

**LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOUR: INTERACTIONS WITH YOUNG  
CHILDREN IN A SCHOOL FOR  
SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES.**

**By  
CAROL THORNE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is an ethnographic study exploring interactions between adults and children within the Early Years Department of a primary school for children described as having social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The study is based on an interpretation of the children's needs which recognises that there may be mismatches between child and adult perceptions of the environment within which they operate. This interpretation arises from an awareness that each child's unique constellation of difficulties relate to core skills, including language and communication.

Video observation was used to record interactions between children and adults. Linguistic ethnographic analysis was used to interrogate the resultant data. These data showed evidence of collaborative problem solving techniques which built on Post-Vygotskian concepts of learning. The identified patterns of language and communication brought about the notion of behaviour supportive learning; that is symmetry in interaction which contributes to children's ability to evolve situation appropriate behaviour. Similarities between behaviour supportive learning and dialogic teaching are observed.

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
Research questions	2
Development of the study	3
 <b>Chapter One</b>	
 <b>What are Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties?</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction	8
Categorisation of a group	8
The process of assessment	11
A continuum of difficulty	14
A continuum of observable behaviour	15
Continua of disrupted skill areas	16
A constellation of difficulties	17
Features of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	19
Environmental influences on Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	21

## **Chapter Two**

### **The interface between Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties**

24

Introduction 24

Prevalence of coexisting Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and  
Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties 25

Features which are common to Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties  
and Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties 29

Pragmatic difficulties 30

Initiations and turn taking routines 31

Prosody 33

Utterances appropriate to the purpose and setting in which they are made 35

Syntax 36

Words 37

Morphology 39

Sentence and phrase structures 42

Questions 43

Writing 44

Phonology 45

Phonology and Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties 45

Phonology and literacy development 46

Phonology and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	49
Emotional difficulties and language difficulties	50
The classroom setting	55
An unrecognised need	56
Language for learning	59

## **Chapter Three**

### **Approaches to the education of children described as having**

<b>Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</b>	61
Introduction	61
Behavioural approaches	61
Systemic approaches	66
Genuine communication	69
Integration of behaviour management and other aspects of learning	72
Social learning	74
Inter-thinking	76
Dialogue	78

## **Chapter Four**

<b>Methodology</b>	82
Introduction	82
The setting of this study	83
The school	84
The early years department	84
Adult participants	85
Child participants	87
Aims of the study	94
Naturalistic enquiry and ethnography	96
Grounded theory and ethnography	98
Linguistic ethnography	100
Limitations of ethnographic enquiry	102

## **Chapter Five**

<b>Design and method</b>	105
Introduction	105
Unstructured observation	106
Participant observation	107
Observer skills	108



Video observation	109
Observation timetable	110
Interviews and conversations	111
Research diary	112
Further insights into research methods	114
Ethical considerations	121
Minimal discomfort or distress	121
Video observation	122
The right to anonymity	123
Informed consent	124
Conflicting roles	126
Data analysis	127
Validity of the data	127
Transcription	130
Categorisation of transcribed events	132
Linguistic ethnography	132

## **Chapter Six**

<b>Data</b>	134
Introduction	134
Promoting shared meaning	136
Promoting shared meaning: developing linguistic skills	137
Promoting shared meaning: language and physical setting	141
Promoting shared meaning: adopting the child's perspective	145
Making positive assertions	153
Providing guidance or advice	157
Suggesting means of achieving outcomes	161
Anticipating appropriate behaviour	163
Giving permission	164
Offering reassurance	167
Expressing approval or recognition	168
Identifying causal or dependent relationships	169
Adults monitoring their own thoughts or behaviour	171
Laminated utterances	173
Monitoring thoughts and behaviour	174
Defusing tension	178
Stating appropriate behaviour	180
Contrasting presentations of laminated utterances	183

Structural devices	189
adjacency pairs	190
Extended patterns of interaction	195

## **Chapter Seven**

<b>Discussion part one: Pedagogy</b>	<b>206</b>
Introduction	206
Identified patterns of interaction	207
The role of shared meaning in behaviour supportive learning	208
The role of positive assertions in behaviour supportive learning	219
The role of structural routines in behaviour supportive learning	227
Similarities with typical classroom discourse	229
Reflection	233

## **Chapter Eight**

<b>Discussion part two: How is this style of communication generated, sustained and developed?</b>	<b>235</b>
Introduction	235
Philosophy and principles	235
How was this style of communication generated?	238
Communication to accommodate a perceived need	239
How is this style of communication sustained?	240
Comparative communication	242

How is this style of communication developed?	245
Advantages of exploiting turn taking routines within this setting	246
Extended patterns of interaction	249
Reflection	251
What have I learned during the process of this study	252
Further questions arising from this study	255
 <b>Appendix one: Transcriptions</b>	 257
 <b>Appendix two: Early years prospectus</b>	 307
 <b>References</b>	 320

# LIST OF TABLES

	Page
<b>Table one</b>	
Descriptors of children's needs.	90

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BERA</b>	British Educational Research Association
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>EYD</b>	Early years department
<b>EYT</b>	Early years team
<b>LA</b>	Local authority
<b>MLU</b>	Mean length of utterance
<b>OFSTED</b>	Office for standards in education
<b>QRF</b>	Question, respond and feedback
<b>SEBD</b>	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
<b>SEN</b>	Special educational needs
<b>SLCD</b>	Speech, language and communication difficulties
<b>TA</b>	Teaching assistant
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of proximal development

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study evolved from a small scale research project designed to collect evidence to stimulate the professional development of teachers and support staff working in the Early Years Department of a primary school for children described as having social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The study was, therefore, initiated by the desire for knowledge and understanding of interactions within a specific setting by a group of colleagues. Eleven boys and girls within the age range of five to eight years became child participants. All the children had statements of special educational need (SEN) which identified SEBD as their primary need, but indicated other potential areas of need, including speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCD). There were thirteen adult participants in the study including three teachers, a nursery nurse, seven part time teaching assistants, one parent and a student nursery nurse. I am the leader of the Early Years Department.

Members of the Early Years Department had been told on many occasions, by a number of people including OFSTED inspectors, Local Authority advisers, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, parents and other professionals that there were aspects of their interactions with the children which were unusual and worthy of investigation. In informal discussions, the team accepted these observations but had no sense of using a consciously contrived form of interaction, rather a naturally evolving means of communication within the specific setting. When finance became available, through the Teacher Research Grant Scheme (TTA, 1998) and the Best Practice Scholarship Award Scheme (DfES, 2000), the opportunity to investigate the interactions became a reality. Personal circumstances and family commitments meant that I was the only member of the team able to take on the role of researcher. Other team members were supportive but unable to lead

and carry through the project.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The original research questions which prompted this study were;

- Are identifiable patterns of interaction taking place between adults and children? I wanted to investigate the veracity of observations made by visitors to the Early Years Department which suggested that we used a particular style of communication to support and sustain children's appropriate behaviour. This task demanded a search for common communicative patterns among members of the adult team.
- What impact are interactions having on the children's behaviour? Reflection on relationships between the communicative process and the children's behaviour was initially a primary concern. As the project developed I felt increasingly drawn towards challenging the notion of simple relationships between language, communication and the children's overt behaviour. I became increasingly involved in more complex relationships which were concerned with the potential of language and communication to mediate in children's learning. Behaviour supportive learning became my focus.
- If there is a community style of communication how is it generated, sustained and developed? At the beginning of the study I was not overly concerned with the question of how a community style of communication was generated because I naively imagined that close working teams all automatically develop features of communication which are unique to them. It was only when I began looking at similarities and differences between adult utterances that I really began to question the process of generating and developing a community style of communication.

As the study developed my attitude to the original research questions changed and I became more



concerned with how the observed behaviours could be interpreted in relation to evolving theoretical perspectives. In particular, I explored Potter's (2007) notion that detailed and rigorous interpretation of apparently mundane interactions can provide insights into the nature of learning. Alongside this desire to uncover aspects of learning which I had previously barely been aware of, reflection on the data led me to investigate the dynamic relationships between philosophy and principles, practice and procedures. I interrogated the ways in which language was used by adults in practical situations and the potential these interactions had to embed philosophies and principles within the team. An additional question was, therefore;

- Can this study identify language and communication mechanisms linking team philosophies and principles with practices and procedures?

The aims of the study were, therefore,

- to identify patterns of language and communication used between adults and children in this particular setting
- to identify the implications of language and communication patterns for teaching, learning and children's behaviour
- to consider how patterns of language and communication may be transmitted and developed within the team
- to extend awareness of the needs of children described as having SEBD.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY**

In order to build on previous knowledge and understanding I began by considering three fundamental areas. Firstly, I sought to understand how the classification SEBD was arrived at and to identify features that children described as having SEBD might have in common. Secondly, I explored similarities between features of children described as having SEBD and those described as having SLCD. Having reflected on perceptions of the children's needs I drew on work describing

approaches that have been used in the education of children described as having SEBD. Each of these three areas provided a focus for a chapter in my review of the literature.

Chapter one considers classification of SEBD. It relates the concepts of notional and normative grouping, discussed by Tomlinson (1982), to some of the confusions that arise in the classification of SEBD. The notion of a continuum difficulty is explored. However, the diverse range of needs that these children experience suggest that the concept of individual and unique constellations of need may provide a more appropriate way of thinking of SEBD. Indeed, Cooper (1999) suggests that SEBD can be defined by other people's responses to the children as much as by any features specific to them.

This study recognises the complex and individual learning needs of children described as having SEBD. Reflecting this concern, chapter two makes comparisons between characteristic features of children described as having SEBD and those described as having speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCD). Common features shared by children from both groups are identified by interpretation of descriptors of SEBD, cited in circular 9:94 (DfE, 1994), as if they were descriptors of SLCD. The identified language and communication difficulties are then considered in relation to the classroom setting.

Reflecting this study's core theme of classroom practice in an early years setting for children described as having SEBD, chapter three discusses approaches to the education of children described as having SEBD. The study tracks a route from approaches which focus on controlling unacceptable behaviour, discussed by Daniels (1999) to social learning theories originating from the work of Vygotsky (1978). Recognition of the central role of social interaction and language in learning developed by Post-Vygotskian theorists forms the link into the remainder of my study.

Chapter four describes the process of generating a research methodology. It reflects on how the fundamental relationships between research questions, aims and philosophical foundations influence the design and methods used. To engage with the research questions I used an ethnographic approach which developed meaning from everyday experiences. Central to this approach is a detailed description of the setting and participants.

Chapter five explains the process of data collection. I describe how video observation was used to collect a large sample of unstructured spontaneous discourse between adults and children. Limitations and ethical decisions undertaken during this process are discussed. The selection of sequences of discourse, which the adult participants viewed as fulfilling the criteria of supporting or sustaining children's appropriate behaviour, is described. The final sections of this chapter consider the initial transcription of selected sequences of interaction.

Chapter six focuses on data analysis. I analysed the data using linguistic ethnography which provided me with opportunities to review my transcriptions and become familiar with sequences of interaction. As the process of reflection evolved I was able to identify patterns of language and communication. Data were categorised and categories have been termed: promoting shared meaning: positive assertions, that is brief, factual observational utterances; laminated utterances, that is, utterances exchanged between two or more knowing participants within the hearing of less aware participants; structural features, including procedural features and patterns in extended interactions.

Chapter seven presents the first part of my findings. Patterns of communication provided a behaviour supportive learning environment in which adults worked collaboratively with children.

Shared meaning was flexibly negotiated between adults and children and mutually acceptable outcomes were arrived at. Behaviour supportive learning was observed to sensitively reflect the needs of children who may potentially have speech, language and communication difficulties; utterances were repeated, recast, delivered slowly, attention and listening were actively promoted, physical and visual cues were used, interactions were rehearsed and predictable routines were observed. Features of discourse were suggestive of Vygotsky's (1978) notion of skilled learners scaffolding the children's learning in the zone of proximal development. The data also showed evidence of dialogue which build on post-Vygotskian theory and develops Alexander's (2008) notion of language for thinking.

Chapter eight considers how this style of community interaction has been generated and sustained and developed. The identified style of communication has strong structural features which reflect collaborative working practices. Such structural devices, for example adjacency pairs and preference organisation, are seen by Levinson (1992) and others, to be fundamental to successful communication. The current data suggest that such structural features may be one of the routes by which patterns of communication have become embedded within this community. However, the practical application of language and communication patterns used by members of the Early Years Team also revealed common philosophies and principles. This study suggests that 'mundane' communication within the Early Years Department sustains and develops philosophies and principles, which are in turn reflected and reinforced in the community style of language and communication.

At the outset I believed that this study would help me and the team I work with, to understand more about the needs of children described as having SEBD. However, I now think that the study contributes more to our understanding of the role of language and communication within this early

years setting.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **WHAT ARE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study is concerned with relationships between language, communication and behaviour among young children and adults in a primary school for children who have been described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). From the outset it is essential to establish an understanding of the range of needs displayed by children described as having SEBD. There has been an unresolved effort to identify and define these children and their particular needs. The complexity of this is reflected by reference to sources which draw on insights over an extended period of time. In the first instance categorisation of special educational needs (SEN) provides the focus of discussion. The Code of Practice on the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994b) recognised a continuum of SEN across the range of ability. Children with SEN are considered to have learning difficulties, significantly greater than their peers, which “prevent or hinder” them from benefiting from the educational facilities provided for their age group within their Local Authority (LA) area. This links provision, the general child population and those children deemed to have SEN. These elements are central to the current discussion.

### **CATEGORISATION OF A GROUP**

The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE 1994b) states that SEN form a continuum, however, there is tension between the concept of a continuum and categorisation. In order to categorise SEN, children’s needs must be seen to occupy discrete groups which are precisely isolated from the needs of the majority of children in significant respects. Tomlinson (1982) questioned this assumption by suggesting that in situations where natural boundaries for categorisation such as, gender or age, are difficult to apply, notional groups

exist. Members of notional groups appear to share some common features for example, SEN, SEBD or speech, language or communication difficulties (SLCD) but Tomlinson (1982) argued that this type of categorisation is artificially contrived. As a result notional groups do not have discrete boundaries but merge with the general population. It is therefore, difficult to identify the extremities of such contrived groups. Tomlinson also argued that notional groups may originate from social, political, economic or educational pressures rather than sustainable natural categorisation. These are issues to be explored.

Complications in setting parameters of SEN described in the Green Paper, Excellence for all Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997), the Consultation Paper, Classification of Special Educational Needs (DfES, 2003) and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) appear to suggest acceptance of Tomlinson's view that children with SEN form a notional group. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994b), the Green Paper, Excellence for All Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997) and the Consultation Paper, the Classification of Special Educational Needs (DfES, 2003) adopt the concept of a continuum which establishes a relationship between the majority of children and those identified as having SEN, however, there are no absolute boundaries drawn between those children described as having SEN and the majority. Indeed Ainscow (1999) states that diverse interpretations of children's needs combined with differing settings mean that judgements about which children have SEN, or the category of SEN that they display, vary between and within Local Authorities. Failure to consistently or reliably interpret need also gives credence to Tomlinson's view that SEN identifies notional groups. One confusion that arises from notional categorisation is demonstrated in the Green Paper, Excellence for all Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997) where it is observed that children from, "disadvantaged families" are often erroneously described as having SEN. This demonstrates a single area where the lack of clarity that is inherent in notional

grouping may be relevant to some of the children in this study. The complex issue of social disadvantage will re-emerge later in this chapter.

Blashfield (1984) cited in Shaywitz, Fletcher and Shaywitz (1996) also identifies inconsistencies in the concept of categorisation of SEN where categorical criteria are imposed on dimensional difficulties, dimensional difficulties being those evident at the 'tail' of the continuum of normal development. Gillman, Cupples, Moore and Ellison (1992) state that a continuum of difficulty can not be categorised because categorical criteria are either positive or negative and therefore, cannot be applied to difficulties which gradually increase in severity. To illustrate the point they explore examples of hypertension and obesity, both dimensional difficulties. Health workers are described as selecting arbitrary points indicating hypertension or obesity. As a result, individuals whose blood pressure or weight is measured below the chosen point are perceived not to have a problem, whilst those above the target figures require some form of intervention by health professionals. The artificial boundary between perceived well being and ill health occurs even though weight and blood pressure are known to fluctuate and frequently cross the arbitrary mark for given individuals. It is suggested that SEBD and SLCD are both notional groups of dimensional difficulties which defy categorisation. This point will be expanded as the impact of categorisation is explored.

Allied to Shaywitz et al's discussion of categorical criteria is Tomlinson's (1982) discussion of normative and non-normative groups. She suggested that some categories of SEN can be shown to reflect a more rigorous group identity, for example children with visual impairment can be identified using finely tuned instruments which are capable of measuring exactly the same aspects of vision for every child in a similar setting. In this way a group is identified by the precisely defined measurable limits of vision, that is, in Tomlinson's (1982) terms, a normative group. This may be comparable with Gillman et al's (1992) view that positive or negative responses to key questions are required as evidence of categorical groups for example, a child with visual impairment



can or can not see a given line of print. However, even within precisely established normative or categorical groups, boundaries can be confused. Children with similar degrees of visual impairment do not always exhibit the same level of educational need. It is important to re-state the view that setting and functional ability are as important as measurable impairment and will be fundamental to the process of assessment, especially with notional, non-normative, dimensional, non-categorical groups like SEBD and SLCD.

## **THE PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT**

The function of assessment, which forms the focus of this section, is its ability to inform judgements about the type or appropriateness of special educational provision. The notional boundaries which are a feature of the groups discussed by Tomlinson (1982), Bashfield (1984), Gillman et al (1992) and Shaywitz et al (1996) mean that there are no definitive criteria which are consistently used for assessment of the range of needs currently described as SEBD. As a result, a variety of assessment tools are commonly used to form conclusions about the nature of children's needs but because the boundaries of SEBD can not be precisely defined there is always subjectivity in interpretation of assessments.

Psychometric tests are used to make judgements about the intellectual ability of children described as having SEBD; this stems from an expectation, reinforced by DfE Circular 9/94, that children described as having SEBD typically demonstrate intellectual ability within the 'average range'. However, Lauchlan (2001) recognises that forming judgements about intellectual ability is fraught with problems. He expresses concern that psychometric assessment using standardised tools provides a limited perspective on intellectual development within the restricted context of the test situation. Kaniel (1992) and Lunt (1993) also argue that socio-economic and cultural bias can

influence decisions about intellectual ability. In addition to these concerns, the concept of a continuum of ability means that, as with other notional groups, the extremities of the typical range are arbitrary and imprecise. In combination these issues begin to demonstrate the complexity of the concept ‘average ability’. However, intellectual ability is not a primary focus of this study and so this point will not be developed, it is sufficient to be aware that the phrase ‘average ability’ is an imprecise descriptor liable to a range of interpretations.

Attempts have been made to produce screening tools to help assessment of SEBD, including Portland Problem Behaviour Checklist (Conners, 1997), the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) and the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (1999) but these are also prone to difficulties. Assessors are encouraged to make value judgements about the child’s motivation or emotional states based on subjective opinion, for example is the child

“sullen, resentful, and negative in general attitude and mood” or

“Desperately craves affection, approval and reassurance, but doubts and questions the regard shown; seeks it repeatedly but remains insecure”.

Diagnostic Checklist Boxall (1998)

Vocabulary like, “sullen”, “resentful” and “desperately craves” appears to legitimise emotive responses and may provide insight into relationships between the assessor and child in a specific setting rather than investigate the child’s needs. The profile’s rigorous reliability and validity testing may provide some sense of distance between assessor and child but unacknowledged subjective judgement remains.

Whilst the Boxall Profile reflects the relationship between assessor and child, other forms of assessment provide greater focus on observation of the relationship between child and environment. The Interactive Profile Protocol (Roberts, 2000), for example, requires observers to make

judgements about interactions between the child, activities and other people in the environment.

Whilst the observer records behaviours and interactions in the setting, it is subjective interpretation which colours the overall assessment and once again the concept of a notional group defies attempts at categorisation. In a similar vein, Carey and Bourbon (2006) state that there are no satisfactory assessment procedures for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders, Conduct Disorders or Oppositional Defiant Disorders, which are commonly used in 'diagnosis' of children described as having SEBD. They consider that checklists are used to achieve a consensus which forms the basis of 'diagnoses' which can be questionable.

Collection of information for a case history is a procedure also used in the assessment of need for children described as having SEBD. However, as with other forms of assessment, it can be affected by unacknowledged socio-economic and cultural influences. Elliott and Lauchlan (1997) suggest that race, gender or socio-economic circumstances frequently mould adult expectations and produce unrealistically low child achievement. In this way children of the disadvantaged families described in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DFE, 1994b) may become subtly linked with an expectation of SEBD and again categorisation is confused.

Tomlinson (1982) suggested that membership of non-normative groups depends on flexibly interpreted criteria because no categorical measures are available. In an effort to counteract the effect of arbitrary boundaries Faupel (1993) suggests that a combination of several forms of assessment, together with consensus of opinion, may be used to identify children described as having SEBD. However, without categorical criteria for group membership, fundamental difficulties for assessment remain, indeed it has been argued by Cooper (1999) that the subjective effect that disturbed and disturbing behaviour has on other people defines the category SEBD more than

categorical features. The question of assessment will recur but now the balance of discussion moves to the notion of a continuum of difficulty.

## **A CONTINUUM OF DIFFICULTY**

Tomlinson (1982) stated that one outcome of identifying and categorising children with SEN is to establish the parameters of 'normality'. That is to say, a large proportion of the population can only be considered 'normal' if criteria exist to identify others as abnormal. The two categories are absolutely dependent on one another, without abnormality normality would cease to exist and vice versa. Part of this unequal equation is that boundaries between so called normality and abnormality are arbitrary and liable to ebb and flow as a consequence of political, social, economic and educational flux. This is illustrated by the move towards inclusion which was officially stimulated by the Green Paper, Excellence for all Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs, (DfEE, 1997) and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) as a result of political, social, economic and educational impetus.

Confused boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour acknowledged by Carey and Bourbon (2006) suggest the continuum of SEBD which has been discussed over the last half century by Underwood (Ministry of Education, 1955), Rutter (1975), Wilson and Evans (1980), Circular 9/94 (DfE 1994a) and Cole, Visser and Upton (1998). However, there are three interconnected issues which must be considered before the concept of a continuum of SEBD can be accepted. These are, a continuum of observable behaviours, continua of disrupted skills and a constellation of difficulties.

## **A CONTINUUM OF OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOUR**

The first of these issues is the relationship between ‘normal’ inappropriate behaviour described in DfE Circular 9/94 and exaggerated behaviour more consistently exhibited by children described as having SEBD. As a non-normative category SEBD can be viewed as a qualitative descriptor which operates beyond, and relative to, ‘normal’ deviant behaviour, that is the inappropriate behaviour which many children experience from time to time. Differences between normal but inappropriate behaviour and exceptionally disturbed, abnormal behaviour relate to intensity and durability as much as qualitative differences. As a result it is difficult to identify precise parameters which indicate that an individual’s behaviour or emotional state gives cause for concern. In consequence, authors including Underwood (Ministry of Education, 1955), Wilson and Evans (1980), Cole, Visser and Upton (1998) and Cooper (2001a) have historically conceptualised SEBD as a continuum of need stretching from ordinary, intermittent, unacceptable behaviour to serious mental illness. This was also the view taken by the Government in Circular 9/94 (DfE 1994a).

In an early government study, Underwood (1955) stated that SEBD formed a continuum of need. Later studies, including that of Wilson and Evans (1980) recognised the notion of a continuum and suggested that it was relatively easy to recognise the small group of deeply disturbed children, unable to function effectively in any area of their lives. However, problems arose in distinguishing less severely disturbed children from the mass of their contemporaries who sometimes display mild and intermittent difficulties. The Elton Report on Discipline in Schools (DES, 1989) encountered similar difficulties in designating the parameters of SEBD by stating that schools found it difficult to distinguish between “‘ordinary’ bad behaviour and disturbed behaviour”. More recently, the Steer Report, Learning Behaviour (DfES, 2005) observed schools continuing to have the same problem. In a previous attempt to clarify the issue, the Elton Report (DES, 1989) suggested that children with SEBD could be recognised by their severe, sustained and persistent difficulties, unlike other

children whose behaviour presented teachers with spasmodic problems in school. In contrast the Steer committee, which comprised practitioners from mainstream settings, recommended that the Department for Education and Skills provide “clear indications” of when children’s difficulties are sufficiently severe for them to require specialised educational provision, thus suggesting that members of the Steer Committee had not completely understood the complexities involved in defining this group of children.

Children described as having SEBD can justifiably be recognised as functioning within a continuum. However, the concept of a continuum suggests that at each point on the continuum a common factor is seen to gradually become more or less intense. Using this definition in relation to SEBD suggests that one variable, presumably behaviour, changes gradually from socially acceptable to highly disturbed. This model appears to be far too simplistic and fails to accommodate the complex issues surrounding disrupted skills encountered by children described as having SEBD.

## **CONTINUA OF DISRUPTED SKILL AREAS**

To explore the idea of how far SEBD can be considered as one variable subject to gradual change, it is necessary to explore difficulties experienced by children described as having SEBD. Rizzo and Zabel (1988) set out a conceptualisation of disturbed behaviour which appears to demonstrate seven parallel continua of learning competence which they call, attention, motor and verbal responses, order, exploration, social skills and mastery. In each area children with disturbed behaviour are cited as being likely to operate at the extremities whilst the majority of children operate in the centre of each continuum. In the area of verbal response, for example Rizzo and Zabel suggest that disturbed children may fail to use language for communication or, at the other end of the continuum may be extremely talkative, use verbal abuse and profanities. Similar opposing criteria are suggested as

typical behaviours for children described as having SEBD in each of the seven competency areas.

A long-standing, but still current, example of continua employed to conceptualise SEBD can be found in the Department for Education Circular 9/94. Here four key areas are identified including, personality traits, verbal competencies, non-verbal competencies and skills and attitudes related to academic tasks. In each of these areas extreme behaviours observed in children described as having SEBD are cited, for example in the realm of verbal competence children may be silent or at the other extremity they are outspoken and use language which is perceived as inappropriate in the educational setting. Circular 9/94 (DfE, 1994) and Rizzo and Zabel (1988) both suggest that there are a series of continua which are significant for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Within the continua cited by Rizzo and Zabel and in Circular 9/94 there is no recognised scatter, pattern or number of points of extreme behaviour which children described as having SEBD commonly display. Observable behaviour may, for example, be loud and excitable or quiet and withdrawn, overly focused or distractable, still or very active. These demonstrably wide and diverse patterns of behaviour begin to call into question the concept of continua reflecting gradual change. Rather, the evidence points to these children displaying abrupt and fragmented patterns of behaviour which are highly individual. To take account of the diversity of difficulties it may be more appropriate to consider SEBD as a constellation of difficulties rather than a continuum.

