. They use "code breaker" practices, "meaning-based" practices, "text user" practices and "text analyst" practices (Anstey & Bull, 1996; Harris et al., 2000; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Winch et al., 2001). The data from this study suggest that at most the activity of oral reading may develop code breaker practices and to a lesser extent text participant practices. Reading instruction should present a balanced view of what effective readers do and provide learning experiences that attend to the four different reading practices (Luke & Freebody, 1997b). Data from this study suggest that many oral reading practices do not present a balanced view of what effective readers do. This also

has implications for the assessment of reading. Oral reading does not give a balanced account of what readers can do, particularly in the case of struggling readers and those who lack confidence. At most it gives teachers an indication of how well students pronounce words, use expression and other skills associated with reading out-loud.

The lack of instructional and assessment benefits and the unnecessary stress placed on learner readers suggest that educators could seriously question the use of oral reading practices in a public forum even if they are under the guise of public speaking, shared reading, reading circles, group reading and the like. Educators need sound educational reasons for asking students to read out-loud.

The data suggest that there were numerous mismatches between what the research had to say about the use of oral reading as a means to teach reading and what actually occurred in the classroom. Other studies (Primeaux, 2000) report mismatches between what the research says generally about 'good' reading instruction and what actually occurs in school. These studies also suggest these mismatches tend to be more detrimental to those readers who struggle with the task.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in that it confined data collection to six classrooms in two schools located in one capital city in Australia. The findings relate only to these contexts although the data collated from the questionnaires, which surveyed one hundred teachers across twenty-six schools indicated similar results.

The other limitation relates to the "objectivity" of the research and the researchers' role. We cannot guarantee 'objectivity' in any research situation. Researchers set up, and construct the field of investigation and delimit the data gathered through the questions they ask. This brings the researchers' agenda into play. The researcher becomes a player within the research and must foreground this. Bordieu claimed that, "A scientific practice that does not question itself does not properly speaking, know what it does" (1992, p. 236).

The fact that my interest in this study grew from concerns that came out of my previous research relating to the practice of oral reading meant that I designed this particular research with a view to finding out more about why oral reading presented problems for some learner readers. In addition, I am a teacher who is extremely passionate about reading pedagogy and improving the way we teach learner readers in schools. I am also a teacher who is dedicated in every sense to the needs of students and believe strongly in reflecting critically on what we do in schools. I have no doubt that this presented a particular lens through which I collected and analysed the data for this study. Despite this, there was a deliberate attempt to minimise some of my own biases in the research. I did not limit my investigation to students but also gave teachers the opportunity to present their views. I used my observations of events as a means to witness first-hand what teachers and students had discussed in the interviews. I used the questionnaires as a means to capture a wider view on some of the issues. Students in the questionnaires echoed what students said during the interviews and the teachers interviewed echoed what teachers reported during the questionnaires. The teachers in this study were dedicated people who were often not afforded the time to examine their own practice in detail. Neither did they have the time to talk to students at length, as I did. I have discussed some of my findings with the participants and they were keen to listen to suggested ways to improve the teaching of reading in schools. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ensure that no harm comes to those represented in their work (Education, 1995). The also have a responsibility to report honestly on their findings and give back to the communities in which they work. This is something I have endeavoured to do.

Future Research

The data in this study highlighted a number of other areas that require further research. The first of these concerns the feedback given by teachers during reading sessions. The data suggest that most of the feedback given was either corrective in nature or fairly non-descript. Students appeared to lack a metacognitive awareness of what they did when they read. When students did receive feedback from teachers, they tended to receive information about the

areas they needed to improve. Students did not receive feedback about what they did well. This area warrants further investigation since the data from this study suggest that teacher feedback contributed to the ways in which students constructed themselves as readers in school.

A second area that warrants further exploration is the criteria against which teachers assess a students reading. The data from this study suggest that teachers and students often talked about reading and oral reading interchangeably when it was clear they are very different practices. Data collected suggest that teachers often used oral reading skills to assess reading. They also used a set of criteria that I have termed 'dispositions' in their assessments of students' reading. 'Good' readers according to students and teachers in this study "read lots", "enjoyed" reading, "persevered" with the task and were "confident".