## **A CONSTELLATION OF DIFFICULTIES**

Department for Education Circular 9/94 and Cooper (1999) recognise the disparate features of SEBD and acknowledge the inconsistencies and polarisations which are integral to the

classification. Laslett (1983) also made earlier reference to this inconsistency in the categorisation by suggesting SEBD is a catchall term for a selection of inappropriate behaviours. Equally Cooper (2000) says that children exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are not as a group suffering from a single condition but rather display a, “loose collection of characteristics” brought together in unique and individual combinations. Complexity and diversity of difficulty is the biggest obstacle to conceptualising social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as a continuum. It is possible that focus on observable behaviours has obscured the constellation of difficulties which impinge on social, emotional and cognitive development and consequently promote disturbed behaviour.

The notion of individual constellations of difficulties associated with SEBD is further explored by Rock, Fessler and Church (1997). They suggest that there are six areas of development which are susceptible to being at risk in children described as having SEBD. These identified areas are cognitive processing, executive function, language and communication, academic achievement, externalising behaviours and emotional and social development. Rock, Fessler and Church conceive each of these areas to potentially present continua of difficulties located at their extremities. They suggest that apparently small, atypical development in two or more of these areas is likely to become magnified by dynamic multi-polar interaction. In addition, Rock et al. recognise environmental and biophysical variables impacting with identified developmental areas of need, thus precipitating thousands of unique and potentially profound implications for the individuals involved, in effect a true constellation of difficulties.

Discussion thus far has focused on group categorisation and the tensions between categories of SEN and continuum difficulties, whilst exploration of the notion of a continuum of difficulty has introduced the concept of a constellation of associated difficulties. Having questioned the concept



of a categorical group the next section explores features associated with SEBD.

## **FEATURES OF SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

This discussion will move forward by reflecting on how SEBD have been defined by describing observable features. Cooper (2001a) explored the relationship between SEBD and environmental settings. He observed mutually reinforcing interactions between adults and children where the child's behaviour caused adults to feel ineffective and in response they attempted to be more controlling, which in turn prompted an escalation in the child's inappropriate behaviour. Carey and Bourbon (2006) term this type of interaction as countercontrol and recognise it as partly responsible for some chronic behaviour difficulties encountered by children in school. Interactions within a setting may, therefore, become part of a dynamic system which perpetuates difficulties and defines them within that particular setting.

In spite of ambiguity in the categorisation of SEBD, Circular 9/94 (DfE, 1994a) has proved helpful in identifying four primary areas of difficulty and detailing a broad range of behaviours often exhibited by children described as having SEBD. These key areas comprise personality traits, verbal skills, non-verbal skills and attitudes and skills specifically inhibiting progress in academic tasks. Of particular interest to the current study is the identification of two key areas specifically concerned with impaired communication skills, verbal and non-verbal, plus the possibility of an associated third area concerned with academic progress.

Circular 9/94 identifies typical extreme behaviours prevalent among children described as having SEBD. Having discussed extreme behaviour in the context of the 'tail' of a continuum, the focus

now changes to discussion of extreme behaviours occupying opposing polar positions on continua for each of the identified areas of difficulty. This means that features of SEBD are markedly different from child to child, although all are described as having SEBD. Within the constellation of behaviours associated with SEBD, children may be: timid and withdrawn or defiant and vindictive; silent or outspoken using language inappropriate to the classroom; clinging and over dependent or contemptuous of rules and ordered behaviour, given to violence and aggression directed at people or property. Children may fail to engage with tasks or appear unable to concentrate and complete tasks without adult support. These features of SEBD support the views expressed over time by Laslett (1983) and Cooper (2000), that no single type of behaviour is typically associated with children described as having SEBD. SEBD is, however, typified by a range of very different types of extreme behaviour.

The apparent anomalies in current descriptions of features of SEBD may become easier to comprehend as understanding of children's underlying difficulties develops. However, over the last 30 years published papers including; The Elton Report, (DES,1989), Circular 9/94, (DfE, 1994a), The Green Paper: Excellence for all Children, Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997), Rock, Fessler and Church (1997), the OFSTED Report on Effective Education for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (1999), Daniels (2000) and Cooper (2001a) consistently agree that children described as having SEBD experience some form of learning difficulty or disengagement with the curriculum. It is difficult to assess whether learning difficulties provoke disengagement from the curriculum, disturbed behaviour limits achievement or a complex combination of the two result in observed learning difficulties. However, subtle but pervasive learning difficulties, similar to those identified by Burgess and Brandsby (1990) and Cross (1997), which affect interacting developmental areas appear to be a defining feature of SEBD.

Whether primary learning difficulties produce adverse behaviour patterns, or whether inappropriate behaviour impairs learning, Circular 9/94, (DfE, 1994a), the Steer Report, Learning Behaviour (DfES, 2005), OFSTED Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (2005) recognise that adverse behaviour interrupts the flow of teaching. Cooper (1999) suggests that part of the environmental impact of SEBD is that it hampers the individual child's learning and disrupts teaching to the extent that other children's learning is restricted. Cooper considers that once the teacher becomes bound in a cycle of behaviour which challenges his or her competence then their ability to deal with inappropriate behaviour is limited by their diminished confidence. Eventually both teacher and pupils are bound in a spiral of failure, a view endorsed by the Elton Report (DES, 1989), Cole, Visser and Upton (1998) and by Daniels, Visser, Cole and de Reybekill (1999) when they affirm that only confident teachers handle pupil behaviour well. This relationship between the cognitive, social and emotional demands of the classroom has been recognised by Daniels (2000) and Cooper (2001a) as pertinent to the education of children described as having SEBD and will inform the current study.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

It has been argued that arbitrary boundaries used for notional non-normative categorisation result in inconsistent identification of children described as having SEBD. Tomlinson (1982) also suggested that group membership subjects children to influences which may compound their difficulties whilst affirming assumptions made during the process of assessment. Influences appear to operate as dynamic, multi-directional systems in which each area is constantly receptive to input which adjusts the recipient area and initiates a process of constant adaptation and re-adjustment. One consequence of this sequence of interaction and adjustment is that children functioning at the extremities of a

continuum may gradually become accepted as a discrete group. Children described as having moderate learning difficulties formed the focus of Tomlinson's discussion but the arguments she presented could equally well apply to children currently described as having SEBD or indeed, SLCD.

Tomlinson went on to discuss issues of "cultural disadvantage" and here the link with SEBD becomes increasingly complex. This appears to be the case in Cooper's (1999) discussion of the post-war period where he observes that severe urban deprivation commonly co-existed alongside pockets of children experiencing SEBD. Indeed it was not until the Elton Report (DES, 1989) that the apparent link between social disadvantage and SEBD began to be dismantled, when some schools in underprivileged areas were observed to operate effective behaviour management strategies.

The Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations (Ministry of Education, 1945) introduced the concept of maladjustment as a descriptor for children currently described as having SEBD. The term maladjusted established a comparative relationship between children described as having SEBD and the majority, whilst at the same time indicating a setting-related difficulty. Excellence for all Children (DfEE, 1997) continues this notion of SEBD as a range of difficulties, observable in comparison with typical development, which are setting-related.

It is difficult to judge whether links between under privileged families and SEBD suggest causal relationships or situation specific adjustment, that is children from deprived families find adapting to the educational setting more difficult than the majority of children. However, Bennathan and Boxall (2000) continue to endorse the view that early deprivation can be directly linked to children who are at risk of SEBD. Whilst Jones (1996) questions the relationships, cited by Davie, Butler

and Goldstein (1972), between families experiencing social problems and behavioural difficulties in children, he accepts that, “parental discord... separation, some form of abuse, inconsistent parenting” are major factors leading children to experience SEBD and under achievement in school. Jones’ suggestion that SEBD can be linked to parenting, does however, endorse Tomlinson’s (1982) view that notional groups provide society with criteria which distinguish between approved ‘normality’ and abnormality. In this case, the majority of parents may be viewed as more effective than those whose children are described as having SEBD. It is not possible to establish how far notions of ineffective or destructive parenting could be sustained if the group of children currently described as having SEBD were identified using more consistent criteria. However, the potential relationships between environmental deprivation and parenting strategies and SEBD are themes which are ongoing foci for research projects.

The complexity of categorising children described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the diversity of needs that these children exhibit has occupied discussion thus far. To further identify the background for this study the next chapter will discuss potential relationships between SEBD and SLCD.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES AND SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The case for SEBD occupying a notional and non-normative grouping encompassing individual constellations of difficulties is fundamental to the current study. It is the range and nature of the children's difficulties which provides the challenge for pedagogy that this study seeks to investigate. It can also be argued that children described as having SLCD constitute a notional, non-normative group with individual needs. Indeed, Leonard (1998) considers that specific language impairments are sufficiently diverse and individually based that they are difficult to envisage as a discrete category. To avoid confusion and lengthy repetition further discussion of the nature of SLCD will be incorporated into discussion of the interface between SEBD and SLCD.

Cole, Visser and Upton (1998) and Cooper (2001a) suggest that SEBD is symptomatic of a mismatch between the child and some aspect of its environment, or evidence of an unmet need. Indeed, SEBD may be used as a descriptor when there is a mismatch between child and adult perception of what constitutes an appropriate environment to meet the child's learning needs. In line with this view, the present study seeks to delve beyond the idea that SEBD are grounded in overt social, emotional or behavioural problems. Rather, it is the less obvious, but more pervasive difficulties encountered by these children in educational settings which are central to this study. It will be argued that there is a case for considering that features associated with SEBD may equally well be seen as evidence of contiguous areas of difficulty, for example, SLCD. Whilst it is relationships

between SEBD and SLCD and their implications for pedagogy, which provide key perspectives for the current investigation, it would be naive to assume that other areas of development are not pertinent to understanding the needs of these children. These other developmental areas are, however, outside the remit of this study. The following section, therefore, specifically explores the interface between SEBD and SLCD. This involves, review of the prevalence of jointly occurring SEBD and SLCD, discussion of features which are common to SEBD and SLCD, the nature of SLCD, and language and communication functions within the educational setting.

Before going further it is essential to clarify what is understood by speech, language and communication. For the purposes of the current study Owens' (2001) descriptions will be adapted. Speech is described as verbally produced patterns of sound. Language is meaning encoded in socially transmitted patterns, which can be spoken, written or signed. Communication is the process by which meaning is shared and may involve, for example, language, speech, gesture, intonation, written or signed text. Language is viewed as central to the learning process by Luria (1973), Vygotsky (1978), and those who have developed their theories, including Daniels (2001a), Mercer (2003a), Potter and Te Molder (2005), Skidmore (2006) and Alexander (2008). Relationships between language, communication and learning are introduced and developed in the course of this discussion.

## **PREVALENCE OF COEXISTING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES AND SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES**

Over a number of years there has been a steady accumulation of research, which has suggested links between social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties. However, the notional, non-normative nature of both SEBD and SLCD make direct

comparisons between study groups of children described as having similar difficulties tentative. Equally the suggestion made by Cooper (2001a) and others, that SEBD may be context related and subject to social, cultural and pedagogic differences make international comparisons difficult. As a result it could be problematic determining prevalence of both SLCD and SEBD within a single chosen population. It is, however, the amount of evidence which suggests relationships between groups of children described as having SEBD and SLCD that makes the potential relationship compelling. Benner, Nelson and Epstein (2002) in their review of literature were able to identify 26 studies which established links between these two classifications of need. The studies considered by Benner, Nelson and Epstein fell into two distinct groups, these identified primary need related to either speech, language and communication or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and then looked for evidence of the other coexisting difficulty. The current study takes as its starting point a group of children described as having SEBD and so my focus for this section of the literature review will begin with studies of children identified as having SEBD who had additional speech language or communication difficulties.

Benner et al identify 18 studies which investigated the prevalence of relationships between SEBD and SLCD. From these studies an average of 71% of children described as having SEBD also had significant language difficulties. However, the actual percentage of children identified as having SLCD in each individual study varied widely. The wide variation in percentage figures can be illustrated by two studies of six-twelve-year-olds. Burgess and Brandsby (1990) found that 16 of the 17 children attending an English Primary Unit for children described as having SEBD had speech or language difficulties. Trauttmann, Giddans and Jurs (1990) undertook a similar study in the United States of America and found that 54% of their population of sixty-seven children had speech or language difficulties. This wide differential may be as a result of variations in definitions of SEBD and SLCD, differing cut off points or the nature of assessment procedures used. Equally, the



differing number of children involved in each study would have influenced the percentage relationship.

Strong relationships were, however, found in other studies similar to those of Trauttman et al and Brandsby and Burgess. Cohen, Menna, Vallance, Barwick Im and Horodezky (1998) observed that in a sample of seven-12-year-olds attending a psychiatric clinic over 60% of the children described as having conduct disorders had previously unrecognised language difficulties. Law and Sivyier (2003) in their study of 31 children aged nine to eleven years old attending a Pupil Referral Unit found that all had significant, but previously unidentified, language difficulties. Clegg, Stackhouse, Finch, Murphy and Nicholls (2009) in their study of children at risk of exclusion from a mainstream secondary school found a similarly disturbing trend. They noted that ten of the fifteen children they studied had atypical levels of language development. However, with these children it had been their unacceptable behaviour which was initially viewed as their primary difficulty.

All the children described as having SEBD and identified as having SLCD had a range of significant difficulties, which impaired their ability to communicate effectively in their first language. These difficulties included combinations of; sound system difficulties, expressive and receptive language difficulties and combinations of the three. Pragmatic skills were difficult to assess because they are context related, however, Trauttman et al assert that,

“Pragmatic deficits abound in this population,” p.127

Overall the evidence suggests a consistent link between SEBD and SLCD, whether this relationship is equally robust in the case of children with recognised primary SLCD is the focus of the next section of this study.

The *Language and Social Exclusion* I-Can Conference (November 2007) not only suggested that

there are strong links between SEBD and SLCD but that these links form a bidirectional continuum which tails into the typically developing population of children. This view suggests that children with SEBD are at risk of having SLCD and those with SLCD at risk of SEBD. Benner, Nelson and Epstein (2002) in their review of studies into the prevalence of SEBD among children identified as having SLCD found an average of 57% of the children displayed features of SEBD alongside SLCD.

Beitchman, Wilson, Brownlie, Walters, Inglis and Lancee (1996), Brownlie, Beitchman, Escobar, Yong, Atkinson, Johnson, Wilson and Douglas (2004) and Beitchman (2005) conducted a longitudinal study which investigated potential ongoing links between SLCD and SEBD. Beitchman et al observed a group of 142 children described as having speech or language impairments and a control group of 142 randomly matched children at five, 12 and 19 years old. The children described as having language impairments, were also found to have elevated rates of anxiety and anti-social personality disorders three times more frequent than the control group. At age 12 Beitchman et al (1996) say that the children identified as having language impairments showed increased hyperactivity, externalised behaviour and lower social competence outside their family situations. This study states that children identified as having language impairment at age five have an increased risk of developing ongoing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties into early adulthood.

Beitchman et al's Canadian study can be compared with longitudinal work carried out by Lindsay, Dockrell and Strand (2007) in England. In this study 69 children, described as having SLCD, had ongoing assessments for SEBD at eight, ten and twelve years old. As with the Beitchman et al study Lindsay et al observed that their population had persistent and ongoing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Lindsay et al observed that relationships between SEBD and SLCD were

sustained over the period of their study. Indeed, they suggested that increasing demands of language in the curriculum as children get older have ongoing implications for this complex, bidirectional relationship. In a similar vein, Cohen (2006) asserts that cumulative evidence suggests that language disorders do not occur in isolation but are entwined with a range of SEBD. This view is further echoed by Paul (2007), as she suggests that interventions with children described as having language difficulties should recognise the potential for future educational and social difficulties among this population. Whilst accepting that there are strong indications of relationships between SEBD and SLCD, Stevenson (1996) questions how these relationships evolve but asserts that presenting difficulties are always individual and unique to each child.

The strength of the relationship between SLCD and SEBD increases when one considers the incidence of speech or language difficulties among the child population as a whole. Burden, Stott, Forge, & Goodyer, (1996) cite prevalence rates of near 7% of the pre-school child population having identifiable SLCD. Such evidence only serves to emphasise the unusual prevalence of speech or language difficulties among children who are described as having SEBD. The following section considers features which are common to SEBD and SLCD.

## **FEATURES WHICH ARE COMMON TO SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES AND SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES**

The present study is concerned with the idea that some children described as having SLCD and SEBD may display a fusion of the features which are common to both groups. Whilst exploring the notion of a fusion of difficulties it is recognised that there are children described as having SEBD who do not have atypical speech, language or communication skills and, equally, children described as having SLCD who do not have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

To effectively explore the concept of a fusion of needs, features of SEBD will be juxtaposed with features of SLCD. Similarities and differences will be identified and discussed. In order to do this a sound definition of either SEBD or SLCD is ideally required. As previously discussed, such a definition for SEBD is hard to formulate. However, whilst recognising its limitations, Daniels, Cole, Visser and de Reybekill (1999), Cooper (2001a) the Appendix to the SEBDA Business Plan (2006) refer to features of behaviour cited in DfE Circular 9:94 (1994a) as the best available definition of SEBD. In consequence, the four categories of behaviour identified in Circular 9:94 are used to focus this discussion.

- personal; low self image, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, resentment, vindictiveness, defiance.
- verbal; silent, threatening, interrupting, arguing, swearing.
- non-verbal; clinginess, truancy, failure to observe rules, disruptiveness, destructiveness, aggression, violence.
- work skills; inability or unwillingness to work without direct supervision, concentrate, complete tasks, follow instructions.

These four categories of behaviour, with examples of each, were identified by Circular 9:94 to facilitate discussion of SEBD. In order to clarify discussion for the current purposes it has been necessary to re-group features and examples of behaviour. In doing this, care has been taken to maintain the integrity of observable features of behaviour whilst presenting them in categories more easily discussed from the perspective of SLCD. The re-organised categories relate to; pragmatic behaviour, syntax, phonology and emotional difficulties

## **PRAGMATIC DIFFICULTIES**

Features of the behaviour of children described as having SEBD are viewed, by the current study,

from the perspective of mis-applied language and communication skills. A similar position was adopted by Gilmore, Hill, Place and Skuse (2004) when they investigated the hypothesis that some children identified as having conduct disorder actually have weak pragmatic language skills. In their study Gilmore, Hill, Place and Skuse found that 66% of their sample of 54 children had “pragmatic language impairments”. Pragmatic aspects of language are central to the reinterpretation of SEBD that the current study proposes.

To clarify the meaning of the term ‘pragmatics’ it is helpful to briefly refer to Bloom and Lahey’s (1978) model of language. Three interacting aspects of language were identified as contributing to linguistic competence. These aspects were termed form, content and use and broadly equate to syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels of language. Each of these aspects of language operates at a receptive and expressive level. There has been considerable discussion about what constitute pragmatic aspects of language, but for the purpose of the current study an adaptation of Levinson’s (1992) definition will be used. He states that pragmatics includes those areas of meaning embedded in context, plus conversation skills. For the purposes of the current study this includes turn-taking routines, including initiation of discourse, prosody and awareness of Grice’s (1975) co-operative principle, in which utterances serve an appropriate purpose in the setting in which they are made. This superficially simple definition will be developed in the course of the following discussion.

## **INITIATIONS AND TURN TAKING ROUTINES**

McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992) state that achieving a listener’s attention is a key feature of engaging in discourse. They suggest that typically developing children use a range of strategies in order to initiate shared attention which precedes conversation. Among these strategies are, establishing eye contact, gesture, touch, vocalisation and verbalisation. Wootton’s (2005) transcripts and photographs of a pre-school child and her parents interacting together provide evidence of all of

these features in place before the child's third birthday. These strategies all demand considerable social awareness. Failure to develop age appropriate awareness of strategies for initiating discourse can present significant difficulties. Frequent touching or excessively loud repetition to attract a teacher's attention could be interpreted as *disruptive* behaviour. If the child persists with these behaviours whilst the teacher is already occupied these early attempts to initiate discourse could be interpreted as *interruptions*. Within the school setting where gaining adult attention is often preceded by the child raising its hand, these behaviours might legitimately be interpreted as inappropriate means of initiating discourse. In consequence the child may be observed to be, *disrupting*, *interrupting* or a *failing to observe rules* which are cited by the Department for Education Circular 9:94 (DfE, 1994a) as features of the behaviour of children described as having SEBD.

Effective turn-taking is of equal importance to the successful flow of conversation but, as Levinson (1992) states, the process by which it takes place is complex. Adult listeners are able to anticipate the end of syntactic units, including sentences, clauses and smaller units of meaning and so recognise points where it is appropriate to change speakers. The conclusion of ideas, intonation changes, pauses, gaze, gesture or direct verbal invitations are all recognised as signalling a change of speaker. Garvey and Berninger (1981) cited by McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992), observed that young children find the strategies that adults use for turn-taking difficult and they need time to perfect these skills. Anticipating points where changes of speaker are appropriate can be particularly challenging for young children and so they tend to use extended pauses in conversation to accommodate turn-taking.

McTear and Conti-Ramsden suggest that children who have not developed turn-taking routines in line with their typically developing peers may fail to take up pauses, thus achieving fewer

conversational turns. Alternatively, they may incorrectly anticipate the ends of turns, respond slowly and consequently overlap discourse more often than other children. Frequent overlaps may be interpreted as *interruptions*, which are cited as common among children described as having SEBD. Assertive children who are slow to recognise the brief opportunities discourse offers for changing speakers may resort to inappropriate intonation or shouting. When these behaviours occur frequently they can be construed as deliberate *interruptions* or *arguing*, and children may be described as *defiant* if they persist in demanding to speak. As a result, descriptors of features of the behaviour of children described as having SEBD, for example *interrupts*, *is defiant* and *argues*, may equally describe features of the behaviour of some children with SLCD.

## **PROSODY**

Alongside turn-taking routines prosody has the potential to prove problematic for children described as having SEBD. Atkinson (1992) states that prosody includes features of language such as volume, intonation and emphasis, which Schegloff (2007) notes, are crucial to meaning. Stressors within short phrases can completely alter meaning and perceived emotional responses. For example, in settings where a child may be discussing a set task with the teacher, “why” can be interpreted as a polite request for clarification or as a rude questioning of the teacher’s authority. These contrasting interpretations are dependant on intonation, emphasis, volume and accompanying posture. Levinson (1992), in his exploration of the prosodic features of communication notes their key functions in communicating emotional states and attitudes, for example, humour, respect, anger, irritability, questioning as well as initiating and terminating conversation. Thus, prosody is responsible for subtle aspects of communication which can completely alter the meaning of the words spoken. Indeed, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2002) suggest that further investigation into the role of prosody in impoliteness may well reveal it to have a fundamental role rather than being ancillary to grammar and vocabulary.

Failure, or inability, of children with communication difficulties to receive or apply prosodic features appropriately can give rise to major problems. McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992) cite the impact of intonation and emphasis on the sparse utterances typical of children with pragmatic difficulties; the minimal utterance, “please” may appear to be a polite request, signal enthusiasm or resentful agreement. Misapplied prosody can convey tangential meaning to that intended, which may lead adults to believe that children using inappropriate intonation or emphasis are being rude, *threatening* or *disrespectful*. Inappropriate intonation can also give the impression of *threat* where none was intended. Indeed, the concept of threat is dependent on recipient response and not necessarily the initiator’s intention. Therefore, if an utterance is perceived as threatening, whether or not that was the speaker’s intention, then it becomes a threat. Equally if an utterance conceived as a threat, is not received as such, then it is no longer a threat. In Searle’s (1994) terms, meaning is constructed by the listener.

A feature of prosody which McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992) cite as common among children with pragmatic difficulties is their failure to effectively monitor the volume of their voices. This can be destructive of attempts to communicate in the context of a classroom. Children whose communication skills mean that they have difficulty discriminating, or recognising the potency of, a whispered conversation or a shout across the classroom are liable to experience social and communicative difficulties. Failure to develop subtle prosodic skills can be highly detrimental to successful communication and social interaction because weak skills can be interpreted as purposeful lack of regard for others.



## UTTERANCES APPROPRIATE TO THE PURPOSE AND SETTING IN WHICH THEY ARE MADE

Grice's (1975) co-operative principle of conversation underlines this section. He suggests that in order for effective communication to take place, participants in conversation need to share perception of the rules governing that particular conversation. Utterances should make an appropriate contribution to discourse at the time, in the manner and for the purpose of that specific interaction. For children with SLCD these subtle aspects of the organisation of discourse within specific contexts present potential problems. Central to Grice's concept of the co-operative principle is a social awareness of other participants in the conversation.

Awareness of the needs of a range of audiences is a fundamental part of pragmatic development. McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992) state that awareness of audience has two perspectives, recognition of the listener's status as well as assumed or shared knowledge. Both of these aspects can present problems for children with language or communication difficulties. In school, recognition of status can cause considerable problems if children do not recognise the need to adjust vocabulary and manner of communication in relation to the role of the person they are talking to. Levinson (1992), for example contrasts polite forms of address used in formal relationships with the more casual features of address shared between friends. In the case of children described as having SEBD slang and *swearing* may sometimes result from an inadequate awareness of situation specific language conventions. Children who experience pragmatic difficulties may not appreciate the offence that failure to use setting appropriate language can cause. As a result their attitude towards teachers or other children may be described as inappropriate or even *aggressive* or *verbally violent*.

Levinson (1992) suggests that differing listeners need different amounts of direct information in order to maintain Grice's (1975) maxim, that information should be sufficient but not more than

required. Conversation between close friends, therefore, often leaves huge information gaps without destroying meaning. For example, the telephone conversation between friends,

Caller A                      and remember...

Caller B                      laughter

where meaning is shared using sparse language. In contrast Paul (2007) suggests that teachers often require children to reiterate knowledge which they both already share. Such repetition of shared knowledge may be outside some children's experience and result in them failing to conform to teachers' expectations. Paul states that failure to share conversational rules which are implicit to the classroom setting can result in confusions or misunderstandings. Some teachers may interpret such misunderstandings as *aggression, disruption, arguing* or an *unwillingness to keep class rules*.

## SYNTAX

To enable a fuller understanding of the potential language difficulties of children described as having SEBD, levels of language need to be considered. Although each area is considered separately for clarity of discussion, it is important to remember that in reality pragmatic skills, phonology, syntactic and semantic awareness are integrated and constantly interact. As a result difficulty in any area will have ongoing implications for effective communication. The following section deals with syntactic development in the context of the classroom. Key features of syntax have been identified for discussion because of their specific educational impact. These include, words, morphology and sentence and phrase structures. Each of these will be discussed in terms of expressive and receptive skills. How observable features are interpreted by adults and impact on children's inclusion in classroom activities are key issues for the current study, so, as previously, each potential area of difficulty will be considered in relation to features of SEBD described in the Department for Education Circular 9:94 (1994).

## WORDS

Root words can be viewed as vocabulary used to express the semantic content of utterances, however, individual words also carry syntactic power. Bates and Goodman (1999) suggest that the development of vocabulary and syntax used by young children are mutually dependent. Accessing vocabulary and syntax is viewed as an integrated process in which syntactic development can not progress without lexical development. This means that children are unlikely to have effective syntactic development if there is evidence of vocabulary processing difficulties. This section, therefore, considers the implications of vocabulary difficulties for children described as having SEBD.

Speaking and listening were given greater status across the curriculum in the UK with the advent of the Primary Framework for Literacy (2006). A programme for extending children's awareness of the power of vocabulary is a key element in this movement towards speaking in classrooms. However, whilst the Primary Framework may enable teachers to promote more creative learning experiences it does little to reduce the range and pace of learning that children encounter. Palmer (2006) states that pressure on teachers to raise their expectations of children at the very beginning of their schooling has been increased. In consequence, there are ever increasing demands placed on teachers and children. Paul (2001) recognises that curricular and social pressures similar to those cited by Palmer can be detrimental in settings where children are experiencing SLCD.

Paul (2007) says that lexical functioning can break down in a number of ways at receptive and expressive levels which impact on classroom performance. Bates and Goodman (1997) suggest that children with word finding difficulties may over use generic verbs for example, 'make a picture', rather than, 'draw' or 'paint a picture' and 'do the garden', rather than 'dig' or 'weed the garden'. Precise nouns that cannot be recalled may result in circumlocution or empty utterances like,

'thingy .. you know'. Children may fail to take up and use new vocabulary which teachers believe they have taught in the course of a lesson. So without specific prompting, for example by linking new vocabulary to established concepts or providing non-verbal and visual prompts, children with SLCD will fail to progress. Frederickson and Cline (2002) observe that children with word finding difficulties sometimes use circumlocution, talking around a subject until their listener becomes aware of an intended meaning. In the classroom this type of long-winded indirect discussion could be conceived as attention-seeking behaviour and regarded as a feature of SEBD. Equally, some children try to resolve word finding difficulties by repeating utterances. In the classroom setting this level of repetition can also have negative implications and be perceived as *argumentative*. Once again the child could be viewed as having SEBD.

Pronoun reversals, where children confuse 'I', 'me' and 'you', noted by Jordan and Powell (2002) can pose particular problems for some children. Imagine a disagreement between children in the playground. When children with weak awareness of the use of pronouns offer an explanation of the situation to adults their confusions may appear as attempts to cover up their own part in the incident. Add to this scenario adult expectations of a child who has previously been in trouble, plus the potential that the child has as much difficulty comprehending adult utterances as it has in formulating its own utterances and the child may resort to *arguing, interrupting, swearing* or indeed become *silent*.

In each of the situations described above adult perception of the children's difficulties are critical. Although Gilmore and Vance (2007) suggest that teacher rating of children's verbal comprehension relates well to comprehension test scores it is arguable whether this correlation is consistently maintained. For example, in stressful situations when the adult's teaching is in question or at the end of playtime when it is imperative for the children to return to classrooms quickly, adults may

become less aware of the children's difficulties. In addition, Williams (2006) states that teachers make less reliable judgements about very young children's language skills. This suggests the possibility that children with unrecognised language difficulties in their early years at school may acquire the persona of children described as having SEBD. In consequence, as these children pass through school their reputation for being troublesome may overtake any awareness of their SLCD.

Teacher's feelings of frustration or professional failure may cause them to increase pressure on children they perceive as failing, whilst the children's continuing difficulties increase pressure felt by the adults. Thus, a cycle of mis-matched expectations, similar to that described by Cooper (2001) develops with the possibility of increasing antagonism between teacher and child. From the adult's perspective the child may appear to willfully disengage from the curriculum, a situation which could be viewed as a reflection of the teacher's ability. From the child's perspective the tasks set become increasingly difficult and it may feel isolated from peers who are able to take on the learning activities. The child's feelings of vulnerability can lead to emotional or physical *withdrawal* or become increasingly demanding of the teachers time by venting its frustration through *disruptive, destructive* or *aggressive* behaviour.

## **MORPHOLOGY**

Scott (1995) describes syntax as structural rules which govern word order and units of meaning. The smallest units of meaning are described as morphemes. Morphemes can be free standing, for example the single morpheme 'jump' or bound, for example 'ed' 'jumped', 'ing' 'jumping' and so on.

Morphological difficulties in children's spoken language have been well documented. Indeed, Leonard, Deevy, Kurtz, Chorev, Owen, Polite, Elam and Finneran (2007) state that children described as having specific language impairment have the most significant difficulties with

morphology. Windsor, Scott and Street (2000) found that the children with SLCD in their sample population made more morphological errors when using verbs in plural forms than typically developing children of a similar age. However, the same children were less likely to make errors when using plural nouns. In both cases they found that the morphological errors of children with SLCD were closely related to errors made by younger typically developing children. Leonard et al noted that children with SLCD were less likely to use past tense regular verbs than their age matched typically developing peers. Children with SLCD matched with younger children for mean length of utterance (MLU) used regular past tense morphemes at a similar rate. In each of these studies it was noted that errors tended to be evidenced by omission rather than substitution.

Further investigation of the morphological awareness of young children by Krantz and Leonard (2007) considered the use of regular past tense when associated with temporal adverbial phrases. Once again the observed pattern among children with SLCD demonstrated omission of past tense morphemes when temporal expressions were taken as substitutes for verb markers. This work could be seen as indication that lexical awareness of temporal adverbials was more embedded in the language of these vulnerable children than syntactic form. If this was the case it might reinforce Locke's (1994) view that early lexical delays may well have implications for ongoing syntactic development. That is, without sound mastery of a vocabulary bank, added difficulties are presented at the point when typically developing children usually acquire syntactic skills.

In the classroom context these syntactic difficulties add a further layer open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation between adults and children. The complexity of the relationship between rapidly processing syntactic features alongside recall of significant facts was a feature of language explored by Leonard, Weismer, Miller, Francis, Tomblin and Kail (2007). Leonard et al found significant differences between the recall and processing abilities of children with SLCD and

typically developing children of a similar age. They suggested that processing difficulties may exacerbate language difficulties.

For children with SLCD the massive task of processing and recalling almost simultaneously suggests the potential for both delayed and erroneous responses. Such atypical behaviours could be interpreted by teachers as symptomatic of SEBD. Even a slight delay in response could be deemed an act of *defiance*. For example when a series of rapid complex utterances are used by the teacher with little non-verbal support, “open your books at the next page and start writing your account of the great fire of London, as if you were living next door to Samuel Pepys. Don't forget to put the date .. can you remember when it happened .. ok”, delay, informal conversation with peers or attempting to clarify the task with the teacher might all be considered as actively *defiant*.

Interpretation of individual children's behaviour is subjective but I would suggest that cumulative patterns of interaction between teachers and children with difficulties can develop into entrenched misgivings about each others motivation resulting in escalating negative perceptions including, *failure to observe rules, arguing, swearing, disruptiveness, aggression, failure to concentrate, follow instructions or complete tasks*.

Working with children at the end of the primary age range Windsor, Scott and Street (2000) observed that it was frequently difficult to identify syntactic flaws in these children's spoken language. However, errors became more evident when written work was examined. In their work with 60 children, observed as 20 matched triplets, one group with SLCD aged between ten and twelve years old, the second group of typically developing ten to twelve year olds and the third group of younger children who were described as having language development equivalent to that of the children with SLCD. They suggest that writing “exposes fragile areas of performance”. As with spoken language they noted that written errors were evidenced by omission and that children

matched for linguistic ability appeared to be following similar routes to mastery.

Scott et al recognise that the omission of verb morphemes in spoken language is difficult to detect, therefore, the children's difficulties may go unrecognised in a busy classroom. This may be particularly so if the children are very young, when, as Williams (2006) states teachers are least likely to notice the children's difficulties, although Gilmore and Vance (2007) suggest that teachers are well aware of verbal comprehension difficulties among children in their care. However, at the point where written work becomes available the children's errors gradually become apparent.

For children described as having SEBD, the failure to apply verb morphemes appropriately in their writing may be interpreted as a lack of care. This interpretation could well be made following specific teaching activities which failed to recognise the child's difficulties. In consequence the child might be seen as being inattentive, *failing to concentrate* or *unwilling to work without direct supervision*. If the child's difficulties remained unrecognised and extra support was not offered then their behaviour might follow one of two routes. The child may either emotionally or physically *withdraw* from lessons which focused on literacy learning or occupy itself in ways that might be viewed as *disruptive*. Equally a child intent on understanding written concepts which it did not have mastery of in the spoken form might appear to *interrupt* lessons in order to seek clarification. All these behaviours could fall outside the teacher's expectation of appropriate behaviour and following the Department for Education Circular 9:94 (1994) definition confirms a view that the child may have SEBD.

## **SENTENCE AND PHRASE STRUCTURES**

Bates and Goodman (1999), Windsor, Scott and Street (2000), Paul (2007), and others suggest that syntactic difficulties can be difficult to identify. This is mainly because errors in syntax have been



found to present as omissions or the avoidance of complex sentence structures containing clauses. Hansson and Nettelbladt (1995) say that simple linear sentence structures, for example, “And then he went home. And then had his tea. And he wouldn't do his home work”, are frequent among children with SLCD. Syntactic difficulties are, therefore, considered as issues of degree rather than kind.

Bates and Goodman state that there are some children who are not syntactically competent but have learnt formulaic utterances or use rote repetition which can give the impression of mastery of more complex syntactical structures. These utterances apply appropriate structures so may disguise the child's actual syntactic difficulties. Repetitive or formulaic utterances, which are syntactically accurate like, “what do you mean?” may, with over-use, be perceived as questioning the teacher's authority, being provocative or disrespectful. In this way they may contribute to the notion that a child has SEBD. If used excessively these phrases could be conceived as *argumentative*, *disruptive* or *a failure to observe classroom rules*, rather than a genuine request for clarification. The youngest children in school may use vocalisations, for example giggling, to disguise their weak comprehension of complex utterances. Initially such behaviour may be treated as an appealing mannerism. However, as the child gets older and continues to experience difficulties the behaviour may be interpreted less favourably as a feature of *disruptiveness*.

## QUESTIONS

Questioning has been identified by Alexander (2008) as being a fundamental of classroom discourse where question, respond and feedback (QRF) routines are well established. In order to participate effectively in this type of activity Wood's (2003) work suggests that children need to be able to interpret and respond to verbal information at a rapid pace. This could present enormous problems for some children. Deevy and Leonard (2004) investigated the use of 'wh' questions of varying

lengths and complexity. Findings suggested that children with SLCD were less efficient than their typically developing peers when interpreting questions which combined complex structures with longer length utterances.

Frederickson and Cline (2002) recognise that children with syntactic difficulties may fail to keep track of conversation and become passive observers of classroom activity. From the point of view of Circular 9:94 (DfE, 1994) the children might be described as not *concentrating* or listening. In turn these behaviours can give rise to poor recall of spoken information resulting in a tendency to respond to questions or instructions more slowly than typically developing peers. Circular 9:94 (1994) might describe these behaviours as active *withdrawal* or *silence*. Equally, children with syntactic difficulties who are determined to engage with learning might appear to *interrupt* and *disrupt* lessons in order to gain clarification. In combination the challenges of the classroom could give rise to the perception that these children are *unwilling to work without direct supervision, have limited concentration, fail to complete tasks* and *fail to follow instructions*. All these features of children's behaviour can, therefore, be ascribed to either SEBD or syntactic difficulties.

## **WRITING**

As the content of the curriculum becomes more challenging, Paul (2007) suggests that children's vulnerabilities become exacerbated. Once writing takes a major part in the curriculum Windsor, Scott and Street (2000), suggest there is the potential for children with SLCD to increasingly fall behind their peers. The demands of note taking and paraphrasing can become excessive. Indeed, Scott and Windsor (2000) state that informative discourse which is central to much of the curriculum is particularly challenging. It demands the ability to manipulate ideas and objects in order to establish links between them. The relevance of cause and effect or the ability to compare and contrast require understanding of connectives, complex verb forms, supplementary clauses and

complex structural devices all of which are highly demanding for children with SLCD. Once again these children may be seen to show some of the features associated with SEBD described in Department for Education Circular 9:94 (1994), including *unwillingness to work without direct supervision, poor concentration and reluctance to complete tasks*.

## **PHONOLOGY**

In order to relate phonology to an educational setting this section will identify relationships between phonological development, SLCD and literacy development. The implications of phonology for children described as having SEBD will be considered in relation to descriptors of SEBD cited by the Department for Education Circular 9:94 (1994). To develop these themes Anthony and Francis' (2007) definition of phonological awareness will be used. They state that, phonological awareness is the ability to recognise, discriminate and manipulate speech sounds.

## **PHONOLOGY AND SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES**

Anthony and Francis observe that phonological awareness develops as two parallel processes. During the first of stages children gradually become able to discriminate larger units of sound into their component parts. In this way a continuous flow of speech can be identified as consisting of words, syllables, then onset and rime and eventually individual phonemes. At the same time as this process is happening children begin to recognise similar and dissimilar sounding words which finally results in the ability to manipulate sounds within words. Bishop (2007) says that key developmental areas in the acquisition of phonological awareness are auditory processing and recall.

In order to extend understanding of differences between typically developing children and those with SLCD Corriveau, Pasquini and Goswami, (2007) considered auditory processing skills. Their

work involved children described as having specific language impairments, younger children with similar language skills and age-matched typically developing children. Recognising task complexity and attentional factors they still observed strong associations between auditory processing difficulties and specific language difficulties. Corriveau, Pasquini and Goswami were able to state that their study suggested that children described as having specific language impairments had degraded phonological representations. In particular, their findings identified that children with specific language impairments have early insensitivity to rhythm and stress. They go on to discuss the potential implications that these early difficulties could have for word segmentation. They suggest that fundamental auditory processing difficulties lead to unreliable representations of words and their meanings. For example, the phonological contrast between 'chip' and 'ship' is quite refined although the meanings of these two words is substantially different. Thus a child experiencing auditory processing difficulties may have more problems establishing a working lexicon than typically developing children. Whilst phonological development supports lexical development it has been shown that lexical development feeds into syntactic development. In consequence, Corriveau, Pasquini and Goswami tentatively suggest that phonological difficulties may subtly permeate the entire language system of some children. In recognition that it would be erroneous to make such far reaching claims without further evidence Corriveau, Pasquini and Goswami suggest that further research must be undertaken if we are to understand the mechanisms involved.

## **PHONOLOGY AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

Goswami and Bryant (1990) made early links between phonological skills and reading ability in young children. In their early work on mapping between written letters and sounds they suggest that literacy skills are embedded in previously established auditory activities. Over the last twenty years these ideas have been questioned and developed. Nation and Snowling (2004) suggest that lexical knowledge is also fundamental in the decoding process, so that children with enriched vocabulary

use vocabulary and meaning to support the decoding of unfamiliar or exceptional words. However, in a more recent study Ricketts, Nation and Bishop (2007) found that although the lexicon can be associated with reading ability for some children, this is not always the case. Pennington and Bishop (2009) take a similar view when they state that although there are relationships between phonological awareness and reading these relationships are complex. They agree with Hester and Williams Hodson (2004) that there are many variables to be considered, including the role of memory and the lexicon. They recommend more work needs to be done to investigate processes and interactions of phonology, lexicon and memory in decoding.

Simkin and Conti-Ramsden (2006) found evidence of long term reading difficulties among a population of 200 children who were being educated in language units. Among children described as having specific expressive language difficulties and combined expressive/ receptive language difficulties decoding and comprehension of written text were implicated. In addition Simkin and Conti-Ramsden suggested that spoken language difficulties impacted on reading ability by multiplication rather than simply additionally. For those children described as having 'resolved specific language impairments' Simkin and Conti-Ramsden suggested that the outlook in terms of their ongoing literacy skills continued to require additional support.

Shaywitz, Fletcher and Shaywitz (1996) consider phonological development is both necessary for, and supported by the process of learning to read. They suggest that increased use of phonological cues encountered during reading activities not only embed skills but promote the emergence of higher order skills. In consequence, they suggest that impaired phonological development inhibits acquisition of literacy skills. This view is endorsed by Corriveau, Pasquini and Goswami (2007) who recognise that atypical phonological awareness can be the precursor of on-going literacy difficulties. However, Bishop (2008) concludes that impaired sound production does not in itself

significantly impair decoding skills unless other broader language difficulties are implicated.

Individual variations may once again make conclusive patterns difficult to identify, however, the evidence does suggest that children with phonological difficulties are potentially more likely to experience literacy difficulties than their typically developing peers.

The complexities of non-transparent orthography, that is written language which has inconsistencies between phonemes and graphemes, for example tie/die which has transparent orthography, as opposed to my/tie, presents additional difficulties for children developing literacy skills in English. Anthony and Francis (2005) suggest that discrepancies between phonology and orthography may delay the acquisition of skills among children using English. Relationship between transparent orthography and literacy skills were investigated by Goswami, Ziegler and Richardson (2006). They compared the phonological awareness of English and German preschool children. The phonological skills of pre-readers in both countries were comparable. However, once the children began reading the German children advanced more quickly in their first year than their English counterparts. The variable pace in the acquisition of literacy skills noted by Goswami, Ziegler and Richardson is suggestive of even more potential difficulties for children described as having SLCD. Indeed, Larkin and Snowling (2008) in their examination of the phonological and spelling skills of 23 children described as having language impairment found that these children had significantly weaker skills than typically developing children.

The National Primary Framework (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) stresses that literacy skills are used across the entire curriculum and reinforces the notion that communication skills in all their forms are inherent to success in school. In particular it places emphasis on development of early reading and writing through phonological awareness. Programmes of study support work at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One which focuses on syllabic recognition, onset and rime,

rhyme and phoneme awareness. In this way a desirable practical link between literacy and early phonological development is made. However, the recommended pace at which these skills are acquired may be problematic for children who have difficulties related to phonological awareness.

## **PHONOLOGY AND SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

At the point where the demands of literacy move beyond working with regular phoneme grapheme links there is the potential for children to disengage from literacy activities. The realisation that hard-won learning may not be generalisable can be crippling for the most vulnerable children. As a result the apparently random nature of English orthography may be pivotal for some children as they begin to perceive themselves being disconnected from the learning that their peers relish. Isolation in phonological learning and feelings of inadequacy are the basis from which potential SEBD may be generated.

From the perspective of the Circular 9:94 (DfE, 1994) phonological difficulties can be seen to promote features of behaviour which are equally applicable to children described as having SEBD and SLCD. This view is compatible with Fey, Catts and Larrivee's (1995) suggestion that early recognised SLCD re-emerge in slightly altered forms as the child matures. They suggest that these changes have implications for literacy learning and social development. Young children struggling to develop phonological skills and making comparisons between their own and their peers' achievements may well have impaired *personal development*. They could develop a *low self image* alongside unusual levels of *anxiety* and even emotional *withdrawal*, these emotional issues will be discussed in the section that follows. Other children with similar phonological difficulties could present as having more actively inappropriate behaviour as they attempt to make sense of literacy learning. These behaviours include, *interrupting*, *arguing* and *disruptiveness*. With increasing self imposed and external pressure to understand the classroom's phonic regime some children express

their frustration as *aggression, violence and destructiveness*. Together the children's insecurities and extreme difficulties in engaging in phonological activities can give the impression that they are *unwilling to work, need supervision, will not concentrate, complete tasks or follow instructions*. The parallel features of observable behaviour between children with SLCD and those described as having SEBD are remarkable. When these child generated behaviours are considered in conjunction with possible adult interpretation of them the case for a fusion of difficulties becomes more compelling. The frequency of co-existing areas of difficulty which have implications for work related behaviours of some children described as having SLCD as well those described as having SEBD could indicate the complex fusion of difficulties similar to that which the current study proposes.

## **EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**

Features of emotional difficulty cited in Circular 9:94 (DfE, 1994a) include; *low self-image, anxiety, timidity, clinginess and withdrawal*, emotional states are, however, also described as features of SLCD. Early studies undertaken by Stevenson, Richman and Graham (1985) and Cantwell and Baker (1987) observed that increased anxiety levels were often associated with SLCD. In their longitudinal study, comparing the development of children with and without SLCD, Stevenson, Richman and Graham (1985) observed that *anxiety* levels among children with SLCD were greater than those of their typically developing peers. *Anxiety* was also cited as a feature of the behaviour of 30% of the sample population of 600 children who took part in Cantwell and Baker's (1987) study. Indeed, Cantwell and Baker suggested that *anxiety* was one of the most persistent psychological effects of early identified language delay. Rutter and Mawhood (1991) and Rutter, Mawhood and Howlin (1992) also encountered exaggerated *anxiety* levels among children with specific developmental language disorders when compared with children who had typically developing language.



The difficulty with anxiety associated with speech and language and communication difficulties is definition, both of SLCD and of anxiety. Almost certainly there are subtle variations in criteria used to define anxiety for each study. Cantwell and Baker for example, state that 10% of their population met the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnosis and Statistical Manual (DSM-111) criteria for anxiety disorder, which provides a clear framework by which professionals can judge children's mental health. However, assessment of the anxiety levels experienced by other children in these studies was agreed between researchers using rigorous interview and observational schedules. As far as it is possible to judge, the reliability of these studies was sound and suggests that anxiety may be a feature of both SEBD and SLCD.

*Silence* can be seen as a feature of *anxious*, *withdrawn* or stubbornly *resistant* behaviour so that as a descriptor it crosses many boundaries. From the perspective of children described as having SLCD, there are two major categories of silent behaviour, both of which have been closely associated with SEBD. The first is a failure to respond, which is frequently found alongside minimal responses or tangential responses which Frith (1989) and Jordan and Powell (1995) cite as features of the language of children within the autistic spectrum. McTear and Conti-Ramsden (1992) suggest that children who have pragmatic difficulties, not diagnosed as Autism, frequently leave conversational initiative to others, creating the impression that they too are silent. Cooper (2001a) suggests that children with features of autistic spectrum disorders are in evidence among the population of children described as having SEBD. Such difficulties may, therefore cross the boundaries between those with communication difficulties and those with SEBD. *Silence* can, therefore, be viewed as a common feature of the behaviour of some members of both groups.

The second type of *silent* behaviour which Rutter and Lord (1987) link to SEBD is 'selective'

mutism. Kolvin and Fundudis (1981) described ‘selective’ mutism as a choice that some children make not to speak in specific settings whilst using spoken language in other settings. For example, children may fail to talk in school but will talk to family and friends at home. Cline and Baldwin (1994) suggest that environmental factors may reinforce what is now known as ‘selective’ mutism, but children prone to this type of difficulty may be timid or overly *anxious*. The small numbers of children who are recognised as having ‘selective’ mutism make it difficult to generalise reasons which may be at the root of their behaviour. In consequence, it is probable that causation is complex and varies from child to child, in much the same way that other forms of SLCD are unique to individuals.

Examining the converse of withdrawal, Fey, Catts and Larrivee (1995) and Paul (2001) recognised social rejection as a feature of SLCD. Fey (1986) reported that typically developing children were unlikely to initiate and sustain conversation with peers who had SLCD, thus giving children with SLCD fewer opportunities to rehearse or practise their skills and reinforcing their reluctance to communicate. However, the suggestion that children with SLCD are quiet and *withdrawn* is not straightforward. Hutcheson and Conti-Ramsden (1992) observed that young children with SLCD were able to respond to conversation at a similar level and frequency to their language-comparable siblings, but they were far less likely to initiate conversation. The frequency of discourse initiation was the biggest difference between pairs of language-comparable siblings of differing ages that Hutcheson and Conti-Ramsden were able to identify. However, they assert that overall interactions within families and between children varied to such an extent that individual patterns of interaction could not be generalised across the group of children with SLCD. Some evidence is, therefore, available which suggests that *withdrawal* from social situations, including conversation, can be identified as a feature of the behaviour of some children described as having SEBD and SLCD.

Research suggests that relationships between SLCD and low *self-esteem* are not always conclusive. Lindsay and Dockrell (2000) found that young children with speech and language difficulties reported positive attitudes to their own abilities and social relationships. This, however, contrasted with reports from the children's parents and teachers who suspected that the children did not always see themselves in such positive light. Lindsay and Dockrell (2000) recognised the potential for conflicting evidence within the methodology of their study. Reasons cited for potential discrepancies within the data included the possibility that young children were unable to recognise any differences between themselves and their peers, that school failure was not problematic among young children or that their difficulties restricted their ability to recognise their own difficult social interactions. On revisiting their sample population after three years Lindsay, Dockrell, Letchford and Mackie (2002) found that children with SLCD did not show evidence of lower *self-esteem* although academic achievement was lower than that of their typically developing peers. Reinforcing the view that it is difficult to make firm judgements about the impact of SLCD on self esteem, McAndrew (1999) was also unable to find conclusive evidence of consistent links.

Within their sample population of 242 children described as having specific language impairments Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000) were unable to find statistically significant evidence of children with SLCD suffering from lower self esteem than their typically developing peers. However, failure to establish statistical significance should not limit the value placed on Botting and Conti-Ramsden's findings which suggest a tentative relationship between *self-esteem* and SLCD and that some, but not all, children with SLCD may have *self-esteem* difficulties. In contrast Andersen-Wood and Smith (1997) suggest that lack of communicative confidence erodes *self-esteem* and that reduced enjoyment of interaction is common among people who have a history of SLCD. Thus, they suggest, that there is a potential link between SLCD and low self esteem which may become exacerbated by limited use of communication skills.

In part, differences between the Botting and Conti-Ramsden (2000) and Andersen-Wood and Smith's (1997) studies can be explained by participant variability. Children with SLCD display a wide range of unique and individual speech, language and communication difficulties which are not easily categorised and may be setting-related. This means that the definitions of SLCD used in individual studies may vary significantly. As a result it is predictable that any two groups of children described as having SLCD are likely to display differing features. Therefore, inconsistencies between sample populations are found in small groups because of the restricted range of difficulties that may be in evidence, whilst larger populations may assume characteristics which are not always relevant.

Robson (2003) suggests that validity, that is whether studies actually observe similar features, can be difficult to judge and Lauchlan (2001) states that it may be naïve to attempt to standardise non-normative criteria as complex as those used to identify features of self-esteem. Rather, there will always be subtle differences between individual researchers' assessments of attitudinal features and it may be better to accept these inconsistencies instead of professing that they do or do not exist. It is, therefore, difficult to state that there is a strong association between SLCD and low *self-esteem*, however, the evidence does suggest some association.

Together, evidence of low *self-esteem*, *anxiety* and *withdrawal* from social interaction appears to suggest that children with SLCD are prone to features of emotional disturbance in ways that may be similar to children described as having SEBD.