A third area requiring further research relates to the three different perceptions of the same event. Teachers reported particular outcomes and characteristics of the various oral reading events that were not articulated by the students or researcher. The data suggest that there were two curricula operating side by side - the "ideal" curriculum and the "pedagogy-in-use" (Piper, 1983). The "ideal" curriculum was articulated through some of the teachers' responses in the interviews and questionnaires and the other the "pedagogy-in-use" was highlighted through the students' responses and researchers' observations. This suggests the need for further studies of "pedagogy-in-use" in relation to reading instruction.

Finally, the value in reflecting on classroom practice from a students' view warrants further investigation. Talking to students sheds a different light on classroom practice and this study has helped to highlight a number of potential issues in relation to classroom practice and reading pedagogy. Further research of this kind, could pave the way for more valuable directions in reading theory and practice.

Data from this study suggest that oral reading is a common practice in primary schools. Teachers assume that it is useful for the teaching and assessment of learner readers. The rules and procedures before, during and

after the activity are as important as the activity itself, which is connected to nineteenth century reading practices. Many aspects of the activity have become naturalised and normalised and as such have become accepted and unchallenged. However students in this study have expressed a view of oral reading that suggests that the activity is as much about ways of doing literacy in school and ways of being in school as it is about learning to read in school. The study suggests that this cornerstone of teaching and learning to read is of a questionable value in the primary school years.

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APPENDICES

The following questionnaire will be used to assist research being conducted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Hames Cook University. My name is Jennifer Rennie and I am employed as a Band 1 Teacher at Woodroffe Primary School, Palmerston. If there are any problems associated with the completion of this questionnaire I can be contacted at the school on 89 323788.

This research aims to establish the relationship between the activity of oral reading and reading pedagogy in the middle years of primary schooling. Names of participants or schools will not be included in the writing up of this research. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of participants. Schools who have participated will receive a summary of my findings.

Most of the questions only require circling or ticking of answers with only a small proportion requiring a more extended answer

Some questions are specific to oral reading whilst others refer to reading more generally.

NAME: (optional)   _____

SCHOOL: _____

CURRENT POSITION: _____

YEAR LEVEL CURRENTLY

TEACHING   _____

AVAILABLE FOR FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW   YES   NO

CONTACT NUMBER

FOR INTERVIEW   _____

I thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire.

Question 1

Are students in your class required to read orally?

YES   **NO**

Question 2

How often would students be engaged in activities where they are required to read orally?

FREQUENTLY   **SOMETIMES**   **RARELY**

Question 3

In what teaching time slots would students be required to read orally?

BEFORE RECESS   **BEFORE LUNCH**   **AFTER LUNCH**

Question 4

In what curriculum areas would students be required to read orally?

Mathematics

Language

Science

Studies of society and environment

Languages other than English

Health

Art

Physical Education

Music

Drama

Other? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____

Question 5

Tick any of the following oral reading activities that are used in your classroom. Indicate whether they are used **frequently**, **sometimes**, **rarely** or **never**.

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

READING GROUPS				
PAIRED READING PEERS				
PAIRED READING ADULT				
ROUND ROBIN READING				
ORAL COMPREHENSION				
READING CIRCLES				
ORAL CLOZE				
READING CONFERENCE				
CHORAL READING				
ROLE PLAY				
SCRIPT READING				
READING ALOUD TEXT				
ORAL BOOK REPORT				
SHARED READING				

Question 6

List any other oral reading activities that you use in the classroom.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 7

How important do you think oral reading is in the classroom?

    Not Important   **Very Important**

       1   2   3   4   5

Question 8

Is oral reading useful for you in the classroom?

YES **NO**

If yes, please explain how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 9

Do you think oral reading is equally important for all students?