## THE CLASSROOM SETTING

It is recognised that speech, language and communication takes place between two or more individuals (present or not) in unique settings. Ultimately it is the setting which defines the degree of skill that children are able to demonstrate in their routine communication. This notion can be illustrated by reference to Edwards' (1991) work on the language and communication characteristics of minority communities. He states that when talking together students who use non-standard English are not disadvantaged. However, non-standard English may place these students at a disadvantage in the classroom, when talking to teachers or other pupils. Difficulties that these students experience are, therefore specific to the school setting. The current study seeks insights into the educational experiences of a group of young children described as having SEBD. Part of this investigation, therefore, sets out to understand the tensions, in terms of language, learning and behaviour that these children encounter within a specific setting.

The complex relationships between language and learning could, in part, be responsible for the apparent aversion that children described as having SEBD have towards work tasks. This is particularly so for those who have additional needs related to SLCD. Fey, Catts and Larrivee (1995) state that spoken language activities occupy 60% of teaching time in primary schools, in consequence they suggest that children with SLCD are inherently disadvantaged. Johnson (1998) expands this idea by stating that listening and extracting meaning from the spoken word can be a constant challenge to children with SLCD because they need to remain focused in order to ensure that they understand the rapid exchanges that take place in the classroom. With this in mind, it would be remarkable if children with SLCD did not have lapses in *concentration* which, Paul (2001) states, become longer and more frequent as the tasks presented become more verbally challenging. She suggests that this establishes a pattern of fluctuating *concentration*, which in turn, also makes the process of extracting meaning from spoken interactions increasingly challenging.

In addition, Johnson (1998) notes, the difficulties some children experience with extracting meaning from spoken language could explain an apparent reluctance to *follow instructions*. Children with impaired receptive language skills have difficulty understanding instructions and in consequence take longer to respond to them than their typically developing peers. Paul (2001) and McGregor and Leonard (1995) suggest that the relationship between impaired understanding, limited *concentration* and the child's ability to *complete tasks* unaided can not be overstated. The relationships between disrupted listening skills, described by Catherall (1994) and Johnson (1998), the ability to *concentrate*, *follow instructions* and *complete work independently* are features which can be directly attributed to receptive language difficulties.

### **AN UNRECOGNISED NEED**

Paul (2001) states that in order for atypical speech or language development to be considered a difficulty it should present problems in interaction and sharing meaning which are exceptional in relation to normal environmental expectations. The concept of a difficulty which emerges in a specific setting and is comparative to the skills of other people within that setting is a key issue for the current study. This is because of the strong evidence linking impaired communication, language and literacy skills to children described as having SEBD. Benner, Nelson and Epstein (2002), in their literature review of the language skills of children with SEBD, say that on average 71% of children described as having SEBD experience "clinically significant language deficits". However, a number of authors including Burgess and Brandsby (1990) and Cross (1997) have drawn attention to the disparity between the speech language and communication skills of children described as having SEBD and their teachers' perceptions of their skills. Burgess and Brandsby and Cross cite teachers as failing to recognise numbers of children with SLCD among populations described as having SEBD. This continues to be a major cause for concern.

For the current study it is important to speculate why teachers fail to recognise SLCD in children described as having SEBD. Firstly, it may be that adults adapt to children's communication patterns and extract meaning from what they say. For example, in settings where adults interact with very young children, Snow and Ferguson (1977) show that meaning is ascribed to fragmentary utterances, "Daddy work" might be recast as, "yes Daddy is going to work". If adults working with young children described as having SEBD also intuitively adjust to the children's developing language and communication skills then this could begin to explain why these adults often fail to appreciate the difficulties that the children have. The current study was not constructed to enable direct enquiry into adult perception of the children's needs. However, observational data will be used to explore adult perception of children's needs.

If, as Benner, Nelson and Epstein (2002) suggest, 71% of children described as having SEBD also experience language difficulties, it could be argued that adults become unaware of atypical language and communication development because it is typical within their working environment. Law and Sivyver (2003) also suggest that teachers may find it difficult to identify children who are experiencing SLCD because they are not sufficiently trained in this area. The current study sets out to help address this type of inadvertent ignorance by potentially raising awareness of the issues involved.

A further reason for teachers' failure to identify SLCD in a population of children described as having SEBD is related to Cooper's (2001) observation that there is a greater than average incidence of SEBD in deprived urban areas. The language and communication skills of young children living in areas of deprivation have been identified by Law (2007) as causing concern. Indeed, language skills among young children in deprived areas have been targeted by the Sure

Start Scheme (DfES 2004) as a developmental priority. There may, therefore, be an expectation among teachers working in these areas that children's language and communication skills will not be richly developed. In consequence, teachers' expectations may impede their ability to identify children who experience difficulties with language and communication.

Practitioners may also fail to identify SLCD because their attention is focused on the category of SEN which has been identified by the child's statement of special educational need, for example SEBD. Indeed placing children in a school or unit for children described as having SEBD may be seen as confirmation that they have discrete difficulties stemming from atypical behaviour patterns and social or emotional difficulties. The effect of this authoritative categorisation may produce an un-questioning attitude among teachers and act as a dis-incentive for them to consider the child's potential additional needs. In this way teachers may fail to look beyond the child's overt behaviour and, as Cooper (2000) and Daniels (2000) recommend, to uncover additional learning needs. The current study is designed, in part to raise practitioner awareness of the language and communication needs of children described as having SEBD.

Having identified SEBD as a primary need the management of classroom behaviour may become an all consuming and the urgent task described by Benner, Nelson and Epstein (2002). In consequence teachers may feel unable to focus beyond the immediate demands of the children's behaviour or emotional turbulence. The current study explores relationships between language, communication and behaviour, with the objective of gaining insights into underlying processes. Greater understanding of what this study terms 'behaviour supportive learning' will focus attention on the entire learning process rather than the limiting demands of 'behaviour management', thus enabling a more holistic approach to the teaching/learning experience.



## LANGUAGE FOR LEARNING

Despite the evidence that language and communication difficulties often pass unrecognised by adults working with children described as having SEBD, Paul (2001) asserts that atypical language or communication skills can be identified by the functional implications for children in the settings in which they operate. The notion of language or communication skills which meet environmental demands of the classroom situation is of particular relevance. Here it is necessary to explore the idea that language does not serve a single function but is used in several ways within the educational setting. Griffith (2002) recalls Tough's (1977) framework for fostering children's language. This recognises both language for developing relationships, for example directing others or reporting on past experiences, as well as academically orientated language for learning, for example logical reasoning, predicting and anticipating. Both Griffith and Tough argue for greater awareness of the influence of settings on language and communication skills.

Fey, Catts and Larrivee (1995) explore and develop the notion of language which is multi-functional when they assert that resolution of conversational difficulties among young children who have SLCD is not an end to the problem. In recognition that language serves many functions in educational settings they suggest that intervention needs to spread through all domains of the child's language system. By this they mean that intervention not only needs to target the observable features of difficulty but to anticipate how these difficulties might impact upon social, emotional development and literacy skills. They consider that potential difficulties commonly encountered by children with SLCD, including, engaging with literacy tasks in school and allied social or relationship difficulties, should be fundamental to early attempts to establish conversational competence. Fey, Catts and Arrivee conclude that intervention programmes should foster skills which support effective interpersonal relationships, literacy, cognitive development, as well as the 'pure' communicative function of language. These aims complement those of the current study,

which seeks to gain insight into these interconnected areas and develop pedagogy.

Having discussed some of the complex features and relationships between two notional, non-normative groups of special educational need, that is SEBD and SLCD, the next section of this literature review goes on to develop ideas about how approaches to educating children with SEBD have evolved. Together these three sections of literature review form the foundation of the current study.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **APPROACHES TO THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN DESCRIBED AS HAVING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study is an investigation of language and communication styles used within the Early Years Department of a primary school for children described as having SEBD. As previously discussed, there is a strong association between SEBD and SLCD. However, Daniels (1999) suggests that the focus of concern for the education of children described as having SEBD has often been one of controlling inappropriate behaviour and stabilising periods of acceptable behaviour. He suggests that by focusing on issues concerned with behaviour, the children's difficulties with learning are minimised. Preceding chapters have reflected on the range and complexity of individual children's needs and identify with Daniels' (1999) position that behaviour management strategies can fail to take into account the full complexity of the children's needs. In order to develop the idea of meeting a rich and varied constellation of needs, pedagogy used within schools for children described as having SEBD is the focus of the current section of this study. The approaches to learning discussed in this section are not intended to provide a complete picture of all theoretical perspectives but they do reflect major influences experienced within the Early Years Department which is at the centre of this study.

### **BEHAVIOURAL APPROACHES**

Behavioural approaches stem from the theories of classical and operant conditioning, which acknowledge linear causal relationships and accent the reinforcing effects of rewards and punishers.

Cooper (2001a) states that behavioural approaches are frequently used in the education of children described as having SEBD, indeed, Cole, Visser and Upton (1998), observed points or token systems, described as following behavioural principles, in 70% of the schools they visited. To critically reflect on the work carried out in these schools, it is essential to consider the reasons why practice based on behavioural principles is so common and to assess its role in the education of children described as having SEBD.

Jones (2000) describes approaches based on behavioural principles, as emphasising behaviour analysis, measurement and the use of carefully planned programmes including behaviour modification. In some respects it is easy to understand the overwhelming use of interventions based on these strategies;

- procedures are superficially simple to explain, for example to an outside observer, or new member of staff.
- changes in behaviour can be demonstrated by referring to measurable, observable features
- the task of setting up a behaviour modification regime provides staff with positive, active intervention which helps to reduce the potential for feelings of incompetence or impotence, described by Cooper (2001).

Thus a behavioural approach can provide a structure for behaviour management which appears to be precise, simple to administer and has quantifiable outcomes. These features contrast with other intervention strategies which can appear vague and difficult to evaluate, for example the eco-systemic approach advocated by Cooper and Upton (1991), which will be explored later. A behavioural approach does, however, present a number of issues which can be difficult to justify for young children described as having SEBD.

Carey and Bourbon (2006) observe the outcomes of behavioural interventions for children

described as having chronic behaviour problems. The children in Carey and Bourbon's study had experienced behavioural techniques in order to attempt to modify their behaviour. Some children responded well to the behavioural interventions and their overtly inappropriate behaviours reduced. Other children experienced a gradual, but massive escalation in their violent and disturbed behaviour. Carey and Bourbon interpreted this increase in disturbing behaviour as evidence of counter-control. They state that counter-control had been identified as a potential weakness in a behavioural approach in Skinner's original work but was rarely addressed in planned interventions. In their discussion Carey and Bourbon demonstrate how vulnerable children repeatedly took control of situations by producing excessively violent outbursts. These outbursts became increasingly intense as additional interventions were applied. Carey and Bourbon suggested that by failing to fully assess these children's needs, clinical interventions had increased the level of violence and disturbed behaviour that they exhibited. Although evidence of counter-control may be rare Carey and Bourbon state that its impact is sufficient to demand consideration of other ways of working with these children.

Peagam (1995) observed other features of behavioural approaches used in primary classrooms which suggest that they are not always appropriate. Discussion with primary teachers, who were intent on building positive social communities within their classrooms, led Peagam to the conclusion that they experienced philosophical conflict with behavioural strategies. The person-centred approaches, which these teachers adopted, seemed to them, to be at odds with the precision which underpins behavioural approaches. Teachers complained of the meticulous and time consuming organisation of behaviourally-based programmes which led them to believe that they were impractical in primary classrooms. Lack of conviction may have also undermined attempts to implement behavioural strategies in the classroom, thus confirming the teachers' original opinions that such interventions were inappropriate. Supporting the teachers' preferences for relationship-

based regimes, Corpus and Lepper (2007) observe that performance directed praise can be an effective motivator when used in early years settings. It is not, however, intuitive reluctance to embrace behavioural approaches which is of primary concern for the current study, but rather more basic issues.

Linear relationships, like those encountered in classical and operant conditioning, are difficult to implement in classroom settings because of the number of extraneous variables in these rich social environments. Wheldall and Merrett (1998), for example cite behavioural principles as guiding their thinking but they are not averse to discussion of the personalities of the teachers they observed or the dynamic interactions which they meet in classroom settings. Indeed, personal relationships must be viewed as potentially influential in changing behaviour because without human interaction it would not be possible to implement targeted behaviour modification strategies. It is, therefore, evident that interventions which are apparently based on behavioural principles are not free standing and must be viewed as part of the environment in which they operate. Recognition of the influence of environment and social interaction are key aspects of the current study, which investigates communication and interaction embedded in a specific setting.

In addition to the problems involved in isolating behavioural approaches from relationships within the classroom, there are developmental concerns. These concerns make the reality of a behavioural approach questionable. Mitchell (1996) states that symbolism, that is the ability to act outside the present reality, is fundamental to language development. He says that young children initially use words to stand-for, or symbolise, objects or ideas which are part of their immediate reality.

Gradually, with maturity and experience, children use words to manipulate objects and ideas outside the immediate physical experience. In this way symbolism is viewed as basic to language development and the evolution of abstract thought. Mitchell suggests that children described as

having SLCD, which the current study recognises to be often associated with SEBD, may well have delayed or impaired symbolic development. It is, therefore, probable that some children, who are only beginning to work with the symbolic system that is language, find aspects of behavioural approaches difficult to understand. The inherent symbolism of a points system or token economy, based on behavioural principles, may be confusing and frustrating for very young children. For example, earning smiley face stickers as tangibles to symbolise appropriate behaviour may be too complex a concept for young children who are experiencing some difficulties with speech, language or communication. Improvements in the behaviour of these young children could be equally well attributed to the approbation they receive from significant adults. It is, therefore, difficult to ascribe improvements in behaviour to specific features of a behavioural approach, whilst unrecognised features of the environment could be equally pertinent.

Metcalf and Mischel (1999) suggest that very young children, or those with poor self esteem, may find delayed gratification difficult to accept and as a result can have problems working towards long term goals. Token systems are usually constructed in such a way that segments of appropriate, defined behaviour are rewarded, with smiley face stickers for example, which can later be exchanged for tangibles. There are, therefore, tensions between the concept of accumulating tokens and the child's desire for immediate gratification. In consequence, token systems which incorporate delayed rewards may not have strong motivational impact for young children or those with damaged self-esteem. Indeed, Lepper, Sethi, Daldin and Drake (1996), suggest that motivation for the youngest children in school is primarily found in the very process of education rather than more tangible rewards. They also observe that tangible rewards may have a substantial appeal when first used with primary aged children but this initial enthusiasm for earning rewards rapidly reduces over time. If, as this work suggests, extrinsic rewards do not provide ongoing motivation for young children then it may well be profitable to look elsewhere for means of enabling young children to

sustain acceptable behaviour.

Concern with the education of children described as having SEBD which highlights pedagogy and the entire educational process provides incentive to move beyond the linear relationships embodied in behavioural approaches. Further consideration will, therefore, be given to the role of the setting in which the children operate. Systemic approaches, therefore, form the focus of the next section of this report.

## **SYSTEMIC APPROACHES**

Hanson's (1995) work on general systems theory demonstrates the view that any interaction can not be considered in isolation from what precedes or follows it. She states that, "everything is related to everything", (p.63) so that all people and their behaviours are considered inter-related. Hanson suggests that in any system, perhaps a classroom, every individual affects and is affected by everyone else. This means that the system changes if, for example, a child is absent, or a new teacher comes in. Each event is individualised by its setting and the actions and reactions of its participants. In all cases, Hanson suggests, outcomes are reflections dependent on individual components which together compound and extend tiny interactions. By making changes to one part of a system all parts are subjected to change. She describes how small actions, or non-actions, can produce unanticipated, dramatic outcomes. For example, the intention of prohibition, in the United States of America at the beginning of the twentieth century, was to reduce alcohol consumption. However, scarcity of legal alcohol resulted in a lucrative black market and smuggling, which in turn fostered serious gang crime. The uncontrolled use of illegal alcohol also led to health risks and associated social problems. Rather than reducing alcohol use prohibition created new adverse phenomena. It can, therefore, be demonstrated that well intentioned intervention within the system failed to produce the intended outcomes and to some extent even exaggerated the original problems.



Using a systemic model Cooper and Upton (1990) conceived problem behaviour as a series of interlinked circles forming chains. In these behaviour chains adult and child behaviour precipitated response behaviours which initiated further cycles of behaviour. For example, when a supply teacher starts working with young children in a special school he or she may slightly change the morning greeting routine, perhaps by talking too little or too much to individual children. This tiny change in routine might upset a vulnerable child, who was tired because he hadn't slept well the previous evening. The child might start shouting at the teacher, saying that they were doing everything wrong. In turn, the unusual noise in the classroom could distress another child who may start crying. In an attempt to calm the class the supply teacher may raise their voice and inadvertently provoke greater insecurity among the children who were already becoming increasingly distressed. Each successive behaviour may happen so rapidly and apparently independently, that it would be difficult to link to preceding precipitating behaviours. As a result the observable outcome of having a new supply teacher could be a noisy and chaotic classroom. In this scenario adult and child behaviour becomes mutually dependant and potentially produces increasingly resistant cycles of inappropriate behaviour. The observable features of these cycles of inappropriate behaviours may appear to demonstrate the qualities of counter control previously referred to by Carey and Bourbon (2006). However, cycles of escalating behaviour viewed from a systemic perspective do not have the simple identifiable starting points associated with the linear patterns that were noted as fundamental to a behavioural approach. Instead Cooper and Upton suggest that there are no clear points of intervention but that a systemic approach offers a problem solving process which interrupts cycles of negative behaviour. In consequence simplistic linear interventions, which suggested adult selection and attempted control of specific behaviours, no longer provide an adequate way of working. Instead problem solving, reflection and subsequently negotiated changes within the system are seen to promote positive outcomes.

Cooper and Upton (1990), (1991) recognised that resolution was always located within the system surrounding the child, rather than within the child itself. For example, the tired and tetchy child who shouted at the supply teacher may have recently been prescribed new medication. Rather than looking to reduce similar outburst through direct intervention with the child, a practitioner using a systemic approach might discuss the side effects of the new medication with the paediatrician, in order to find a resolution. This approach, which acknowledges complex multi-layered difficulties, moved away from the previously held perception that difficulties stemmed from individual deficits in the child. Thus, with the onset of systemic interventions, there was potential to move away from a culture of blame, and negative connotations of the child's behaviour began to be replaced by a more optimistic view. The systemic approach embraced the idea of interactions between people that could be positively developed, at the same time it tended to question the previously held view that behaviour management should be used by adults to control children's inappropriate behaviour. Cooper and Upton (1991) acknowledged that this problem solving approach enabled adults, working collaboratively, to choose to change their own behaviour, so enhancing the functioning of the system. Of equal importance, it was acknowledged that children were also entitled to make choices about their behaviour and could not be compelled or coerced to change existing patterns.

Recognition that children and adults can be active partners in resolving difficulties is an important concept for the present study, with its focus on communication. The concept of reciprocal interaction within a setting of negotiated change is fundamental to a systemic approach to the education of children described as having SEBD. However, recognition of interactions as potential points of both difficulty and resolution is the antithesis of power and control which are embedded in the notion of 'behaviour management'. So, whilst this study investigates the key themes of interaction within a specific setting, communication and interpretation, that a systemic approach

exemplifies, it rejects the frequently used notion of behaviour management. Insights gained from reflection on systemic approaches do, however, contribute to the development of understanding of the nature of the task of supporting and sustaining appropriate behaviour. This view of developing acceptable behaviour, with its emphasis on collaborative practice, may be considered as the beginning of an interactive approach focusing on the social dynamic of situations. To develop further the concept of communication, which works to support emotional states, it is helpful to consider Rogers' (1977) model of person centred therapy.

## **GENUINE COMMUNICATION**

Rogers (1977) suggests that in therapeutic and teaching situations relationships and communication provide an underlying foundation for effective practice. He suggests that relationships and communication may be considered to develop in parallel, each feeding on the other. Communication which offers the opportunity to sensitively and respectfully explore ideas is the route by which relationships are fostered, whilst trusting relationships provide adults and children with the confidence to explore ideas and communicate their most deep-seated feelings. The interplay between communication and relationships is, therefore, central to social interactions including those which form the focus for investigation in the current study.

Whilst recognising that interdependent features, for example communication and relationships, may not be unravelled to provide neat causal relationships, Rogers believed that a basic trust in other human beings facilitates a nurturing environment where genuine communication could take place. In his terms, genuine communication encompasses verbal and non-verbal interactions which develop shared meaning at the very deepest levels. The challenge of expressing this depth of communication is enormous Thorne (2003) likens it to emotional or spiritual love where there is the potential to understand another person's experience, beyond the inadequacies of language. In order

to achieve this heightened awareness in communicative interactions, Rogers suggests that there are core conditions which are applicable to both person centred teaching and therapy. It is these attitudes, features and processes of genuine communication which are pertinent to the present study as it explores communication in the classroom setting.

Rogers (1977) identifies three primary features which are essential for genuine communication to take place; empathy or understanding; outright acceptance of the individual; and congruence or absolute honesty in the moment. Although defined as discrete elements these three attributes of genuine communication interact with each other. In each evolving communicative setting the subtleties of interaction mean that participants' empathy, acceptance and honesty are constantly mobile, reacting and re-adjusting to meet the changing demands of the situation. It is suggested by Rogers, that only when all three aspects are in perfect balance can genuine communication take place. From a systemic perspective, this might mean that with each communicative turn the essence of the three features have to adapt to changing circumstances.

Without overt unconditional acceptance and empathy for the child it would be difficult to engage in genuine communication, which Rogers suggests requires congruence between all participants. The honesty to reject inappropriate behaviour has to be balanced with reassurance that the child is respected and understood in its own right. Clear communication that it is the inappropriate behaviour and not the child which is being rejected is essential if genuine, honest communication is to be encouraged. Failure to acknowledge inappropriate behaviour is damaging to honest communication. Adults working within a Rogerian framework have a duty to clearly articulate limits and boundaries for acceptable behaviour. However, Rogers warns that in order to achieve genuine communication it is important to remember that honesty is not conceived as an excuse to vent personal frustrations and malice. It is an opportunity to make factual comments about feelings

and circumstances within the moment, some positive assertions within the current data can be viewed as fulfilling this function. In this way communication can grow rather than be stilted by material issues which are hidden or held back. These principles promote the identification of boundaries and reject inappropriate behaviour. They value the child and provide precise affirmation which underlines the notion of behaviour supportive learning, fundamental to the current study. It is the balance between honest and direct communication and unconditional acceptance and support, which Rogers says fosters an environment where genuine communication can take place and community members are enabled to grow. These practices and attitudes are in evidence within the Early Years Department at the centre of the current study.

In order to achieve the high level inter-person communication described by Rogers, there is need to develop listening skills. Such skills go far beyond hearing and interpreting sounds, but attempt to make sense of silence, pauses, unspoken meaning, actions and gestures that only hint at underlying meanings. All these skills, which take interpretation beyond the surface meaning of simple verbalisation, are characteristic requirements in the context of primary education for children described as having SEBD. Indeed, effective communication with young children who have potential language and communication needs may focus on Rogers' criteria for listening. In addition, the conversation analysis employed in the current study uses reciprocity and linguistic features to explore motivation and interaction which implies Rogerian style listening. In consequence, Rogers' insights, which stem from a counselling and psycho-therapeutic background, add depth to thoughtful interpretation of interactions based on linguistic features of discourse. Core communication between the adults and children investigated by the current study, therefore, recognises all of Rogers' key features of genuine communication and together the linguistic and psycho-therapeutic perspectives present an increasingly substantial foundation for this study.

## **INTEGRATION OF BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT AND OTHER ASPECTS OF LEARNING**

All insights into approaches to the education of children with SEBD that have been presented thus far have focused specifically on relieving difficulties. This study, however, is concerned with moving away from a deficit model of behaviour management towards a more inclusive model of behaviour supportive learning. This incorporates Mitchell's (1996) view that inappropriate behaviour and disturbed emotional states are the secondary indicators of a mismatch between the child and some aspect of its environment, or as Cooper (2001) states, indications of an unmet need. Curriculum and pedagogy are fundamental to an educational setting and, in consequence, it must be considered whether they enhance or handicap the child's educational experience. In his review of provision for children described as having SEBD, Cooper (2001b) identifies values, attitudes and skills, which he suggests are fundamental to the process of learning. Social, personal and academic skills are all cited as contributory to academic achievement. Moreover, these key attributes, which are fostered by effective provision, are equally applicable in all educational settings and not solely tools to transform the behaviour of children described as having SEBD. The findings of Daniels, Visser and Cole, (1999) also state that the successful schools for children with SEBD integrate children's cognitive and emotional development in their planning and teaching.

In the past Laslett (1977) and Wilson and Evans (1980), among others, recognised the potential importance of curriculum in the education of children described as having SEBD. Writing before the introduction of the National Curriculum, these authors gave some consideration to the content of the curriculum whilst pedagogy was treated more superficially. Teaching was referred to as either structured or informal but it was recommended that it should be carefully matched to the children's needs. However, ongoing interest in the therapeutic influence of curriculum was taken up by the Chief Inspector of Schools report, *Principles into Practice* (OFSTED, 1999) and affirmed by Bull

(1999), at the inaugural meeting of the National Association of EBD Schools. This report brought together observations made during OSTED inspections of schools for children with SEBD, in conjunction with focused interviews with staff. High quality teaching was consistently recognised as a feature of successful schools. This continues to be the case where the Steer Report (DfES, 2005) and HMCI of Schools OFSTED Annual Report (OFSTED, 2005) again cite high quality teaching as being associated with effective behaviour management. However, whilst it is possible to identify features of effective teaching it is doubtful that these can be distilled into a formula which is consistently effective in all circumstances.

The influential role of teaching aspects of language development, including reading, writing, collaborative and cooperative discourse between adults and children were emphasised by Bull as helpful in over-coming overt difficulties. Bull went on to suggest that teaching not only promoted academic achievement but also provided the foundation for self control, effective relationships and more appropriate behaviour. This echoes the views of Lepper, Sethi, Daldin and Drake (1996) who suggest that the process of education is a primary motivator for the youngest children in school. Engagement between academic achievement and changes in emotional and behavioural states takes the notion of acceptable or appropriate behaviour beyond the concept of behaviour management into that of behaviour supportive learning. It is interaction between cognition, social interaction and affect, mediated by language, which this study investigates as a potential route beyond behaviour management. Together, this evidence indicates the possibility of a powerful relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and children's behaviour, all of which requires further investigation. Adopting the view that the construction of new knowledge is a right for all children Daniels (2001b) argues that the education of children described as having SEBD should not be overly concerned with control of individuals' inappropriate behaviour but rather explore the notion of learning to learn. That is pedagogy which endorses and promotes behaviour supportive learning embedded

throughout the curriculum.

The next section of this review addresses aspects of social learning, which in the past have rarely been associated with behaviour management but which in the present study are considered pertinent to the concept of behaviour supportive learning.

## **SOCIAL LEARNING**

In order to contextualise pedagogy encountered in the current study, it is essential to be aware of the key contribution that Vygotsky (1978) has made. He believed that learning takes place within social settings where experienced learners initiate the less experienced. In these apprentice-like associations he noted that inexperienced learners were able to carry out tasks that would have proved impossible for them to negotiate unaided; this area of supported learning has been termed the zone of proximal development (ZPD). It is possible to conceive of this type of apprenticeship learning contributing to the development of a regime of behaviour supportive learning. However, considerable development of Vygotsky's ideas has made Post-Vygotskian thought even more pertinent to the education of children with SEBD.

Of relevance to the current study are Daniels' (2001a) views about how knowledge is transmitted between learners. He disputes the pure apprenticeship conception and suggests that skilled learners do not just pass on knowledge. If this were the case it would be difficult to understand how new knowledge and understanding developed, given that knowledge, in its existing form, would just be handed down through generations without any evolution. Instead, he suggests that knowledge is negotiated between skilled and less skilled learners, each contributing to the learning process. Such negotiated learning puts into question the notion of teaching and learning as two separate activities, which are mutually dependant. Rather it may be helpful to begin to think of teaching and learning as



fused activities, where participants are actively involved in both roles, not teachers or learners but all teachers and learners. This duality of role sits well within the principles which underline the present study, where adults are responsive to children's needs and open to sensitive reciprocity.

Maintaining Vygotsky's (1978) primary theme of social learning, Daniels (2001a) asserts that social, emotional and cognitive development are integrated and balanced. Thus, each developmental area is stimulated by activity in the others and in optimum circumstances a gradual mesh of knowledge, skills and understanding is consolidated. This cumulative process of collaborative learning enables constant adaptation as new learning situations are encountered. In effect, cognitive changes take place in problem solving situations which demand participants' active social and emotional engagement. Central to Daniels' (2001a) conception of interactive learning is that active mediation of the three developmental areas is facilitated by language. Interaction through language is the primary route by which feelings and ideas are communicated, challenged and advanced. So, in this model of learning, language and communication skills are seen as fundamental, in much the same way that they are central to the current study.

When language and communication skills are areas of need, as may be the case for many children described as having SEBD, the implications for teaching and learning must be profound. Indeed, the primary concern for teachers of children described as having SEBD is not resolving their overt behaviour difficulties, behaviour management, but rather promoting learning how to learn.

Certainly Cooper (2001b) and Daniels (2001b) recognise the complex interplay between social, emotional and cognitive development as a factor which could be used to sustain children susceptible to SEBD in their mainstream schools. The relationships between children's behaviour, language and communication skills and meaningful classroom interactions between adults and children are at the very core of this study and will provide the main stimulus for evolving discussion.

To assist in understanding of how language may be used to develop behaviour supportive learning this review examines the work of Mercer (2003a). He has continued to develop post-Vygotskian thought into the relationships between language, communication and learning and it is his contribution that forms the focus of the next section of this review.

## **INTER-THINKING**

Mercer (2003b) explores the relationship between language and cognition using short episodes of discourse. Conversation analysis enables him to discover patterns of behaviour which he systematically interprets. This method of investigation has much in common with the current study, which uses an adaptation of conversation analysis to identify patterns of behaviour which will provide insight into the setting observed. Discourse is demonstrated to be a collaborative process by which knowledge is shared and new knowledge constructed. Experienced learners do not just pass on their ideas but as they offer explanations or clarification to the less experienced members of the community they are able to consolidate or question their own ideas. With each turn in discourse, participants are able to recast, summarise or question the preceding utterances. In this way they gradually build up agreement which surmounts intellectual or practical problems they have encountered. Reciprocal turn taking in conversation can, therefore, challenge all participants, enabling them to create new knowledge and understanding together. In this way Mercer (2003b) is able to develop the notion of learners' active responsibility for their own learning.

The idea of meaning which is actively negotiated through conversation requires participation by all members of the community. The option of passive presence in discourse situations, where individuals fail to engage with conversation or offer superficial utterances which do not project into the cognitive domain can not be viewed as examples of inter-thinking. Only when the

communication process is equally active, demanding and extending for all participants can a real link between language and cognition be demonstrated. Communication which fulfils these criteria truly explores the partnership of negotiated meaning and the development of new knowledge or understanding. Partnership in learning may be applied to interactions between adults and children observed within the present study, but of equal interest, it may also be applied to discourse between adult participants in the study.

Mercer (2003a) suggests that engagement with ideas strengthens the foundation of group knowledge and understanding. He observes rapport between individuals based on shared history and understanding of the setting in which they are operating provides layers of supportive structure on which to embed new knowledge and understanding. He views language as the means by which communities identify themselves. At the same time, new conceptions, or resolutions to problems are conceived by discourse between community members who share a common interest or motivation. Participants verbally play back problems, either adding utterances to support and reinforce opinions or presenting comments which re-direct the conversation towards a solution. Mercer terms the points at which communicators mix and develop their ideas the intermental development zone. This shared construction of knowledge, which Mercer terms inter-thinking, is based on collaboration exemplified by language and communication. The concept of group discourse evolving in response to shared problem solving is a theme which has strong reverberations within the current study and will provide a basis for discussion of how practice evolves within a given setting.

Although most of Mercer's model of learning features interpretation of the dynamic act of speaking it would be facile to consider speaking in isolation from listening. Listening may be perceived as a passive activity but in Mercer's view this is certainly not the case. The ability to listen attentively, and clarify issues by questioning is central to the growth of understanding. Engagement with

listening is, therefore, crucial. However, for children experiencing SLCD attentive, active listening may present obstacles to accessing the curriculum. As a result it is imperative that pedagogy should recognise and attempt to support both speaking and listening in order to provide children described as having SEBD opportunity to learn how to learn, and facilitate a behaviour supportive environment.

## **DIALOGUE**

Mercer's (2004) notion of interthinking leads to reflection on how potential opportunities for using language to support learning in school are maximized. The nature of classroom discourse has occupied researchers over a number of years and forms the basis of the next section of this study.

Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast (1997) observed contrasting aspects of classroom discourse. The first they term monologic discourse, which is typified by the teacher's control of interactions. Such discourse follows a predetermined route which excludes children's questions and is based on non-authentic teacher questioning. Nystrand et al view 'non-authentic' questions as those to which the teacher has a previously identified, specific answer. Questioning sequences are routinely short following the, question, respond and feedback (QRF) pattern identified by Edwards and Westgate (1994). In consideration of this type of discourse Skidmore (2006) suggests that children's thinking is limited because they do not need to truly engage with learning but merely recount what they believe the teacher wants to hear. In addition, Alexander (2000) observed that children in classrooms with a dominant culture of monologic discourse were highly competitive. Children had to bid for turns to make verbal contributions with the consequence that the least secure children were content to disengage from this process. Some children were fearful of getting the answer wrong whilst others became passive participants. Adult utterances focused on performing regulatory or organisational functions with minimal evidence of utterances which challenged or

extended the children's leaning.

Skidmore (2004) also suggests that in classrooms which promoted monologic discourse adults were seen as controlling the supply of knowledge which needed to be transmitted to the children. Adults took on a 'knowing' role which limited children's active participation and true generation of learning. These features of discourse are compatible with Wells' (1999) view that monologic discourse seeks to maximize the social distance between adults and children maintaining the adult's position of authority. These aspects of monologic classroom discourse not only provide a contrast with dialogic discourse but also the collaborative interactions witnessed by the current study.

Alexander's (2000) work sets the scene for the development of dialogue in the classroom. In a comparative study Alexander considered classroom practice in five countries, India, Russia, France, England and the United States of America. In Russia and France he found spoken language was recognised and accepted as a primary route for thinking and learning. This contrasts to its role in English classrooms where, Alexander asserts, it is largely reduced to preparation for writing, which is seen as the real intellectual work. In those classrooms where dialogue was most effective children and adults were engaged in collaborative discourse where real questions, to which the adult did not know the answer, were common. Extended discourse was encouraged, ideas were explained, justified and challenged. Children's utterances, including further questions, were really considered by the teachers. Each contribution in the dialogue was incorporated into an ongoing search for mutual understanding between adults and children and between individual children and their peers. Children offered confident opinions which were valued by the teachers and listened to by other members of the class. In these settings children were generally eager to participate and were not inhibited by the thought of failure, indeed unexpected responses were taken up as opportunities for learning.

In contrast with minimally challenging feedback typical of monologic discourse where Alexander observed that children's utterances were regularly accepted with token praise, Wells (1999) states that adult feedback in dialogic classrooms is accurate and challenging. Adult utterances avoid ambiguity and often provoke further reflection. Both positive and negative feedback is treated as a route to further learning. Interactions are not prematurely ended but are extended and expanded, issues are exemplified and justified. In this way children are initiated into a system where they are encouraged to review their learning and actively build on it in the future.

Alexander recognises that children's active participation in generating discourse could potentially distract from the curricular focus of learning, leading to loose conversation rather than academic challenge. However, discourse was not allowed to lose direction but remained firmly focused through routines and structure maintained by adults and children working together and respecting each other's roles in this process. Teachers were observed to set flexible boundaries within the curriculum which helped children to explore novel ideas without detracting from primary curricular goals. This aspect of dialogue is of particular relevance to the current study where adults support children to achieve common understanding of social situations.

Within Alexander (2000) and Skidmore's (2006) notion of dialogue, the interaction of social, cognitive and affective aspects of learning are recognised. Of particular interest to the current study is the notion that dialogue promotes children's increased engagement with learning activities. Alexander suggests that the positive engagement of all participants promotes greater inclusivity. Teachers are encouraged to build on children's knowledge and understanding in a supportive way which recognises the learner's position. In consequence, less able children became more actively involved in their own learning. Throughout this process children are encouraged and supported by

both adults and peers in their collaborative efforts. Collaboration and building from the child's perspective are key issues for the current study.

In discussing dialogue Alexander (2000) recognises that it may not be the most effective pedagogy in all situations and that rote, repetition or QRF may be appropriate in some circumstances. Indeed, the identified features of dialogue are not intended as a formula to be rigidly applied but need to be sensitively adapted to individual situations. This can be demonstrated by reference to observed situations where discourse appears to fulfil all the criteria of dialogue but fails to support thinking, collaborative classrooms. This may be symptomatic of confused focus where shared clarity of purpose no longer applies. This notion of sensitive application of language and communication strategies also has resonance within the current study.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the original purposes of this study was to identify possible patterns of communicative behaviour used within the Early Years Department (EYD) of a primary school for children described as having SEBD. As the study evolved additional aims became evident, among these, the need to develop an increased understanding of a model of pedagogy that was used within the Early Years Department. Because interactions between adults and children formed the primary focus of the study this also suggested the route from which pedagogy might be explored. The work of Daniels (2001a), Mercer (2003b), Alexander (2008) and Skidmore (2006) promote models of learning which hold language and communicative processes at their core. In consequence, relationships between patterns of language and communication and their impact on learning and teaching provided the core elements on which the foundations of the design and methodological structure of the study developed. The current chapter reflects on the interactions between research questions, aims, setting and participants and the research process.

Murphy and Dingwall (2004) suggest that research questions and the purposes of enquiry influence the research strategies employed. Further, they assert that the data collected, how those data are analysed and interpreted are also subjected to the influence of research questions and methodologies. These layers of influence may initially appear to represent a hierarchical structure, where research questions dictate the methodological perspective adopted. In turn, methodology may seem to determine the methods used to collect data, whilst data collected dictate the means of analysis. In turn, these layers shape the outcomes of the study. However, as Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest in their discussion of educational ethnographic research, there can be much more interplay between the stages of developing a research methodology and design. They suggest that in



ethnographic studies the researcher's personal philosophical stance, practical skills and preferences engage with the research question and at each stage modify and develop the whole. Using this model to develop a research project suggests a dynamic evolving process in which interaction between the researcher and the topic being studied generate changes in theoretical perspectives. Progressive adaptation, stemming from engagement with the research process, means that aspects of the study can take on new or surprising importance and lead to unexpected outcomes. This developmental process has been fundamental to the present investigation. Curiosity about how language was used in everyday practice led to an evolving investigation which developed into exploration of the relationship between language and learning. With increasing depth of study the dynamic, reciprocal nature of language, communication and learning opened another level of meaning for this study, which originally only set out to search for patterns of interaction. Investigation of a community style of communication prompted consideration of how these patterns of language were generated and evolved. In turn, reflection on the generation of community styles of communication pointed to exploration of the power that communication exerted within the community. As a result this study has moved in unexpected directions with self perpetuating growth. As with all ethnographic study, the setting in which the study takes place is a primary consideration and so details of the setting and participants form the initial section of this chapter which considers the principles and processes involved.

## **THE SETTING OF THIS STUDY**

Robson (2003), Pole and Morrison (2003) and Gorard (2002b) warn of the dangers of generalising the findings of ethnographic studies which examine the detail of events within specific contexts. They recognise that the findings from any individual study cannot be directly transferred to other settings but, like Mercer (2003b), welcome precise and detailed descriptions which build up a body of knowledge. In this way ethnographic studies, similar to the current one, can become meaningful

beyond the setting initially investigated. As well as these methodological implications, setting is of particular relevance to studies which focus on the education of children described as having SEBD. Norwich, Cooper and Maras (2002) have argued that the behaviour and emotional responses of children described as having SEBD may vary according to the environment in which they are operating. They say that this may be particularly evident in school where children's behaviour can become more extreme in certain classes or unstructured situations, for example at playtimes. With this in mind the present study provides a detailed account of the features and characteristics of the setting investigated. The Early Years Department of a primary school for children described as having SEBD is the focus of the current study and is described in the following sections.

## **THE SCHOOL**

The school is thirty years old and purpose built as a primary school for children described as having SEBD. The school caters for the needs of 54 boys and girls within the age range of four to twelve years. All the children have statements of special educational need (SEN) which identify their primary need as SEBD. The children are grouped in six classes, three in the upper school and three in the Early Years Department. There are six class teachers, a head and deputy head teacher plus, a nursery nurse, three half-time teaching assistants (TA) plus four part-time teaching assistants who support children who have exceptional needs.

## **THE EARLY YEARS DEPARTMENT**

The Early Years Department has three classrooms joined by a communal activity area and adjacent outdoor play space. The school hall is used for PE lessons and large group activities. In common with Cole, Visser and Upton's (1998) study which observed a ratio of ten boys to one girl in under fifteen-year-olds educated in special schools for children with SEBD, there is a gender imbalance within the Department with only three girls and 24 boys. There are nine children in each class. At

the time data were collected classes had some overlapping age groups. In common with similar schools cited by Cole, Visser and Upton (1998), children do not join the school at one point in the year or at a specific age, thus presenting considerable problems in terms of organising classes in age bands. In addition, deliberate attempts are made to accommodate the children's differing developmental needs by providing supportive peer groups.

- Class One included children in their Reception Year, Year One, Two and Three.
- Class Two, the class which was the main focus of this study, included children in Year Two and Three.
- Class Three was mainly comprised of children in Year Three plus two children from Year Four.

In recognition of the limitations that small classes can impose on peer relationships and curricular challenges, opportunities for team teaching are exploited. This gives rise to children and adults moving between classes to accommodate children's particular learning needs. Several times a week the classes combine to provide children with experiences of large group work. In consequence, although data were mainly collected from Class Two there were occasions when children and adults from the other classes were observed during the process of data collection.

## **ADULT PARTICIPANTS**

Adults who participated in this study included,

- Two permanent, full time teachers who had worked together with the researcher in the Early Years Team for more than five years
- A supply teacher who had been working in the school for two terms
- A nursery nurse who had worked predominantly in Class One for four terms
- Three part-time teaching assistants, two of whom had worked as members of the Early Years

Team for more than five years

- Four part-time teaching assistants who provided extra support for individual children. One of these teaching assistants had worked as a member of the team for more than five years the others had joined the department during the previous three months
- A student nursery nurse on a one month placement in Class One
- A parent whose child had been in the school for two years
- The researcher is the leader of the Early Years Team and had worked in this setting for more than five years

The adult participants formed a close group of colleagues. Prior to the study we had developed a child centred approach to our work with a strong focus on individual learning. Two of the three permanent teachers in the Early Years Department had a particular interest in speech, language and communication. One of the teachers had previously worked in a language unit, whilst I had developed my interest in speech, language and communication through studying for a higher degree. In consequence, the team frequently discussed children's learning from the perspective of their language and communication needs. In addition, professional development opportunities grew out of the teachers' shared interest in language and communication. During the course of this project there were usually two, but occasionally three, adults working with each class.

Visitors to the study school regularly commented on characteristics of practice and relationships between members of the Early Years Team. The most frequently cited characteristics included consistent patterns of behaviour, style of language and communication, collaborative working and interchangeable roles. The pervasive influence of relationships within the team are potentially reflected in all aspects of this study. They are at the heart of the methodology selected which in turn influenced data collection, analysis and interpretation. At the point when the study began, data collection, analysis and interpretation were conceived as an extension of the observation, reflection

and discussion which routinely took place between members of the Early Years Team. The team actively encouraged questioning and criticism of practice in the pursuit of professional growth. This spirit of enquiry meant that team members developed shared respect for the observed record of their work because it was the evidence which enabled them to challenge and extend their existing practice. Discussion of observed events was routinely undertaken in an environment which enabled negotiated interpretation of meaning between team members. The methodology selected for the current study, therefore, mirrored this philosophy enabling insiders to develop understanding of everyday events through reflexivity. Vaughan (2004) recognises research, similar to the current project, as being built on texts constructed from ordinary events in which participants' experiences are brought together and examined by the researcher.

## **CHILD PARTICIPANTS**

In common with other notional, non-normative groups, the child participants in this study did not display common core features or characteristics and so it is advantageous to reflect on the features and characteristics of this particular group of children. As previously stated, Tomlinson (1982) recognised reciprocity in the relationship between school and child population. She suggested that the school they attend defines children's needs and in turn the children define the school's function. This relationship is clearly identified in the study school's admissions policy which requires children to have a statement, or draft statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) which is expected to,

“specify the type of provision available in the school”.

School Admissions Policy (2001)

Additionally the admissions policy suggests a need for compatibility between the child's individual needs and those of the school population as a whole. These requirements reflect Tomlinson's view that the child's needs and the school's function can be mutually defining.

This relationship between individuals and the setting in which they operate can be bi-directional and mutually reinforcing, as explained in the review of literature. Therefore, to establish the parameters of this specific population of children the school's admission policy must be considered in conjunction with children's needs. Ideally these would be examined simultaneously but for clarity it is proposed to introduce the admissions policy and then consider the children's needs whilst referring back to specific features of the policy.

The school's admissions policy cites The Scope of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, paragraph 3, page 7 from Circular 9/94, The Education of Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (DfE 1994a) as a definition of SEBD. This paragraph provides insight into the nature of SEBD including the complex range of difficulties that the term encompasses, which has been discussed in depth in the preceding chapter. DfE Circular 9/94 recognises SEBD as a continuum of associated difficulties which may occur in specific environments, with varying degrees of severity, over a range of time frames. However, SEBD will always be,

“persistent ...and constitute learning difficulties.”

P7 DfE 1994a

In recognition of the diversity of need identified by DfE Circular 9/94 the school offers to support children with a broad range of difficulties that can affect their learning. Although Frederickson and Cline (2002) recognise that social, emotional and behaviour difficulties co-exist alongside other SENs, e.g. sensory or intellectual impairment the children attending the study school are required to demonstrate SEBD as a primary difficulty not arising from severe, moderate or specific learning difficulties. This principle seems uncomplicated but in practice it is very difficult to decide how children's needs interact and where dominant needs lie. Stevenson's (1996) exploration of the relationship between behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties suggests that discrimination

between causal and responsive relationships is complex and does not assume a single uni-directional pattern. He suggests that learning difficulties sometimes promote behaviour difficulties but behaviour difficulties can also promote learning difficulties. Equally the two can operate independently or in parallel. This ambiguity leads to the conclusion that although social, emotional and behavioural difficulties may be an observable priority, they are not easily distinguished as a primary difficulty. Admission to the school requires children to demonstrate intellectual ability within the range typically found in mainstream schools.

To describe the child participants from the Early Years Department, evidence was collected from the children's statements of SEN (DfE 1994b). Parents/carers, social workers, paediatricians, general practitioners, health visitors, child psychiatrists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, clinical and educational psychologists and teachers offered observations and opinions about the nature of the children's needs which were submitted as appendices to statements of SEN. Each contribution reflected the particular professional focus or experience of the writer and together they provide a valuable resource. Statements of SEN identify individual needs but when used together they can begin to provide a description of the features and characteristics of the group of children in the school. When a feature of children's development was identified in more than one statement of SEN these comments were used to construct a group description. Table 1. represents a collation of common features expressed in the children's statements of SEN. This evidence is presented in this way for ease of interpretation rather than to demonstrate trends. Such small numbers prevent generalised interpretation, data are intended to suggest common characteristics of the group. Within the cluster of needs identified in Table 1. individual children's needs are unique. Each child displays a specific combination of characteristics. In addition each area of difficulty is expressed in qualitatively unique ways. For example, 'shouting out' for Charles involves swearing or abusive language.

**Table one**

Name	L	S	D	H	T1	M	T2	R	J	C	A
Yr. of admission	R	R	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Physical aggression	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Verbal aggression	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Disruptive	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Impulsive	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Shouts out	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Distractible /poor concentration	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Weak listening skills	*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*
Difficulty following directions	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*
Difficulty co-operating with adults/peers	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Communication difficulty	*	*		*							*
Language difficulty	*	*	*	*		*					
Speech difficulty	*		*	*		*					
Delayed onset of speech/lang.	*	*	*	*		*	NA	NA		NA	*
Reading difficulty	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Academic delay	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Reluctant writer Fine motor difficulty	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Spatial difficulty										*	*
Visual impairment					*	*					*
Hearing impairment		*					*				?

Descriptors of children's needs. Source: statements of SEN.

Observation suggests that this 'shouting out' may be used in an attempt to assert his status among



his peers. In contrast Tyler 'shouts out' comments about his pets, in the manner of a much younger child. He appears to have an insecure and immature grasp of the social use of language but is desperate to talk to an adult about issues that are of urgent interest to him. Both these children are described as 'shouting out' but observation suggests that their behaviour does not fulfil a common function. At the surface level children in this sample population may appear to share common observable features, for example 'shouting out', but there seem to be fundamental individual differences in function and presentation of these features.

Variation in the fine balance between areas of development which interact and either support or distort each other is fundamental to the individual child's needs and defies group identity. For example, Leanne and Harold both have identified difficulties relating to speech and fine motor control. For Harold the physical task of writing is a problem. In the past his poorly developed pincer grip has meant that picking up small toys has been difficult for him. He also has a recognised speech difficulty which makes what he says difficult to understand. Together these apparently minor difficulties contribute to a pattern of unacceptable behaviour. Harold found it difficult to choose and pick up toys as quickly as most children of his age. He also found it difficult to verbalise his wants and needs effectively. As a result experience taught him to grab at toys and fiercely defend his choice. Being the eldest child in a chaotic household further exacerbated Harold's functional difficulties. His sometimes grubby and unkempt appearance linked with limited awareness of accepted polite social behaviour exaggerated the impact of relatively small deviations from typical development. As a result he has been described as displaying impulsive and aggressive behaviour. In contrast Leanne is a well cared for child who is able to echo socially polite greetings but also has fine motor and speech difficulties. Leanne's short stature and appealing smile mean that she is often assumed to be very much younger than her chronological age. Adults have tended to accept and accommodate her immature speech and fine

motor skills. Her fierce outbursts have been likened to temper tantrums of younger children. These characteristics of younger children have diverted adult attention away from considerable comprehension difficulties and resulting frustrated communication. Although both these children share speech and fine motor difficulties allied to SEBD the impact on their development has been markedly different. Similar patterns could be cited for other children in this study where disrupted developmental features interact to produce different individual difficulties.

Features identified in the children's statements of SEN also demonstrate the confusions that stem from notional, non-normative categorisation of dimensional difficulties. At this stage it is important to be clear that all the descriptors used in this section of the study were found in the statements of children described as having SEBD as primary needs. However, similarities between SEBD and SLCD can be observed.

Relationships between SEBD and SLCD have received considerable attention in the literature review which supports this study but it is possible to illustrate the overlap between features of SEBD and SLCD by reference to behaviours observed in appendices to statements of SEN. Donald, for example, has been described as displaying distractable behaviour. He finds sustaining purposeful activity very difficult, tends to be impulsive, rushing from place to place. Together with loud outbursts of vocalisation these behaviours have been described as very disruptive and were considered to suggest he had social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. He was described as not following directions, being unco-operative and uninterested in stories. Observation also suggested that Donald had difficulty using and applying language. He rarely used more than two-word utterances. Utterances were frequently difficult to understand because of sound system difficulties and his limited ability to convey meaning. Although these features may be attributable to SEBD

they are also indicative of SLCD.

Mercer (2003b) and Alexander (2008) recognise language is a primary route for all learning. With this in mind a limited understanding of spoken language would contribute to a lack of interest in stories and an unwillingness to carry out directions, whilst inability to engage effectively in a verbal community could give the appearance of a child who was unco-operative. In turn weak relationships with adults and peers reinforced by limited speech, language and communication skills could produce fleeting engagement with activities presented. Once this pattern of isolation from the communicative environment in a mainstream classroom was established, Donald had little support to help him monitor the acceptability of his behaviour. His behaviour was perceived as disruptive, impulsive, inappropriate and further isolated him. This pattern of unproductive behaviour was rapidly reinforced by adults' feelings of ineffectiveness as they failed to involve Donald in classroom activities. The mismatch between adult and child expectations noted by Bennathan and Boxall (2000) was established and resulted in cycles of increasingly inappropriate behaviour. As a consequence unacceptable behaviour was cited as a priority for Donald although it was recognised that his speech, language and communication needs were contributing to his overall difficulties.

Toby presented language difficulties of a different type which were not easily distinguished from SEBD. As a young child he had sound system difficulties which had been recognised and received some support from the speech and language therapy service. However, his extremely violent behaviour had prevented a thorough language assessment. As a five-year-old he repeatedly shrieked, "what you mean" in a high pitched and insistent tone. His veneer of spoken language made it seem implausible that this disruptive and irritating verbalisation carried any real meaning. In consequence it was treated as unacceptable behaviour rather than a genuine request for explanation.

Toby's young parents were known to the police, mental health and social services because they had long standing difficulties of their own. The problems they had in providing an adequate caring and nurturing environment distracted attention from Toby's receptive language difficulty. In consequence his difficulties were considered to cluster within the range of SEBD and to be firmly associated with abusing and neglectful parenting. Further investigation could have revealed an equally complex tangle of speech, language and communication needs.

To conclude, this group of children appear to display features which are common among children described as having SEBD and SLCD. However the combination of needs is as unique and individual as the children themselves and constantly eludes a group identity.