YES **NO**

Question 10

Are there ages where you think oral reading is more or less important?

YES **NO**

Please explain your response.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 11

Are there some oral reading skills that you feel are important to develop in students?

YES **NO**

If yes, what are they and why do you think they are important?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 12

Please describe any activities that you might use specifically to enhance the oral reading abilities of your students.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 13

Where did you learn about the oral reading activities you use?

For example, professional development, other colleagues, university, journals etc

_____

_____

_____

Question 14

What methods do you most commonly use to assess a child's reading ability generally?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 15

What characteristics do you think describe a 'good' reader generally?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I thank you for taking the time to participate in completing this questionnaire.

ORAL READING

QUESTIONNAIRE - STUDENTS

---

1. Do you enjoy reading? Circle the correct answer.

Yes   No

2. Where do you do most of your reading? Circle the correct answer.

At home.   At school.

3. Do you read out-loud at school? Circle the correct answer.

Yes   No

4. How often do you read out-loud at school? Circle the correct answer.

Every day   Weekly   Not very often   Never

5. Do you read silently at school? Circle the correct answer.

Yes   No

6. How often do you read silently at school? Circle the correct answer.

Every day   Weekly   Not very often   Never

7. How do you prefer to read? Circle the correct answer.

Out Loud   Silently   Not sure

8. Why do you prefer to read this way?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Which is more difficult? Circle the correct answer.

Reading Silently   Reading Out Loud   Not sure

10. Why is it more difficult?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Fill in the following table. Use ticks for the correct answer. You either tick **a lot**, **sometimes** or **never** for how often you do the activity and **I like it**, I **don't like it** or **not sure** for whether you enjoy doing it.

Activity	A lot	Sometimes	Never	I like it	I don't like it	Not sure
Reading groups						
Reading to whole class						
Reading to teacher						
Reading to parent						
Reading to friend						
Oral book report						
Comprehension						
Silent reading						

12. Tick what describes you as a reader best. You may tick more than one answer.

I am very good at reading.

I find reading difficult.

I am OK at reading.

I read lots.

I don't read very often.

I prefer not to read.

I read better in my head.

I read better out loud.

13. What words would your teacher use to describe someone who is good at reading?

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. How does your teacher find out how well you can read?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. How do you work out words you don't know or can't read?

_____

_____

_____

_____

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

**QUESTIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS
RELATING TO ORAL READING IN THE CLASSROOM**

Tell me about the best book you have ever read.

Do you enjoy reading?

Why? Why not?

What kinds of books do you like to read?

Where do you get your books from?

How much reading would you do?

Do you read at home?

When do you do reading in school?

What sorts of activities do you do in school that involve reading?

Do you read out-loud in school?

Do you read silently in school?

Which do you prefer?

Why?

What sorts of activities do you do when you read silently?

Do you enjoy any of these activities?

Tell me about the ones you like.

Tell me about the ones you do not like.

What sorts of activities do you do when you read out-loud?

Do you like any of these activities?

Tell me about the ones you like.

Tell me about any that you dislike.

Do you think you are good at reading?

Why?

What sorts of things do good readers do?

How do teachers know if someone is good at reading?

How do they find these things out?

Are there any other things you would like to tell me about reading in school?

Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

Reading with Mr W - Paired Reading Year 4/5

1	L	The frisbee hit the ground and skipped a few times before landing under the (.) hedge at the back of the house. "Not today, I'm busy," Mr Boyd said and (1)=
	Mr W	=abruptly=
5	L	=abruptly (.) turned and elooped (.)
	Mr W	eloped ((points to word))
	L	eloped (.) into the house. The screen door slammed close. Casey (1) b brushed his straight blonde hair on his head. "What's his problem?" he called to Margaret (.) his sister
10		(.) who (.) watched the whole skene from the side (.) of the redwood gum=
	Mr W	=that's scene ((points to word))
	L	(2) "You know," Margaret said politely (.). She wiped (.) her hands on the legs of her jeans and hel held (.) held
15		them both up. Inviting a toss. "I'll play frisbee with (.) with you for a (.) little while," she said. "Ok," Casey said without enthu (.)=
	Mr W	=with enthusiasm=
	L	=enthusiasm=
20	Mr W	=try it again. Enthusiasm.
	L	enthusiasm. He walked slowly (2) to around (4) slowly over (.) the (1) to [trieve
	MrW	[to retrieve
	L	=to retrieve the frisbee from the under hedge. Margaret
25		moved closer. She felt sorry (.) Casey (1) who had (.) their (.) Dad were really=