## **AIMS OF THE STUDY**

Yates (1997) and Malin (2003) argue that there is no single methodological approach which is more effective than any other, but rather different approaches are suited to different kinds of research questions. The question, or area of study is, therefore, the point from which methodology can be seen to first emerge. To identify the methodological stance that the current study employs it is first necessary to state precisely the research questions, define the fundamental aims of the study and to examine ways of thinking about them.

As stated above, the research questions seemed to alter and grow as the study evolved.

The apparent simplicity of searching for patterns of language and communication used between adults and children in the Early Years Department of a school for children described as having SEBD was soon over taken by the desire to explain identified patterns. I was led to question the implications of language and communication patterns for teaching, learning and children's behaviour through investigation of the nature of reciprocity within the data. In the course of the

study curiosity about how community styles of communication evolved and their functions within the community became a major theme, but at the outset this was not apparent.

These aims can be viewed from two perspectives, the first takes a practical stance and the second focuses on theoretical issues. Practical experience initially provoked my curiosity to identify and increase understanding of classroom communicative practices. Interrogation and evaluation of language and communication led to the development of theoretical perspectives which returned to the classroom setting and led me to re-examine and question the practical issues which were stimulating evolving theoretical perspectives. In this way interplay between practical everyday experiences and theoretical perspectives developed and presented a fusion of aims. The aims can be envisaged as two sides of a coin, each presenting a different face of the same object and each supporting the other. It is, therefore, appropriate to present the aims of the study in terms of identifying language and communication patterns used within the Early Years Department, and to critically interrogate and evaluate data. Reflection on communication within a specific setting can, therefore, enable enhanced understanding of how language and communication patterns impact on the children's behaviour and learning. In Robson's (1998) terms, this is an exploratory study intended to identify features of behaviour in a specific situation.

The current study might be said to exemplify what Fitzgibbon (2000) terms passive research, that is research which does not actively initiate situations or try to alter behaviour but follows, records and interprets the pattern of spontaneous events. At the beginning of this study I was uncertain about what I would find, but wanted to begin to understand the interactions that were taking place within the Early Years Department. I made efforts not to change the day to day routines of the Early Years Department and just record interactions between adults and children. My interpretations of the events I recorded led to completely unexpected aspects of pedagogy. Accepting Pole and

Morrison's (2003) view that some methodological approaches may appear to display common features, the exploratory and wide ranging nature of the present study suggests three approaches which share common features. These are naturalistic enquiry, grounded theory and ethnography. The following section sets out the position of this study in relation to these three methodological approaches.

## **NATURALISTIC ENQUIRY AND ETHNOGRAPHY**

The current study took an exploratory stance and focused on a search for meaning in day to day interactions. At the outset I was curious to understand more about the communicative practices that were taking place within the Early Years Department, but I did not have a clear view of the direction that the study would take. This is consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) views that naturalistic enquiry is flexible, allowing the research focus to gradually emerge. More recently, Robson (2003) stated that naturalistic enquiry tries not to disturb the natural state of affairs but looks for meaning in the detail of everyday events. This has been succinctly described by Van Maanen (1995) as the process of making the familiar strange, that is, analysing and interpreting ordinary or common events to extract previously unrecognised meaning from them. He contrasts naturalistic enquiry with other research methodologies which he suggests attempt to make the strange familiar that is, applying novel conceptualisations to unfamiliar experiences. This study, by analysing ordinary classroom interactions, therefore, belongs in the realm of naturalistic enquiry.

Pole and Morrison (2003) state that ethnography builds on the adaptable foundation of pure naturalistic enquiry. They also assert that an ethnographic approach involves first hand interaction within a specific setting in order to discover the experience of the individuals within that setting. Malin (2003) describes this process as striving to establish an interpretation of a particular reality, by extracting meaning from detailed and careful observation and analysis of ordinary situations. In

the case of the current study the researcher and the setting being investigated were fundamentally linked, I am the Early Years Team leader and have a desire to understand the nature of interactions happening within the department in order to further develop effective practice. Ethnography is not, however, loose observation of common daily events, Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest that in order to be effective it always has characteristics which promote rigorous research methodology. These characteristics include focus on an entire range of social interaction within a specific setting where a variety of research methods are used to interpret and understand what occurs. In the case of the current study, the focus was interactions between adults and children engaged in specific communicative activities in a particular setting. An ethnographic approach was, therefore, ideally suited to the study.

Walford (2007) states that participants in ethnographic studies hold knowledge about themselves and the situations they encounter which is not available to other groups. He asserts that focused reflection on individuals operating in specific situations is the real value of ethnological studies. Indeed, Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest that underlying meaning and intricacies of the setting are of greater relevance than attempts to generalise findings. Gorard (2002b) concurs with this view when he states that the temptation to generalise the findings of ethnographic studies demonstrates misplaced confidence and misunderstanding of their value. The current study was originally undertaken to promote professional development within the Early Years Department. Findings were, therefore, only considered to be pertinent to that setting and not suitable for generalisation. However, recognition that findings are not generalisable does not preclude the possibility of using them to add depth and build on current knowledge. A significant value of the study is that it provides insights into communication between adults and children in a primary school for children described as having SEBD. No other research has been found that investigates detailed communication in a similar setting. In consequence, this study provides a unique contribution to

current knowledge and understanding of communication. Geertz's (1973) 'webs of significant meaning', cited by Malin (2003), suggest that individual small scale studies, similar to the current one, are nonetheless important and do contribute to an appreciation of wider issues. Studies which develop common themes, for example communication in learning settings, can, therefore, gradually bring about recognition of patterns of meaning which can provide insights into wider issues. This is certainly Mercer's (2003b) opinion when he affirms the need for research into more examples of discourse used for learning. He is not only interested in generating a greater quantity of evidence but also variety in the locations and situations from which it is collected in order to create a depth of understanding which single studies can not achieve. The current study is part of this movement to provide in-depth individual insights into discrete aspects of interaction which together challenge and develop understanding of the processes involved in language for learning. The thirst for more examples of language, communication and interaction within a range of settings is demonstrated by the on-line Languse community ([language-bounces@hum.aau.dk](mailto:language-bounces@hum.aau.dk)) of academic researchers from across the world who use these contacts to obtain access to a dearth of transcribed data.

## **GROUNDING THEORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY**

From the outset of this project I made every effort to adopt an open minded approach to data and how they could be interpreted, thus suggesting the potential for ideas to be gradually moulded by data. This is a similar perspective to that adopted by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their conceptualisation of grounded theory as a research methodology. They suggest that grounded theory accepts the unexpected and, rather than being constrained by methodological criteria, it is flexible and allows for changes in direction. In consequence, theoretical perspectives develop from, or are grounded in the data, and the researcher's unconfined familiarity with the data enables new ideas to evolve. Each time I reviewed the data they revealed new dimensions which suggested fresh ways of interpreting them. For example, the notion that there were laminated utterances which might build



into extended patterns of interaction was not something I searched for. These patterns emerged as I re-read the data time-and-again. Both grounded theory and ethnography can be conceived as journeys of discovery, where there is some uncertainty about what the study involves or where it will lead. In consequence both methodologies are ideally suited to exploratory investigations, similar to the current one.

Studies which use grounded theory methodology mould methods to serve their purposes, as can be the case with ethnographic studies. However, the current study used observation techniques as its primary means of data collection, thus recognising Murphy and Dingwall's (2004) notion of minimal "trains of transference". That is, a method of data collection which subjects data to a minimum of re-interpretation and thus potentially sustains their original intended meaning. In contrast, Murphy and Dingwall conceive that there are more opportunities for transformation of meaning using interview techniques. This is because the interviewee has to extract meaning from the interviewer's questions then respond. The interviewer again has to extract meaning from the responses, thus providing two opportunities for meaning to be misinterpreted or distorted. In order to rigorously examine observational data, the current study supplemented and challenged observations using conversations and field notes, which are discussed in the following chapter on page 120.

The parallels between ethnography and grounded theory have promoted plentiful discussion. Indeed, Pole and Morrison (2003) recognise that the two methodologies have much in common but suggest that the area where there is most divergence is at the point of analysis and concept development. Grounded theory approaches the development of concepts from the perspective of the researcher's ability to become steeped in the data so that saturation permits the generation of new ideas. In contrast, although ethnography would not discount the immersion approach it would not

overlook other means of generating theory. The current study placed an emphasis on familiarity with the data which, with repeated review, generated the theoretical perspectives that were arrived at. It is recognised that part of the reflective process was influenced by my long-term personal role within the Early Years Department, for example on re-reading sequences of discourse I always had a strong sense of the people involved and other interactions that they had been part of. In other settings, where I would have had less personal involvement, it is probable that recorded interviews and conversations would have been more influential in the process of interpreting data and drawing conclusions. My personal involvement is, therefore, viewed as both a strength and a weakness of the current study. As a strength, my involvement provided me with insights which may have been less obvious to other observers. As a weaknesses, my role in the Early Years Department made it difficult to view interactions with new eyes.

## **LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY**

Analysis is a critical feature of ethnographic studies and Pole and Morrison (2003) propose that rich text descriptions are the base in which concepts are grounded. Interpretation of data is negotiated and takes account of the views of those involved in the project, although, as Malin (2003) observes, they do not necessarily match them. Multi-directional relationships between research questions, methodology and analysis are acknowledged by Pole and Morrison (2003). They suggest that each of these aspects of a research project exerts powerful influences on how choices are made. The questions posed by the current study not only suggest the appropriateness of an ethnographic approach but are also deeply embedded in the exploration of language. Further, linguistic ethnography is identified by Skidmore (2006) as having particular relevance for studies which adopt a post-Vygotskian stance, as is the case with the current study.

The post-Vygotskian view of learning which this study recognises has been described by Daniels

(2001a) as the engagement between social, emotional and cognitive development mediated through language. This means that cognitive changes are achieved through social interactions using language. It has been suggested by Maybin (2003) that much of the research involving language and learning in classrooms has focused on discrete interaction between teachers and children involved in specific types of learning. She questions how far these interactions acknowledge the variety of social and cultural settings which exist within the classroom and the effect that these have on the range of learning that takes place. She argues that neglecting the range of social and contextual experiences taking place within classroom interactions our understanding of the process of learning is restricted.

Creese (2008) describes linguistic ethnography as the mutual shaping of language and social life. Linguistic ethnographic analysis can, therefore, draw on both verbal content and the powerful contextual and social inter-play involved in interactions between teachers and children. By seeking to illuminate the child's perspective and highlight potential misunderstandings Maybin (2009) states that linguistic ethnography gives a wider access to the process of learning. Careful analysis of linguistic and contextual features may, therefore, enable insights into engagements between social, emotional and cognitive aspects of interaction and provide the tools to explore the inter-related experience of learning. In consequence, linguistic ethnography is chosen as the medium for analysis in the current study.

Bezemer (2007) says that linguistic ethnography uses techniques which recognise that participants in each unique setting in which communication is generated interpret utterances through their expectations and assumptions of that setting. Rampton, Tusting, Maybin, Barwell, Creese, and Lytra (2004) suggest that communication is shaped by the setting and the setting is shaped by communication. In order to gain a full appreciation of discourse within context the interplay between language and participants within a particular setting must be given due consideration.

Blending linguistic and ethnographic perspectives gives a more complete interpretation of the setting being studied than either ethnography or linguistics are able to provide individually. In this way ethnographic skills used to interpret the social setting are balanced with perceptions gained from analysis of the verbal evidence.

The current investigation is a focused, thick exploration of specific activity in the natural setting of the classroom, similar to those discussed by Walford (2007). Large quantities of data reflecting communicative activity which were unpredictable at the outset were collected. These data were interpreted using linguistic ethnography which required reflection on how language and communication were used and the impact interactions had on children's learning. Interpretation of the data was considered to be an evolving process flexibly determined through familiarity with them. This approach to data and their analysis was, as Malin (2003) suggests, labour intensive and time consuming, producing a rich descriptive text from which concepts were drawn.

Gorard (2002a) suggests that ethnographic study requires defensibility of design, rigour of conduct and credibility of claims. The need to question decisions at each stage of the research design is, therefore, fundamental to an ethnographic approach and forms the focus of the next section of this chapter.

## **LIMITATIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC ENQUIRY**

The strength of ethnographic enquiry lies in adaptability and flexibility, ability to focus on detail and recognition of a range of interpretation and outcomes which are specific to the setting studied. It would be easy to argue that these broad boundaries for investigation could encourage ill defined or diffuse attitudes to research projects which do not foster rigour and lead to fundamental weakness.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), however, are clear that each element of a programme of naturalistic

enquiry influences and operates on other elements building a strong and cohesive structure. Any inconsistency in the framework, the data or their interpretation could, therefore, undermine or distort the entire project. This is the reason why the present study takes care to explain how its structure has developed. Yin (1989) states that identification of possible discontinuity or weakness in collection, analysis or interpretation of the data are fundamental to the conscientious use of naturalistic studies.

Rigorous qualitative study requires clear and precise reporting of events, data collection and analysis. In this way replica studies can, as far as possible repeat processes and reassess findings, but even under these circumstances Pole and Morrison (2003) accept that outcomes will be as unique as each individual situation. As well as acknowledging the researcher's subjective perspective, the current study also seeks to counter balance subjectivity by reporting contrary indicators. Only by presenting a balanced assessment can strength of argument be demonstrated and evaluated by others. The thesis provides details of the circumstances which provoked the research, a comprehensive account of how data were collected and analysed and careful discussion of findings, as well as providing insights into my role and relationships within the study.

Respect for the individuality of naturalistic enquiry is at the centre of ethnographic study. Pole and Morrison (2003) state that the individuality which is at the heart of effective ethnographic study may be interpreted as loose thinking which does not maintain the supposed rigour of quantitative or positivistic research approaches. In the past the apparent objectivity of positivist research methodologies was highly acclaimed and, Robson (2003) suggests, were used in preference to the anti-positivist approach being currently discussed. In consequence, Robson says ethnographic research has been criticised as being careless, self-satisfied and amateurish. Pole and Morrison (2003) dispense with these accusations by stating that the purpose of ethnographic study is not to

provide objective data generated from a positivist perspective but rather to record and explore the detailed life of a section of social interaction. This is precisely the perspective of the current study which focused on investigating and understanding specific interactions, during one week, within a particular setting. The aims of one methodology do not apply to the other and differences in practices and outcomes should be respected as unique, complementary qualities and not treated as if one was of greater value than the other.

Ethnography depends on developing relationships between researcher, location and human beings interacting within the location, so that the researcher and participants begin to negotiate meaning from sensitive evolution of ideas. At all stages of their evolving relationships members of the Early Years Team developed personal and professional skills and competencies which enabled their relationships to grow. The role of researcher, in this study, enabled me to begin to question some of the opinions that I had previously held in the role of Early Years Team leader, for example, that the prevalent communication style observed within the Early Years Department displayed unique features which could be interpreted in a number of ways. Therefore, although the researcher and adult participants had strong relationships before the project started, as it evolved these relationships were enriched and developed through conversations about their shared interest in children's learning. Malin (2003) suggests that outcomes of ethnographic research may, therefore be dependent on interpersonal skills as well as academic skills.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **DESIGN AND METHOD**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter has reflected on the overall concept of this study. Now consideration will be given to the means by which it was conducted in more practical terms. The challenge for data collection that this study presented was to amass a detailed, accurate, retrievable discourse sample which provided the potential for analysis and interpretation. A valid sample of unstructured spontaneous discourse between adults and children was required in order to see whether there were patterns of language and communication and to assess their implications for teaching and learning. The greater the quantity of discourse available the more likely it was to reveal a range of interactive behaviours, thus providing the potential to identify patterns within the data. To ensure that any patterns identified were valid the data also needed to contain details of verbal, non-verbal and some para-linguistic features all embedded in the setting. The sample also had to provide extended, continuous, unstructured discourse because as Sacks (1992) states, it is not possible to anticipate when a sequence of utterances begin or end until after discourse is concluded. In other words, the boundaries of a communication sequence can only be established in retrospect. In the case of the current study, the boundaries for each sequence of discourse were only identified at the point where the process of transcription began. As a result, the quantity of discourse had to be sufficient to accommodate unpredictable utterances and avoid curtailing discourse sequences. The following section describes how I undertook to achieve these objectives and the practical issues I encountered.

## **UNSTRUCTURED OBSERVATION**

To satisfy the aim of understanding naturally occurring phenomena, unstructured observation techniques were considered to be the most appropriate means of data collection. All observations were, therefore, made within a natural setting where no attempts were made to secure specific behaviours or manipulate situations. Robson (2003) states that this type of unstructured observation provides the observer with freedom to select events without the constraints of a closely pre-planned schedule. As a result it is well suited to exploratory studies. In the development phase of the study unstructured observation did not seem at all daunting. Familiarity with the setting, routines, people and patterns of behaviour within the Early Years Department led me to believe that I would be able to intuitively select appropriate events to observe. Over time I began to reconsider this assumption and changes in my thinking will be discussed in the course of this thesis.

My experience of working in the Early Years Department suggested that most interactions involved limited numbers of people and were often slow to evolve. Within the classroom of nine children and two or three adults there were rarely more than one or two interactions operating at any one time. Single interactions frequently provided the central focus for everyone in the room. Indeed, it was not unusual for there to be periods of time when there was no overt verbal communication. Data collection, therefore, focused on the dominant interactions taking place. As my awareness of the research process developed I began to recognise how many assumptions had initially been made during the data collection phase. For example, I took it for granted that adults adopted interchangeable roles to highlight specific functions of communication. So rather than focusing data collection specifically on the interactions between teacher and children there were occasions when the lead teacher modelled attending and listening to key communications made by the teaching assistant or a supporting teacher.



## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

This study terms the approach used as ‘participant observation’. However, as Robson (2003) suggests, the term ‘participant observation’ can include a range of observer involvement which varies with the setting being studied. He asserts that in all cases the observer seeks to understand the community being observed but involvement can range from actually sharing and helping to produce day to day experiences to a more distant and restricted role. Participant observation in the current study aimed to reproduce what Vaughan (2004) terms ‘an involved spectator’ role. I recognised that I could not disappear within the classroom or cast aside my role as head of department. As far as possible I wanted to present myself as a silent observer. I made meticulous efforts not to take an active part in either the interactions being observed or any other classroom activities. To do this I remained focused on the task of observation. By apparently ignoring participants I attempted to reduce my impact on the events being observed.

Within the department adults routinely stepped back from their primary teaching role and withdrew from interaction with the children in order to conduct short observation sessions. These observations formed the basis of teaching and learning programmes but, more importantly for the current project, established a pattern of behaviour where not all adults in the classroom were available to the children. Observation was, therefore, routine and fundamental to the work in the Early Years Department and usually caused little disruption to typical classroom activities. However, as Malin (2003) asserts, observers always precipitate some changes in participants’ behaviour. Indeed, it would be impossible for a participant observer to enter a situation without affecting some aspects of behaviour.

Familiarity with the participants and the setting, allied with a routine observation procedure may have reduced the impact of observation on the behaviour of adult and child participants in this

study. However, all adult participants were aware that data collection for this study was not part of a routine observation. The study was initially funded by the Teacher Training Agency, Teacher Research Grant Fund. This funding marked the project as out-of-the-ordinary, as did the additional advantage of academic supervision. Both of these features may have altered adult participants' perceptions of the observation process and set data collection apart from more typical observation sessions undertaken in the department. Child participants were not informed that the observation period was anything outside usual classroom practice.

Discussion following observation sessions indicated that adult participants wanted to show themselves in a good light and 'help' with the project. They stated that observation periods began with them thinking very carefully about their interactions with the children. However, once the children arrived in the classroom the adult participants said that they were unable to focus on anything other than working with the children. Robson (2003) suggests that research participants commonly state that they want to please observers and provide them with 'good' data. In addition, he notes that it is not uncommon for participants to recognise a desire to show themselves in a good light. Robson has called this the social desirability response bias. Both these features may be reflected in the data collected. However, as Croll (1986) states, researchers may legitimately expect that atypical behaviour, on the part of participants, will reduce over time. In the case of the current study, it was anticipated that intense observation over an extended period would reduce atypical behaviour.

## **OBSERVER SKILLS**

Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest that successful ethnographic study is largely dependent on researcher observation skills. Experience had provided me with basic observation skills which have been developed further during the course of the current study. Malin (2003) recognises sustained

concentration as important for those engaged in accurate observation. Initially there were several occasions when I experienced lapses in concentration. I sometimes found myself becoming engrossed in aspects of children's learning, which were outside the remit of the study, and had to redirect my attention. Sustained concentration was a particular problem towards the end of long data collection sessions which contained few interactions. However, throughout the data collection process I was highly aware that I was in a privileged position of having time to make sustained and detailed observations. My understanding of resourcing within the school meant that I knew that this observation period was unlikely to be repeated so I could not afford to waste the opportunity.

## **VIDEO OBSERVATION**

The accurate and detailed observation of rapidly occurring interactions which did not have easily predictable starting or ending points was too complex for a single observer to record manually, therefore, video recording was used to collect data. Video recording provided an ideal means of retrieving data and enabled reflective examination and analysis. As with all observation techniques, it presented some limitations. The intrusiveness of the observer is sometimes seen as a disadvantage, however, for the present study, the opportunity to review data outweighed all other disadvantages. Indeed, the children in the Early Years Department were so used to having video cameras in their classrooms that there was little evidence to suggest that it greatly disrupted their typical behaviour. During the course of the study three children overtly referred to the camera. On each occasion the children returned to their classroom tasks following very brief explanations by adults within the room. All adult participants expressed a certain initial discomfort when working with the camera and some appeared slightly tense at the beginning of observation sessions. However, once they became engrossed in their work, all but one adult participant said that they forgot about the camera.

Limitations of the technical equipment, which was old, cumbersome and heavy presented some problems. For example, the use of a tripod reduced spontaneous movement and flexibility of observations but enabled long observation periods without undue physical discomfort or the distractability associated with discomfort. Using a view finder limited the operator's peripheral vision, so it was sometimes difficult to record the entirety of interactions which moved at speed from one area of the classroom to another. Resultant failure to record complete interactions was occasionally frustrating, but the quality and quantity of recorded material was sufficient for the purposes of the current study. A further difficulty related to the technical equipment, which did not emerge until the process of data analysis was under-way, was fluctuating sound and light quality. This prevented detailed analysis of some sections of the recorded data which were later discarded.

## **OBSERVATION TIMETABLE**

It was initially intended to record interactions in one class in the Early Years Department for an entire week. There were four primary reasons for taking this course of action;

- A week provided opportunities to observe a wide range of social and educational settings
- A week had the potential to be long enough to set up routines which would gradually reduce observer intrusion, thus providing data typical of the setting
- One of the early years teachers was keen to participate in the study and so her class provided the focus for most of the observation
- Teacher Training Agency (TTA) Teacher Research Grant (TRG) funding was available to provide supply teacher cover for one week. This provided a time frame which could not be negotiated. At the end of the week I had to return to my usual teaching role within the department.

Prior to the planned week the Early Years Team discussed the observation timetable and agreed that

some limitations should be applied.

- No filming which was potentially detrimental to the welfare of the participants should take place. This is discussed in some detail in the section of this report devoted to ethical considerations on page 132.
- Poor sound reproduction meant that filming could not take place in crowded or noisy locations, for example the dining room and playground
- The study aimed to focus on typical interactions so data gathered on an atypical day were deemed to be outside the remit of the study.

In consequence, no data were collected during assemblies, lunch times, playtimes, on the day of the Christmas sale or when the welfare of participants was at risk. Video observation took place at all other times during the observation week.

## **INTERVIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS**

Observation was the primary means of data collection used in this study, however, in order to increase understanding of the primary data it was supplemented by data generated by interview, conversation and the use of a research diary. During this study the possibility that unplanned and informal conversations contributed to the depth of understanding of the context was not recognised. Talking to colleagues was a habit that largely passed unrecognised and unrecorded. Organising the observation routine over a single week meant that there was no time to begin formal analysis of the data during that week and as a result conversations with colleagues were limited to anecdotal discussions about individual children's responses to particular situations. These conversations were similar to those the Early Years Team would have had at the end of every other school day. The major difference during the observation week was that at least two adults were able to offer perspectives on aspects of individual children's behaviour, thus providing the possibility for richer discussion than normal. In line with Mercer's (2003a) views it is, therefore, probable that discussion

at this time promoted group perceptions of teaching and learning, some of which are likely to be embedded in this study. Without detailed notes it is unfortunately not possible to explore this notion in retrospect. In consequence no claims can be made for these conversations. Equally, the casual conversations that occurred as a result of the process of observation were not recorded and so cannot be used as part of the data base of this study. Semi- structured interviews were, however, planned to supplement the observations.

Semi-structured interviews can take on a range of characteristics but for the purposes of the current study, they were defined as planned discussions which took place within a specific time frame. The notion of a planned discussion was used to differentiate semi-structured interviews from casual conversations. Discussion was initiated with focused questions or comments, but not confined by these questions so that issues which seem relevant to the participants could be explored. During the study two semi-structured interviews were planned. The first was a brief discussion during a departmental meeting. All the teacher participants were present at this meeting, as were three of the teaching assistants. The purposes of this interview were to discuss the aims of the study, establish criteria for data collection and achieve informed consent from adult participants. At this stage the aim of the study was simply identified as developing understanding of language use within the department. Agreed criteria for data collection have been identified in the previous section of this report on page 119. The ethical issues encountered in relation to data collection and informed consent are discussed in a separate section on page 134.

## **RESEARCH DIARY**

The value of a research diary can not be over stated and, as Vaughan (2004) suggests, it became a multi-functional constant companion. In particular, notes were made at the end of video observation sessions so that details of the settings in which interactions took place were recorded. Some of this

detail was lost on camera and could have been neglected or forgotten if notes had not been taken. In this way events were clarified. In addition, the reflection process began with these brief diary notes. For example, they prompted questions about patterns of communication, including whether members of the team use exactly the same phrase or maintain meaning but adapt vocabulary. In this way the research diary refined the observation process. Thus, the research diary provided a record of how the process of observation and immersion in the setting and data enabled the gradual evolution of ideas. However, because the setting was so familiar to me I failed to record aspects which might otherwise have seemed worthy of comment. This failure to record the detail of events, particularly conversations with colleagues, has restricted my ability to present alternative views. Failure to record routine conversations, which often mirrored my own views, means that I can not look back to find out the opinion of a particular teacher or teaching assistant, or even whether my own opinions about specific events have changed over time. This is a weakness of the current study, which if I was to repeat it I would attempt to rectify.

Reflection on the data collected in the study was intriguing. The more I became involved with the data the more I wanted to look at it in greater depth but I felt too close to it. In order to see it with fresh eyes I had to look beyond the familiar to begin to encounter some of my previously unrecognised assumptions. The process of beginning to understand those things that I took for granted was a route I wanted to follow and to do this I needed a different setting to compare my experience with. Despite what visitors to the Department had told me, at this stage I was convinced that practice in the Early Years Department was neither unusual nor exceptional. To challenge these assumptions I decided to explore another setting which displayed some features similar to the Early Years Department.