Transcription Notes	
(.)	Untimed Pause
(2)	Timed Pause
=	Running on without break
[	Overlap
(( ))	Non-verbal behaviours
Yes	Said with emphasis
[ ]	Inaudible

Example of Transcription Notes

Table 21 - Reading Recount Year 3 Farrer Primary

Line No	Transcript	Teacher	Reader	Listeners
1 G1	I went to my Nanna's (.) place (.) and watched TV (.). I		Reads recount	
2	asked my Pop if I could go to the (2) ffffete and he said		Difficulty pronunciation	
3	"No". (.) Then (.) Mum and Dad came ((turns page.		Brief pauses between words.	
4	Student in front talks to student next to him)) and took		Longest pause 2 seconds	Inattentive behaviour Coughing
5	us home. On Saturday ((student coughs)) I (.) got up and			
6	had a shower. Then I (.) had breakfast. Then I went (.) to			Inattentive behaviour
7	the (2) waterslide and I ((same student talks again)) and			
8	went went on (.) there. The I (1) tigged for Julian. On			
9	Ssssunday I gave my Dad (.) a (.) card (.) and a present		Difficulty with pronunciation - Sounding out	
10	Then Josh and I went to crocodile croc-o-dy-lus Park. (.)		Finishes - looks at teacher to indicate this	
11	((1 min 9 sec)) Finished. ((looks at teacher))			

REDUCED SET OF CODES
USED IN ANALYSIS

Instruction

In 1   Corrective

In 2   Encouraging Code Breaker strategies

In 3   Modelling reading strategy

In 4   Using questions to encourage Text
        Participant practices

In 5   Reminding about use of Oral reading
        skills

Assessment

Ass 1   Comment on reading performance

Ass 2   Checking understanding of text

Ass 3   Checking use of code breaker practices

Ass 4   Providing written feedback

Reader

R 1   Reading as performance

R 2   Difficulty with reading

R 3   Behaviour disrupts reader

R 4   Using reading strategies

Procedural aspects

P 1   Organisational aspects

P 2   Respond to question

P 3   Others assist

P 4   Repeats word

Participatory Rules

Pr 1   Engagement

Pr.2   Inattentive/inappropriate
                 behaviour

Pr 3   Teacher intervention

Pr 4   Challenge teacher

Pr 5   Signs prompting action

Construct Identity

C I   Construct identity

C 2   Feedback

C 3   No feedback

C 4   Protect identity

Others

O 1   Behaviour

O 2   Showing engagement

O 3   Demonstrating knowledge

Coded Analysis 1 - Small group reading Year 7 Gunn Primary

Line No	Transcript	Teacher	Reader	Listeners
42 Ms S	Why did Alistair have a leg up? ((G7 and G8 put up	In 4		P 3
43	hands))			
44 M	[ ] Australia			P 2
45 D	[inaudible for 7 sec] ((hits chest)) He's probably never			O 4
46	heard of it [ ] and probably yeah yeah [ ]=			
47 D	=Cause his Mum told him not to probably. ((G7 closes			R 4/Pr 2
48	book))			
49 Ms S	Is leg up an Aussie work or is [it			
50 A	[leg up yeah [ ] Aussie	In 4		
51	word for push up.			P 2
52 Ms S	Would you say. Would you say leg up? ((demonstrates			P 2/Pr 2
53	with hands))=	In 4		CI 3
54 A	=No Miss we just say get on my head. ((students laugh))			P 1