Although the children in the Early Years Department are described as having SEBD, for those of us

working with them their over whelming characteristic is that they are very young children struggling to make sense of the environment in which they find themselves. The most easily accessible early years setting was a reception class in a mainstream school. At this point I secured DfES Best Practice Research Scholarship Funding (2000) and spent the equivalent of one week as a participant observer in a mainstream Reception Class. Initially, I thought that I needed to collect comparative data. However, once I began making observation in the Reception Class I discovered that it was not the data but the process of data collection which was increasingly illuminating. In a novel setting with participants I didn't know well I encountered new awareness of the issues of reliability, validity and ethical considerations.

## **FURTHER INSIGHTS INTO RESEARCH METHODS**

My expectation to generate data that were readily comparable with those previously collected in the Early Years Department led me to try and replicate the methods used as precisely as possible. In effect determine the reliability of my methods. That is, to collect data using unstructured participant observation techniques supplemented by interviews and research diary notes. The change of setting however, meant that I developed a greater awareness of the research process. This stemmed from working in an unfamiliar setting with new routines and unknown participants. Indeed it was the new and unexpected nature of the setting which helped to bring my study of interaction within the Early Years Department into focus.

Robson (2003) suggests that the process of clarification and gradual refinement of data collection is a common experience for researchers involved in participant observation. He states that initially participant observers frequently encounter feelings of overwhelming and chaotic proportions, which with time, reveal pattern, structure and regularity. During the initial data collection phase I was not aware of being overwhelmed by the situation. This was, perhaps, because I was so familiar with the



Early Years Department and had spent over a year thinking about how the project could be achieved and subconsciously adapting my ideas. I began the supplementary observation with the expectation that it would be easy to identify parallels between the two settings. In reality this was not the case, the differences were as confusing and disorientating as Robson (2003) suggested. I began to realise that if I was finding it difficult to duplicate the processes I had used in the Early Years Department the problem of providing other researchers with sufficient information to reliably duplicate my study would be enormous. In particular, I began to recognise the amount of contextual detail I took for granted in the Early Years Department and the length of time it would take to gain the same familiarity with another setting.

Initially I found the number and range of interactions taking place within the classroom overwhelming. Even when the children were all taking part in a teacher led activity several interactions were often taking place simultaneously. For example, the teacher might be setting tasks for the class as well as commenting on individual children's behaviour, whilst at the same time the teaching assistant was verbally supporting an individual child and groups of two or three children were talking about the content of the lesson or directing peers to attend.

As I became more familiar with the mainstream Reception Class I gradually teased out those aspects of complex interactions which were of particular interest to me. I began to plan more structured observations based on previous experiences in the setting. Selection of observation events was an evolving process in which specific adults or children and their interactions were identified and targeted for more detailed observation. In addition I became proficient at making rapid judgements about which interactions were most likely to contribute to the overall pattern of the study. Experience of observation in the mainstream Reception Class enabled me to concur with Robson's view that participant observation can initially be a confusing and chaotic process. I also

came to recognise part of the subconscious planning that I had undertaken prior to observation in the Early Years Department. Perhaps more importantly, I saw the real value of testing my ideas against participants views and then evaluating them against the video evidence in order to evaluate the validity of my data.

Working in the Reception Class also made me aware of my limited observation experience, which was all based within my own work setting. Transferring my learning to a new setting I realised how tolerant my own colleagues were. In the Reception Class I felt intrusive, unskilled and conspicuous because I was not a part of typical classroom routines there. In consequence, I had to evolve new ways of working in the role of observer which enabled me to begin to understand interactions without the very close involvement I had in the Early Years Department. Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest that positive trusting relationships are basic to ethnographic study and key to this is the researcher's ability to sensitively balance relationships with the participants and a respect for the search for knowledge and understanding. The potential tensions between these two essential aspects of the current study are discussed in the section concerned with ethical issues on page 126.

Beyond participant observation I introduced video observation to the mainstream Reception Class. Neither the staff nor children were used to working in a classroom where video observation was taking place. Initially the children were interested in the video camera and wanted to know what I was doing. I let those interested look through the view finder and told them that I had, "come to see the good things you do". This appeared to be sufficient explanation and the children's intermittent interest in the video camera steadily decreased over the period of observation. The children in the Reception Class appeared as equally at ease as the children in the Early Years Department, who were familiar with video observation. This endorsed my view that the children's responses to video observation were probably consistent with their typical behaviour. However, interactions between

adults and children might be considered less reliable.

Adults working in the Reception Class all stated that they felt some diffidence about the use of a video camera. However, once they became engrossed in their work most paid minimal attention to the camera. Teaching assistants, who joined the Reception Class for half an hour to help with reading, said that they found it difficult to relax during observation sessions. The response of full time members of staff in the Reception Class appeared to mirror the responses of established members of the Early Years Team. Given a little time, adults who were fully involved with the children were able to forget that video observation was taking place. This suggested that adult uncertainty during the phase when they were aware of the video observation could produce unreliable, atypical interactions between them and the children.

Judging when my observations related to typical classroom interactions had been an automatic response in my own work setting, but in the Reception Class it was far more difficult. I used discussion with the fulltime staff to guide my judgements, and evaluate their validity. However, participant bias was an ever present possibility. Because I was a visitor to the school it seemed probable that staff there would wish me to leave with a good impression of their work and their school. As a result there was always the probability that the interactions I observed were atypical of the setting. However, over time I was able to accept Wilcox's (2008) suggestion that it is possible to select valid data based on prior knowledge. Uncertainty about quality of interactions in the Reception Class subsided and I began to accept them as typical of the setting, but I did not arrive at the certainty that I felt about interactions in the Early Years Department.

The process of defining boundaries for data collection in the Reception Class followed the same procedure as in the Early Years Department. Conversation with the teacher and full-time teaching

assistant enabled us to set parameters which almost mirrored those previously set by the Early Years Team. We agreed that data collection would be restricted if adults believed that,

- it was detrimental to the well being of participants
- potential participants had not given informed consent
- sound and light levels would limit viable observation
- observed events were atypical, for example during the school OFSTED inspection.

As with the data collection in the Early Years Department, observations were enhanced with interviews and conversations. Conversations are defined by this study as spontaneous occurrences that happened randomly during the mornings when I was observing whilst interviews were time-planned. Interviews were semi-structured, introductory topics were identified in order to ease the way into discussion. However, discussion was not limited to these topics, thus providing opportunity for participants to develop themes and introduce their own ideas. Three interview sessions took place during the course of the project in the Reception Class. The Reception Class teaching assistant supported teacher comments, rather than initiating topics. Established teaching assistants in the Early Years Department initiated topics and responded to discussion by both agreeing and disagreeing with other team members. It is not possible to say whether these differences in teaching assistants' behaviour reflected the degree of security they felt within the two teams or the differing quality of relationship they had with me personally. However, more time was spent in discussion of the ethical issues around individual rights within the mainstream setting. To ensure spontaneity of response and relaxed discussion no notes were made during the sessions but brief records of the discussion were made afterwards. This was quite different from the less restrained recording that took place during interviews with the Early Years Team, where I felt able to make notes intermittently without unsettling participants. I used the combination of discussion, observation and reflection cited by Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) to evaluate the

process of data collection and the potential validity of resultant data.

I wanted an understanding of the mainstream setting so asked about children's birth dates, ages, gender, SEN status and some insights into family circumstances, for example siblings within the school. I also collected some details about the school from its most recent OFSTED report. In addition, I asked about the teacher's personal philosophy of education, career and aspirations for the class. Together these details provided the basis from which an understanding of the setting was constructed. The process of becoming familiar with an unknown setting helped me to recognise the kind of information I would need to supply in order for other readers to gain a similar concept of the Early Years Department.

Gorard (2002a) suggests that ethnographic study encourages the use of many research methods, some of which are unplanned, in order to gain as full a picture of the research context as possible. Informal conversations were an essential component which helped me to develop a shared understanding of some of the issues which were operating in the Reception Class and to build relationships with the adult participants. The benefits of informal conversation can be simply exemplified; when I commented on how effectively routines and finger plays can be used to draw the children together and gain their attention the teacher replied that she saw these activities as primary aids to the intellectual process. From this conversation I concluded that, although similar activities were used in both settings it would have been erroneous to ascribe similar functions to them without discussing my ideas with the participants. Casual conversations with the participants provided opportunities to ask questions and seek clarification which in all other roles would be difficult or unacceptable.

Informal conversation happened at the beginning and end of every observation session as well as

occasional brief exchanges during the morning. Beginning of session discussion invariably focused on any special circumstances operating that day, for example, when children were off school, when the class was going to the local Chinese take away, or when staff absences meant that extra children (outside the study group) joined the class. End of session conversation usually focused on some aspect of what had been observed by either the teacher or researcher. These discussions were fleeting because we both had obligations to be else-where. There were also ethical tensions about what we could say to each other. These are discussed in the ethics section of this report on page 126. Time was a key factor which limited conversation and interviews. As a result of these conversations with the Reception Class teacher I came to see the full value of similar conversations that I had been having with the Early Years Team throughout the observation period for this study. Not only did adult participants and researcher pass on factual information, they began to share the meanings that informed interpretation and analysis. These conversations subtly guided the “rich text” which informed the outcome of this study.

The research diary I kept whilst working in the Reception Class took on a similar importance to the one I kept in the Early Years Department. However, I was far more circumspect about making notes in front of participants with whom I was just beginning to develop a relationship. I was also, perhaps, more thorough in my use of the diary because I did not expect to be able to easily recall incidents and ideas in a project which was outside my daily routine and growing beyond my original expectations. Following each session in the mainstream school I set aside time for reflection before I did anything else, when ideas and questions were fresh in my mind, for example, whether adult roles within the Reception Class determined communication strategies more than they appeared to in the Early Years Department. These were also the times when I was most likely to develop ideas about how to begin to structure observations. For example, following my first observation of the reading team interacting with the children I was curious to understand variations

in communication patterns and wanted to accommodate this in my observation schedule. As my ideas developed and I began to draw links between the two settings I recorded this process in my research diary. As my ideas evolved I was constantly posing questions and searching for ways of answering them including, developing data collection and interpretation. I relied on my diary as an aide memoir which supplemented and embellished the video recording.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The BERA (2004) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research suggest that respect for participants' welfare should be a primary consideration. The current study interprets this as meaning that participants have the right to minimal discomfort or distress, informed consent, withdrawal from participation at any time, awareness of how data and outcomes will be used, as well as assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Concern for the participants' well being has, however, also to be balanced with respect for the data, their interpretation and the search for understanding. Each of these issues was given careful consideration and influenced how the current study was constructed and carried out.

## **MINIMAL DISCOMFORT OR DISTRESS**

Robson (2003) states that some subjects are beyond ethical research because the damage they may cause participants' physical, psychological or spiritual well being is potentially greater than the benefits of the research. However, he recommends that reflection on potential hazards can enable the researcher to formulate questions and strategies in ways that respect the rights and dignity of participants, thus causing them minimal harm. The current project, with its focus on communication strategies used with children described as having SEBD, has massive potential to cause distress to participants. Some inappropriate behaviours displayed by children with SEBD have the potential to cause extreme embarrassment to the children, their parents and teachers. Norwich, Cooper and

Maras (2002) state that SEBD can appear to de-skill teachers making them look and feel ineffective. With this in mind, a good deal of thought preceded the formulation of the central research question. The study, therefore, emphasises how language and communication are used to support and sustain appropriate behaviour rather than examining the resolution of difficult or potentially embarrassing events. Focusing this investigation on skilful support for children's appropriate behaviour was the first step to minimise any potential threat to adults' self esteem or diminish the children, whilst at the same time maintaining the value of the investigation.

In the course of the study I worked to maintain the trust and confidence of participants. Initial contacts and early discussions offered them reassurance that the investigation was going to be a positive non-threatening experience for all of us. Debriefing, including ongoing conversation and planned interviews were also essential elements which were used to achieve sustained mutual respect and understanding about the work being carried out. During the data collection phase it was easy to sustain open and honest communication with the participants because of our regular contact. However, once data collection was complete the slow pace of transcription and data analysis made it difficult for some members of the Early Years Team to sustain more than polite interest. Staff movement also meant that the study lost its relevance for other members of the team as their work took them in different directions. In spite of this diffusion of active interest I maintain my intention to provide participants with reports and conclusions of the study.

## **VIDEO OBSERVATION**

Video observation has been discussed from the perspective of data collection but it also has ethical implications. I was aware of the potentially invasive nature of video observation and in consequence determined to negotiate an agreed code of conduct. Prior to data gathering it was agreed that if any of the adults believed observation caused distress or negative changes in the children's behaviour



then I would withdraw. Although these limitations may have reduced the range and richness of observable interactions, the children's well being was the first priority and the data collection was justifiably second. I was also aware that adult participants had some natural misgivings about video observation. At the outset all adult participants stated that they felt uncomfortable about it but were willing to participate as long I was sensitive to their reservations. One adult remained diffident about being filmed but insisted that she wanted to contribute to the discussions surrounding the project. This adult was not included in the video material. There were two occasions when I redirected observations in order to avoid recording short episodes of inappropriate behaviour by a child. On both occasions this was done in an attempt to reduce the pressure that the class teacher may have felt at having an observer in her classroom. In addition, my withdrawal allowed the teacher to engage with the child without the potential for any additional distractions.

The use of the video observation data was a clear concern for all participants. Together we decided that video evidence should only be used for training purposes in the schools directly involved. I also acknowledged the participants' right to view such data before it was shared with colleagues, or to withdraw their permission to share it with their colleagues if they felt it appropriate. However, I retained the right to draw on this evidence and use transcripts to report the outcomes of the project to a wider audience at any time in the future. I undertook to ensure that reports would be fair, accurate, relevant and not harmful or embarrassing to the participants whilst maintaining the integrity of the findings.

## **THE RIGHT TO ANONYMITY**

In part, the right to anonymity may be assumed to resolve some of the potential discomfort participants may inadvertently experience during the reporting process. However, Malin (2003) recognises that there are difficulties involved in securing participant anonymity in small scale

ethnographic studies. Certainly the specialised nature of the provision investigated potentially makes the school easily identifiable even though it is not named. The small number of adults involved also makes it relatively easy for individuals to recognise themselves or for other people to identify them, even though participants' names have all been changed. Children's anonymity was of particular concern because public discussion of the nature of their difficulties had the potential to cause them, or their parents, emotional discomfort. As a result children's names have been changed and relationships between age and date of birth are not provided.

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

The concept of informed consent was initially, briefly, negotiated within the Early Years Team before funding was available. However, once funding became available the detail of informed consent was discussed. The Early Years Team had an ongoing interest in patterns of interaction experienced in the department. In consequence, when the opportunity arose to undertake a small scale research project members of the team were enthusiastic. I was concerned that newer members of the team should not feel compelled to participate by the enthusiasm of their peers. So, at the planning stage, each adult member of the Early Years Team individually discussed their part in the project in order to ensure that they were clear about their rights and my responsibilities to them.

The situation for teaching assistants was recognised as being potentially difficult because the teachers were willing to work with the project and could have inadvertently assumed that the assistants would participate. Robson (2003) recognised the potential for authority figures, for example team leaders, to enforce participation. At the time I felt confident that the established pattern of open communication within the Early Years Team allowed members who had reservations about the process, in particular video observation, to make their feeling explicit. In retrospect, this may have been misguided confidence. I was so eager to embark on the project and the majority of

the team were actively supportive that I may have failed to notice signs of reluctance among the less confident team members. I paid more attention to the sensitivities of the teaching assistants in the Reception Class and actively sought their opinions, recognised and respected the kindness and tolerance that they showed me. I was more aware of their potential to feel powerless to withdraw from the project than I had been of the feelings of teaching assistants in the Early Years Department, who may have felt even less in control of the situation because I was their line manager. I have since discussed this dilemma with one of the Early Years Team teaching assistants and she says, for her part it wasn't a problem, but for the others I have no way of knowing.

Vaughan (2004) states that the motivations of participants in any research project are frequently unclear and may include issues like the desire to please line managers, unwillingness to refuse a request, desire for professional advancement, plus intellectual or professional curiosity or the opportunity to work collaboratively with researchers. It was much easier to identify some of the pressures on Reception Class staff than those I knew so well in my own team. The mainstream school was preparing for an OFSTED inspection at a time when research and evidence based practice, inclusion and collaboration between mainstream and special schools were all high on the political agenda. So involvement in the study might have seemed beneficial to the school. All of these factors could have been influential in prompting the Reception Class staff to participate. It was made clear to all participants that agreement to participate in the study did not mean that they may not withdraw from the project at any point.

To gain the informed consent of children is, as David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) state, an exceptionally difficult area. The children in the Early Years Department were both very young and some were developmentally immature. Therefore, it was decided that informed consent should be an issue for parents and carers rather than the children themselves. On entry to the special school

parents and carers were informed that video observation was a routine part of the school practice, used to support staff training and develop specific techniques for working with individual children. As a result my head teacher suggested that the current investigation was an extension of the school's common practice and did not require additional consent from the parents. Wiles, Heath and Crow (2005) suggest that such setting specific judgements are common to similar social research projects and require careful consideration in order to make a link between ethical procedures and practical considerations. In similar situations Robson (2003) suggests that the ethical dilemma is reduced if the child participants are not asked to do anything outside their normal behaviour. Observing typical interaction was the basis of the current study and so Robson's view would tend to support this as being ethical.

Careful consideration of how to provide informed consent for the children in the Reception Class demonstrated to me some of the problems that could arise when undertaking research with very young children. Parents and carers were specifically asked for written permission for their children to participate. Here the issue of parents who shared parental responsibility but did not live together had to be carefully negotiated. The research was described as teacher training. The mainstream head was very supportive and provided assurances that none of the video material would be used by anyone other than myself and members of the mainstream school staff. In addition, the head teacher offered to discuss data collection procedures with individual parents should they need further reassurance about the project. All parents of children in the Reception Class agreed to allow their children to participate; no one withdrew during the course of the study.

## **CONFLICTING ROLES**

Within the Early Years Department there were minimal conflicts between my role as head of department and researcher, for example when I found myself reflecting on motivation or

achievement of individual children, rather than data collection. Any potential conflict within the roles was not realised. This may have been because this project originated as an extension of the reflective practice that all members of the Department routinely engaged in. However, the situation in the Reception Class was slightly different. In that setting I had to completely separate my research role from my teaching role. This was because the Reception Class teacher frequently wanted to talk about the behaviour of specific children and the problems they were experiencing. The Local Authority Behaviour Support Service was already working with these children and I had to be very clear that commenting on their development was outside my remit. This perceived conflict between my roles alerted me to potential ways in which a participant observer could easily become involved in the community they were studying resulting in changes in their pre-defined role.

This section has explored key areas of ethical consideration and established the primary regard that the current study has for individuals, knowledge and the quality of the research. However, it is recognised that ethical issues pervade the field of educational research and are ongoing throughout any study.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **VALIDITY OF THE DATA**

Robson's (2003) notion that data analysis influences the design and methods used is recognised by the current study. However, to provide clarity in this report the process of data selection and analysis is discussed in the following section. Interaction between how the data are identified, analysed and the outcomes of the study are of fundamental concern. That is to say, if the data are flawed then any findings will be at least equally flawed. The internal validity of these data is, therefore, a critical matter which permeates the entire study. It is, therefore, essential to put in place

systems to repeatedly evaluate the selection, analysis and use of data as the study progresses. It is notoriously difficult to evaluate the validity of ethnological data because as, Barwell (2003) observes this is a highly personal interpretation of a unique setting. In order to help overcome these difficulties I used LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggestion that it is wise to consider data selection from several different perspectives.

During the observation and data selection phase of this study I followed Walford's (2007) view that the participants' perspectives offer unique and valuable insights. In consequence, I discussed the criteria for events to be included in the data with members of the Early Years Team. Through discussion, the team explored differing perceptions of the features of interactions in which adults used language and communication strategies to support or sustain children's appropriate behaviour. Defining such behaviour was highly challenging and it became evident that the consensus was, appropriate behaviour varied from child to child and from situation to situation. The notion of supporting or sustaining appropriate behaviour was equally difficult to define. However, reflection on the contextual and linguistic features of the video evidence combined with some discussion, provided the parameters for selection of data. Transcribed events all involve a potential breakdown in communication. These potential breakdowns are indicated when contextual features suggest adults and children have differing expectations of a situation, for example children talking when teachers were trying to explain an activity; children making surprising responses, for example running during a hopping race; children failing to respond; when pauses in conversations or verbalisations suggest the need for linguistic repair. When adults intervened in potential breakdowns in interaction and communication was repaired, this is described as supporting or sustaining appropriate behaviour.

Although Wilcox (2008) says that careful selection of data based on prior knowledge of a setting

can produce acceptable data, I was uneasy about taking this route. This was because I was aware of the potential for my usual role in the Early Years Department to influence my judgements. In order to balance my diffidence in taking on this task and to produce a rigorous study which was meaningful to members of the Early Years Team I saw the selection of data as a major collaborative issue. It would have been impractical, because of the time involved, for the Early Years Team to work through the video evidence together to identify each individual event. In consequence, I used collaborative video reflection with my colleagues to focus our discussions and assist me in the process of selecting events for transcription. Following extended informal conversations within the team we watched a ten minute sample of video material. Independently team members identified events which they considered demonstrated adults supporting or sustaining children's appropriate behaviour. Team members discussed the events that had been identified. Although there was a high level of agreement there were also occasions when we arrived at the conclusion that it was not possible to absolutely determine the meaning of another person's actions and intentions. The discussion process enabled me to confidently identify interactions which fulfilled the criteria of adults using language to support or sustain children's appropriate behaviour. In addition, discussion with participants provided increased awareness of their perspectives which, Nurani (2008) states is one of the critical features in evaluating the validity of ethnographic studies.

As a result of careful examination of the video evidence I identified 266 events which were transcribed and are the data on which this study rests. In Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers' (2002) terms I considered this quantity of data an appropriate sample, that is sufficient to provide a view of all aspects of adults using language to support or sustain children's appropriate behaviour. Throughout this process I was tentative about my decision making and examined my own attitudes towards the data. However, I am reassured by Nightingale and Cromby (1999) who recognise the difficulties that distancing oneself from the data pose for ethnographic researchers. Although my

discussions with members of the Early Years Team, collaborative viewing of the video evidence, my prior knowledge of the setting and reflexive attitude cannot ensure the validity of my data, Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest that together these features do provide rigorous controls for validity to be evaluated. In addition, I recognise the necessity, discussed by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) of maintaining active interaction between the data and its analysis throughout the research process. In consequence, at each stage of this study I re-appraise the validity of my decisions.

## TRANSCRIPTION

Events were transcribed in chronological sequence. Each event was numbered. The first number indicates the video tape on which the event was recorded, these numbers range from two to six. Tape One was discarded because sound and vision quality were poor. The second number identifies activities that the children were involved in, for example, being welcomed into school, working in the classroom, a PE lesson, or snack time. Individual sequences of discourse occurring within each activity were ascribed a third number. The fourth number indicates a speech turn. Using this system, 6.2.6.1. indicates the first utterance of the sixth interaction during the second activity from tape six. That is, the utterance “*who hasn’t had a turn yet*”, from the sixth transcription during snack time from tape six.

6.2.6, on page 137

*The children were sitting around the group table taking turns to choose snack food, fruit or crisps. Some children were talking loudly together and becoming excited. The teacher’s (T) behaviour can be thought of as a second turn response to the children’s noise and excitement.*

*I        T        (as if talking to herself, looking at the food)*

*Who hasn’t had a turn yet*



Transcriptions used for different purposes have differing levels of detail. For example, Jefferson (2004) states that her own transcriptions provided as much encoded information as she was able to identify within each segment of conversation. She was not always certain about the relevance of the details she transcribed but considered that patterns would only emerge if sufficient care was taken at the early stages of transcription. As a result she often included detail which was not immediately important but became useful at a later stage in analysis. Jefferson recognized that her style of transcription had developed and become increasingly detailed over a number of years. Her written representations of utterances provide details of timed relationships between utterances, overlaps, quality of sound, vocalizations, pauses and the actual sounds spoken as well as the setting in which utterances took place. She expressed concern about transcription of aspects of pronunciation but always aspired to reproduce an exact representation of sequences of discourse. Jefferson's later transcriptions demand an exceptional level of skill and experience to produce and present an enormous challenge for interpretation. My own transcription was much less detailed.

Because transcribed events provided the data on which this study is based I recognized the need for absolute accuracy and decided that it was preferable to ensure a high level of accuracy in a limited number of areas. I, therefore, provide some background to each incident with details of verbalizations, some vocalisations and pauses. Initial transcription was a meticulous time consuming process. Reviewing transcribed events frequently uncovered errors in the fine detail of behaviours. Sequences of speech, vocalisation and pauses were sometimes mis-ordered. Only by repeatedly returning to very small segments of video material could accuracy of transcription be achieved. Following the initial transcription of 266 events, which are available in Appendix One additional details were included to illustrate specific areas later identified as being of importance.

## **CATEGORISATION OF TRANSCRIBED EVENTS**

Transcription provided a written record of each identified event, however, the large quantity of material continued to mask patterns of behaviour. Categorisation of transcribed events appeared to be the route forward in order to make the amount of data more manageable and allow patterns of behaviour to emerge. Initially I thought that categorisation should be completed before in-depth analysis began, however, this was not the case. As Glaser (1992) suggests, understanding of the data was a dynamic process which grew out of interaction with them. Engagement with the process of interpreting transcribed interactions led me into gradually more and more refined categorisation of the data. This process reflected that described by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) as being fundamental to rigorous ethnographic research. Four key categories were eventually arrived at. These have been termed; promoting shared meaning, making positive assertions, laminated utterances and extended patterns of interaction. The category described as ‘promoting shared meaning’ considers methods by which meaning is negotiated between children and adults. The category described as ‘positive assertions’ identifies a language pattern where factual observations about situations or children’s behaviour are communicated with minimal emotional input. The category termed, ‘laminated utterances’ consists of discourse between knowing participants, who are usually adults, within the hearing of less-knowing-listeners. Laminated utterances provide information or suggestions which the less-knowing-listeners might act on. The category termed, ‘extended patterns of interaction’ identifies consistent functional structures within segments of discourse. Each of these categories is explained in detail in the following chapter beginning on page 145, which discusses data. Although these categories are presented discretely, in reality utterances usually overlap categories. Utterances are categorised purely to aid clarity of discussion.

## **LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY**

This study uses linguistic ethnography to analyse transcribed video observations. Selected events

are reviewed to identify recurring patterns of interaction. This analysis is grounded in the recognition that conversation is a sequence of action and reaction involving a minimum of two people within a particular setting. Alexander (2001) states the verbal content of individual utterances can be open to a range of interpretation. It is only by acknowledging the completeness of participants' responses that a reflection of the communicative intent is achieved. This type of analysis is, therefore, highly individual and dependant upon the participant's understanding of the interactions as they evolve, to which the researcher seeks shared understanding. The current study explores the listener's interpretation of each preceding utterance by their response. Amplification of the exchange of meaning comes with each successive turn in the conversation. The interactional consequences of sequences of utterances provide the descriptions and explanations which are fundamental to this study. The detail of conversational turns are analysed in relation to the setting in which they take place and through this analysis patterns are identified. The interpretation of recurring patterns provides insights into the relationship between language, behaviour and learning within this setting.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DATA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter I described the process of collecting a large sample of spontaneous discourse between adults and children. I went on to explain how sequences of interaction which showed adults using language and communication to support or sustain children's appropriate behaviour were selected and transcribed. The detail of how these transcriptions were analysed and became the data on which the findings of this study are based constitutes the next section of this report.

Analysis was undertaken in two stages, the first was transcription, the second, analysis of transcribed events. From the combination of transcription and analysis, patterns of behaviour gradually begin to emerge. Antaki (2008) suggests that neither of these processes is able to disclose patterns independently. It is only by working with the two processes together and becoming increasingly familiar with the evidence, that patterns are revealed. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) suggest that by repeated examination of the inter-play between data selection and their analysis allows the researcher to arrive at a point which they consider reflects the scene studied. In consequence, repeated inspection of the engagement between data and its analysis provides a continuing way of evaluating the validity of the study. In order to arrive at greater understanding of the interactional processes involved in specific situations, Goodwin (2003) recommends in-depth analysis of small quantities of transcribed discourse. However, it is not only interpretation of transcribed events but also the selection of items of discourse within particular settings which eventually decide the patterns of behaviour that emerge. Rampton (2004) states that the function of linguistic ethnography is to uncover the meaning that participants place on

interactions. He suggests that analysis should reflect participants' meaning more powerfully than meaning ascribed by researchers. To ensure meaning that reflects participants' reality, analysis should be constantly questioned. I recognise that the selection, transcription and analysis of data in the current study provide a reflection of my personal interest and perception; other readers will see alternative interpretations. However, my long standing, close relationship with the participants provides me with a unique opportunity to reflect on core meanings. I recognise the potential for misrepresentation and am constantly balancing my interpretations against the context in which they are set. Barwell (2003) suggests that ethnography is as much about the researcher's views as it is about the subject of the research. He says that at best classroom based ethnography can only hope to draw a picture of what the researcher believes they have been party to. It should be clear to participants and others that the report is about the researcher's perceptions rather than absolutes. In addition readers should be asked how far these perceptions match their own experiences. I regard Barwell's views as particularly helpful in my conception of the current study, which is heavily embedded in my own experiences and can only offer others a view of what I saw and understood during the research process. However, my analysis of the interactions recorded in the Early Years Department has the potential to be compared or contrasted with interactions observed in other settings and so promote questioning of classroom practice.

The data selected to investigate whether there are identifiable patterns of interaction taking place between adults and children are described as, interactions supporting and sustaining appropriate behaviour. These data focus on adults responding to children at a point of potential breakdown in interaction. Unlike sequences of utterances analysed by Heritage (2005), Goodwin (2003) and others, the first turn, usually taken by a child in the current study, is not always a verbalisation framed to initiate discourse. Adult participants respond to and seek to interpret physical behaviours, generalised vocalisations or verbalisations as well as conventional first turn initiating utterances by

the children. In these terms the adults are viewed as taking the second turn in a sequence of communicative events. Hopper (2005) suggests that one function of second turns in a sequence of discourse is that they can be used to clarify confusions. This notion of second turn, mainly adult utterances, being used to relieve confusions seems highly pertinent to the present study. It is the amalgamation of second turn repair and supporting children's appropriate behaviour, which provide the basis of analysis and interpretation. The selected examples of interaction illustrate features which produce a cumulative picture. Few examples cited in this study, embody single features of discourse, nor yet does any one example demonstrate all of the identified features. However, together the cited examples are the data on which this study is based.

From the original 266 briefly transcribed events, 94 have undergone further light transcription in order to provide detail to support analysis. Another 40 of the 266 interactions have been analysed in greater depth, these examples form the core of the data. The analysis consists of four sections which consider persistent patterns of function and structure identified within the data. The features of function are termed, 'creating shared meaning' and 'making positive assertions'. The structural features are termed, 'laminated utterances' and 'extended patterns of interaction'. The following section provides a rich text description of these structures and functions with supporting examples. The 40 transcribed and analysed events are based on interactions between nine adults and eleven children, the roles of these participants have been discussed previously in the section devoted to participants and setting on page 85.

## **PROMOTING SHARED MEANING**

Within the available evidence the balance between meaning derived from social, locational or psychological setting and meaning which stems from linguistic sources is complexly intertwined. Creese (2008) suggests that this convergence of contextual and linguistic features means that not

only are linguistic and paralinguistic features used to negotiate meaning but also prior knowledge of the cultural and social context in which interactions take place. Mercer (2003a) agrees that listeners derive meaning from all types of information in order to make sense of what is said. He suggests that meaning is uniquely developed between participants in every discourse event. In typical discourse cited by Goodwin (1992), Pomerantz (1992) and others there is negotiated reciprocity until meaning is mutually shared between participants in discourse. For children described as having SEBD, who may also have SLCD, achieving negotiated shared meaning may well present considerable difficulties in linguistic, social, emotional and cognitive domains. Analysis of the data in this study reveals features of behaviour which can be interpreted as promoting shared meaning between adults and children. For clarity three aspects of promoting the development of shared meaning have been identified. These areas are termed, ‘developing linguistic skills’, ‘language and physical setting’ and ‘adopting the child’s perspective’, each forms the focus of a section below.

## **PROMOTING SHARED MEANING: DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC SKILLS**

### **6.2.6**

*The children were sitting around the group table taking turns to choose snack food, fruit or crisps. Some children were talking loudly together and becoming excited. The teacher’s (T) behaviour can be thought of as a second turn response to the children’s noise and excitement.*

*T (as if talking to herself, looking at the food)*

*Who hasn’t had a turn yet*

*(Some of the children began to calm down. The teacher looked around the group without making eye contact with any of the children. She then passed food to children who were sitting quietly looking in her direction. Other children began to settle quickly)*

Although the cues for attention in this example were sparse and the content of the teacher’s utterance was limited, the context is compelling. The teacher stopped passing the plate of food

around the table, withdrew her gaze from the children and slowly began to use spoken language as if she was monitoring her own behaviour. The snack time had not ended but the teacher had withdrawn from interaction with the children. It can be suggested that the quiet change in the teacher's behaviour provided a distinct signal for the children that interaction must be re-established in order for the snack time to continue.

Paul (2007) suggests that reciprocal gaze is among the earliest communicative behaviours established in infants, and other communicative acts develop from it. Within the group of children at the centre of this study the majority were observed to use reciprocal gaze to support communicative functions. Reciprocal gaze between speaker and listener, which Goodwin (2003) identifies as a feature initiating interaction, had been actively withdrawn by the teacher. Thus, in order to re-engage with the activity the children were required to take the initiative. They had to search for reciprocal gaze from the teacher to restart the interactive process of snack time. The teacher's use of gaze, combined with the psychologically motivating snack activity, encouraged the child participants to make active efforts to re-establish interaction.

The phrase, "*who hasn't had a turn yet*" combined with the visual cue of a plate full of food suggest that the teacher was trying to remember which children would like something to eat. Goodwin (1992) suggests that displays of forgetfulness or uncertainty operate as requests for more 'knowing' participants to collaborate in the production of an ongoing narrative. In this case the self-questioning phrase, "*who hasn't had a turn yet*" appeared to invite the children to share in the teacher's apparent problem of not knowing who to pass the snack food to next. In Goodwin's terms this enables the speaker to re-arrange the structure of the interaction, in this case allowing the teacher to by-pass the difficulty she was experiencing with overly noisy children. The teacher in this case said that she stopped talking and engaging with the children in order to quieten the situation.



She had used this strategy in the past and expected it to be effective. She was not aware of her use of gaze or its implications.

The teacher's apparent withdrawal from active engagement with the children combined with time for the children to respond. The children were not hurried to use the contextual features of this interaction to decode underlying meaning. They took their time to use individually appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues to engage with the teacher. This unhurried approach may have been helpful to those children who had difficulty using language at either an expressive or receptive level. The children's actions may be viewed as representing their individual communicative skills. They attempted to:

- initiate interaction using gaze
- collaborate with the teacher in response to her verbalisation, once again using gaze to initiate interaction and then verbalise that they would like some snack food
- take meaning from the setting and food that was available and imitate the behaviour of those children who received snack food
- make another choice of their own which did not reflect any aspect of the teacher's communicative behaviour.

Adult withdrawal was also used to define a situation in 3.4.22. In this example the children were talking loudly and rather than attempting to talk over the noise, the teacher stopped talking. Once again the children became quiet and adopted listening attitudes. Teacher and children then re-engaged with the activity.

There are other examples of children being initiated into features of discourse in order to create settings for shared meaning. For example, 4.4.1. here a child attempted to interrupt the teacher's

conversation with another child, rather than directly asking him to wait the teacher suggested he consider whether or not she was occupied. She did not reject his attempted interaction but encouraged him to consider whether she was free to talk. Then, by withdrawing her attention, he had to wait until she signalled that she was available.

4.4.3, shows a further example of a child attempting initiate conversation with the teacher. The child used gentle touches and verbalisation to try and get the teacher's attention. In this case the teacher was already using gaze to focus on an established interaction, so she was unable to withdraw gaze from the child who was interrupting. She used four utterances, "*am I listening*", "*am I listening to you*", "*I was talking to Martin*", "*why are you interrupting*" to question the child's means of securing her attention. In each of these four utterances the teacher identified aspects of the process of initiating discourse which the child needed to be aware of. The child needed to secure the co-operation of an attentive listener who was not already engaged in discourse with someone else. With each turn the teacher's responses became more directive until her fifth turn, "*can I be talking to you and Martin at the same time ...* " when she made a positive assertion, "*you should wait until I've finished*". The child was provided with adult utterances which identified features of interaction which he should consider before attempting to initiate discourse. This segment of discourse shows the teacher supporting the development of shared meaning, between herself and the child, which initially focused on appropriate means of securing attention, within the specific setting. Although the teacher's utterances in this transcribed form could be interpreted as showing her irritation with the child's behaviour they were all delivered with a quiet conversational tone suggestive of factual reporting. This level of transcription, which does not contain details of prosody can be prone to misinterpretation. It is, as Alexander (2001) notes, only with the benefit of video evidence and first hand experience of the recorded situation that words and meaning can be united.

4.4.2., also shows the teacher developing communication skills with a child by planning and

rehearsing a sequence of discourse. As a result Steven was supported to operate within, and create, a context with both the teacher and another child, “*Steven’s just going to ask me ... can I go and ask Leanne to come and play*”, “*I ask Leanne to play?*”. By preparing and rehearsing utterances the teacher enabled Steven to produce an effective utterance that was understandable by herself and Leanne. In addition, Leanne, in overhearing the interaction between the teacher and Steven, was prepared for the request and had time to consider her response. In this sequence the teacher was, therefore, preparing two children with SLCD to engage in discourse with a degree of independence. Similarly in example 6.1.7., the teacher’s comment, “*talk to him . sort it out together*” and also example 6.1.8., “*why don’t you ask Toby . see what he says*” show the teacher setting up situations where two children were able to engage in discourse. Each of these episodes show an adult helping a child to develop conversational skills within a real setting, where the child had an urgent need to establish meaning with another person. The adults involved in these interactions confirmed that their intention was to support the creation of situations in which children could develop skills to share meaning with both adults and peers. The development of skilful use of spoken language, as opposed to low level chatter, is one of the key features of dialogic teaching identified by Alexander (2001). The use of language that the teacher in the current study is fostering is clearly not the ‘thinking’ language discussed by Alexander. However, until children are securely grounded in early communication skills, for example initiation and turn taking they would struggle to function in some of the classrooms observed by Alexander, where active engagement was embedded in critical listening.

### **PROMOTING SHARED MEANING: LANGUAGE AND PHYSICAL SETTING**

The process of negotiating meaning by building communication through the parallel use of language and the physical setting is elaborated in the following example, 3.4.8.

*The children were having a hopping race. When James’ (J) turn arrived he ran across the course.*

*Teaching assistant (TA).*

*TA James . James .*

*(child slows and looks towards TA)*

*it's hopping .. hopping one leg*

*(demonstrates)*

*J I'll go back*

*TA OK . alright then ..*

*that's it*

Drew (2005) suggests that it is not possible to make a judgement about a participant's cognitive state as a result of their response in a sequence of interaction. There is always the possibility that a participant's behaviour could indicate strategic 'bending' of reality in order to avoid a situation that they would prefer not to become involved in, whilst at the same time giving the impression that the opposite is the case. For example, it may have been that James understood that running could be faster than hopping and so he intended to win the race by running. It is questionable if judgements can be made about whether individual utterances, or response behaviours, convey their surface meaning or a different, underlying meaning. It is, therefore, not possible to identify what motivated either James or the teaching assistant in this sequence of discourse. However, Drew (2005) suggests that the cumulative effect of several examples of specific behaviour may give insights into cognitive states or motivation to particular responses.

In the example above the teaching assistant was insistent on drawing the child's attention to his apparent error. She twice used his name, followed by a pause, to secure his attention, before embarking on the crux of her message. The effort that was required to secure the child's attention suggested that the teaching assistant believed that the meaning she wanted to share with the child was important. Her first utterance, "*its hopping*" suggested that she was correcting a lexical

confusion that could have arisen in the heat of the moment. In his excitement to join in the race James may have mis-heard or forgotten that it was a hopping race. However, when the child failed to act on this input the teaching assistant repeated and extended her utterance, “*hopping one leg*”. She then combined this with a brief demonstration of hopping. This suggested that the teaching assistant interpreted the child’s failure to begin hopping as failure to understand her previous utterance. The teaching assistant’s ability to enhance the context to support meaning, by repetition associated with a visual demonstration, gives credence to the notion that she eventually interpreted the child’s difficulty as being associated with his misunderstanding of the verb, ‘hop’ rather than any strategic advantage he may have tried to gain. Indeed, the child’s offer to “*go back*” supports the view that he needed help to interpret the word ‘hop’ rather than suggesting that he was attempting to manipulate the rules of the race.

The pause in the teaching assistant’s next utterance, “*ok . alright then*” as she agreed with the child’s offer to re-start the race, occupies a similar position to those noted by Schegloff (2007) as signifying a certain discomfort. This may be because the teaching assistant had resolved one mis-match in meaning between herself and the child, by placing verbal and physical cues side by side to illustrate hopping, but exposed another problem. This was that the child did not appear to appreciate that racing was concerned with arriving at a given point quickly. The teaching assistant’s apparent discomfort could originate from her inability to work with the concept of racing, at that point, because the other children in the class had actually completed the course. This interaction ended with the teaching assistant smiling and uttering the reassuring phrase, “*that’s it*” as the child demonstrated his skill at hopping.

Throughout 3.4.8., cited above, the teaching assistant sustained the child’s concentration in order to resolve a shared difficulty. Throughout this incident the visual cues and verbal recasts and

repetition may reflect the teaching assistant's awareness of the child's potential difficulties with receptive language. The child and adult were shown collaborating to repair misunderstanding and achieve a common, negotiated understanding. Mercer (2003b) suggests that events similar to that cited above constitute a substantial process of learning. He states that new understanding is created through interactions which contribute changing perspectives with each conversational turn and build on preceding utterances. The stepwise transition in the teaching assistant's behaviour occurred as she repeatedly evaluated the child's difficulty and appeared to search for a shared route to resolution. Initially she appeared to ascribe the problem to re-call of instructions but when repetition did not resolve the problem she moved to clarify meaning of specific vocabulary using supported physical cues. Heritage (2005) says that although strategies for repair may reveal particular patterns to the analyst it does not mean that these patterns are evident at a cognitive level for the participants. In the example cited above, it may be that the teaching assistant was operating at an intuitive level. Familiarity with the child and the teaching assistant's sensitivity to his individual needs, combined with her stated desire to establish shared meaning, may have informed her actions rather than conscious reflection on the alternatives available to her.

Mercer (2003b) suggests that speakers and listeners jointly create meaning. In the above example the teaching assistant was actively searching to establish common meaning, the child's role was less visible. However, his ability to sustain attention and pursue meaning can be considered indicative of his commitment to achieving a context which was collaboratively constructed. The notion of collaborative construction of new meaning is, in Mercer's terms, the co-construction of knowledge. The collaborative process of learning through focused language tasks is central to Alexander's (2001) view of effective pedagogy and a feature of the current data.

Further examples of adults creating the potential for shared meaning by using physical aspects of

the setting combined with verbalisation, abound within the data, for example

3.4.7., “*oh look at that group . their hands on their knees . their straight backs*” In this incident the teacher highlighted and praised a group of children, who were sitting quietly waiting. The children's behaviour was quickly imitated by other members of the class.

3.6.1.4., “*oh look Harold's going to tuck his chair in*”, also drew the children's attention to appropriate behaviour and how to achieve it. Other children followed Harold's lead immediately after the adult's utterance.

Examples 2.6.3. and 2.6.1. show a chocolate cake, being shared at snack time, serving to support the teacher's and teaching assistant's utterances that children needed to sit down quietly.

Example 6.2.5. on page 151, shows a teacher indicating a chair to encourage a child to join the group at the table.

Example 5.3.4. on page 150, demonstrates an adult using the last line of a finger play to move the child on from unacceptable broom flailing to sitting with the group.

Highlighting visual aspects of communication alongside verbalisation is, according to Paul (2007), helpful in supporting children experiencing receptive language difficulties. In the case of the current study it reflects awareness of the potential SLCD of some of the children, and acknowledged by the established teachers in the Early Years Team.

## **PROMOTING SHARED MEANING: ADOPTING THE CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE**

The problem of defining the child's perspective is enormous. As Coulter (2005) indicates it is not possible to know the invisible ideas that are hidden until language and interaction reveal them.

Therefore, to adopt a child's perspective is problematic until the child or the context in which it is operating reveals that which is invisible. In these data contextual clues are the main indicators of the child's perspective although these are most accurately assessed in retrospect. That is, if the adult participant accurately interprets the child's perspective then the likelihood of a mutually

satisfactory outcome to the interaction is enhanced. This can be seen in the example 6.2.3 below. To provide some rigour in the task of identifying when adults adopt a child's perspective I also discussed some of these events with the adults involved. Very infrequently the children expressed an opinion that confirmed the view that adults were interpreting situations from the child's point of view, but these opinions were fragmentary and rare.

### 6.2.3.

*The teacher (T) and a group of children were settled at the table ready for their afternoon snack.*

*The teaching assistant was preparing drinks at the sink. James (J) was late arriving and before he sat down began drinking directly from the cold water tap.*

*T        James ... sitting down*

*(James continues drinking from the tap)*

*T        he could have a drink from the red one Mrs C.*

The first turn in this interaction shows the teacher using the child's name followed by a pause, in a feature of communication which Goodwin (1980) recognises an initiation strategy used to secure active attention. The teacher identified this interaction as a specific listening task for James by clearly using his name followed by a pause, as she waited for his active attention. Her gaze was focused on the back of James' head if he had looked up she would have been in a good position to attempt to establish reciprocal gaze and so sustain interaction. The child gave no indication of having heard the teacher's attempted initiation. However, she continued with a telegrammatic utterance describing the required behaviour. The brevity of this utterance, "*sitting down*", makes it difficult to decide whether it should be interpreted as a direction, a question, an invitation or a suggestion for appropriate behaviour. Interpretation of data is a problem commonly experienced by linguistic ethnographers. Alexander (2001) suggests that utterances must be considered in conjunction with the situation and the manner in which they are delivered. In this case most children were seated around the table and the teacher's tone was very soft, probably indicating a suggestion



that James should join his peers at the table. The utterance did not have the assertive tone of a direction or the rising intonation of a question but I find the utterance itself provides inconclusive evidence of its intended meaning. I was unable to discuss this aspect of the video clip with the teacher and so must accept some uncertainty about her meaning.

When James failed to respond the teacher did not extend the interaction by using other means to gain his attention. Instead she refocused her conversation to the teaching assistant, who was preparing drinks for the group. This move to change participants may reflect the teacher's recognition and acceptance that James urgently needed a drink and was unlikely to respond to her before his thirst was satiated. James' frequent urgent need for a drink was an issue that the Early Years Team had discussed with health professionals on several occasions and was well known to the teacher. An interpretation of James' behaviour as a legitimate physical need meant that his failure to respond to the teacher's utterance could be categorised as neither disobedience nor rudeness. However, the teacher's behaviour suggests that she did not treat it as such. Her utterance, "*he could have a drink from the red one (cup)*" can be conceived as an acknowledgement that she thought it was inappropriate to drink from the tap whilst clarifying that children should drink from cups. The teacher's utterance also confirmed her acceptance of James' immediate thirst not being symptomatic of disobedience. The teacher's utterance, directed to the teaching assistant removed the need for James to construct a verbal response and potentially provided him with further incentive to sit at the table, as soon as he had finished at the sink. When he finished drinking at the tap James joined the group at the table and drank from a cup. This incident demonstrates how the teacher used previous knowledge of the child and his non-verbal behaviour to develop shared meaning through compromise. She maintained her overt expectation for socially acceptable behaviour, in this case that James should drink from a cup rather than the tap, but at the same time she appeared to accept the child's point of view by neither overtly condemning his inappropriate behaviour nor pursuing an

immediate verbal response from him.

By trying to consider interactions from the child's perspective adults were able to avoid potential confrontations. For example,

3.3.1.

*The class had just started changing for PE. On Monday mornings Martin (M) habitually failed to bring his PE kit to school, this was the first time he had remembered his kit all term. Teacher (T).*

*M I'm glad I got my PE kit*

*(swinging his PE bag in the air as he took it from the hook at the side of the room)*

*T so am I ..*

*T Come on get ready for PE then*

Here the adult appears to use her prior knowledge of the child's long-standing problem of bringing his PE kit to school to support her interpretation of his behaviour. The child's delight in remembering his PE kit producing over-exuberance, which in other circumstances would have been inappropriate. The teacher's acknowledgement of his joy, with the utterance, "*so am I*" gave the incident shared meaning. The collaborative effort that Alexander (2001) recognises in the construction of shared meaning promotes a tolerance which is evident in the current data. The teacher provided encouragement for the child to calm down, "*come on get ready for PE then*", rather than drawing attention to his potentially inappropriate bag swinging and the child willingly conformed.

6.1.9., also showed the teacher apparently viewing an interaction from the child's perspective.

Recognition of the child's effort and achievement with a writing task was acknowledged with the single word, "*lovely*". The teacher then went on to add a dimension from her own agenda, "*what have you forgot to do*". Rather than presenting this as a confrontational situation the teacher

returned the problem to the child. Together the adult and child shared the meaning of wanting to improve the writing task. The child's response, "*put name*" indicated her active involvement in wanting to collaborate with the teacher. The teacher's smile and shrug reduced perception of the task to something that the child could achieve, rather than allowing it to become an obstacle between the two of them. This sequence of interaction seems to conform to aspects of Alexander's (2008) notion of dialogism. The teacher and child viewed the work collaboratively and with the teacher's guidance the child was able to recognise how to improve on her work. Rather than adopting a monologic approach the teacher returned the problem to the child and encouraged her response.

In other examples the creation of settings in which meaning was shared sometimes seemed to be one-sided. In the following example it was the teacher's interpretation of the child's reason for refusing to dress that allowed communication to take place and provided a resolution to a situation which was potentially confrontational.

3.10.9.

*Steven (S) is refusing to dress after a playroom session. Teacher (T).*

*S        I don't want to get changed*

*T        just put your t-shirt on . you don't have to wear your jumper Steven .. if you're hot*

The teacher created a shared setting in which communication could take place, by noticing that Steven was hot rather than disobedient. She then went on to make a statement of required behaviour, "*put your shirt on*". This directing statement is modified by the teacher's use of "*just ...*" and followed by further compromise with the utterance "*you don't have to wear your jumper*". This sequence could be viewed as a negotiated outcome. The original meaning that the child had taken from the setting, that he should put all his clothes on, was renegotiated by the teacher. The interaction was qualified by the coda, "*if you're hot*" which provided a causal relationship for the

changed criteria for dressing. The modification of outcome was, therefore, not a random, chance decision but based on the logical explanation, that the child was hot.

Alexander (2001) notes that teachers who adopt a dialogic approach tend to take a more flexible route to learning objectives which adjusts to children's individual learning needs. Example 3.10.9 above shows the teacher's agenda as being that the child should dress. By taking a flexible approach to achieving this outcome, which recognised that the child might feel warm, the child willingly agreed to dress. Both participants in this interaction modified their positions, the child started dressing and the adult clarified that she did not expect him to wear his jumper.

#### 5.3.4.

*The children were sitting round the table having just started singing rhymes. James had been sweeping up some sand following his sand play and was carrying a sweeping brush as he went to sit on the lap of a teaching assistant (TA). The teaching assistant was singing the final line of the finger play.*

TA     *“lay them gently on your knee”*

*(James sitting on the teaching assistant's lap flailing with the broom)*

TA     *oh where's your knee .. oh there they are*

*( removing the broom and following James' hands to his knees with her own hands)*

This example shows a teaching assistant encouraging a child to join in a finger play in which the final action was for the singers to put their hands on their knees. By focusing on a positive physical attribute of the finger play rhyme, “*lay them gently on your knee*” the teaching assistant supported the child to achieve shared meaning. She avoided drawing attention to the James' inappropriate activity, flailing with the broom and highlighted an incompatible, alternative activity.

#### 6.2.5.

*The class were preparing to start an activity at the group table. Leanne was approaching the table*

*slowly. The teacher (T) invited Leanne (L) to join the group*

*L (quietly laughing in the manner of the cartoon character 'Mutley')*

*T Leanne do you want to come and sit with us there's a chair behind  
(offers a chair)*

*L n*

*T you'd rather be over there*

*T alright*

This example shows the teacher using a physical prompt, offering a chair to a child, to enhance her meaning. The offered chair can be interpreted as an invitation to join the group at the class table. However, Leanne's minimal refusal, "n" was accepted by the teacher, who had previously commented to me about the child's diffidence at being in close contact with other children. The utterance, "you'd rather be over there" "alright" acknowledged the child's right to choose where to sit as well as the fact that she was going to sit down. Through minimal compromise the teacher and the child were able to sustain positive communication.

Another example of an adult building shared meaning through reference to the child's point of view and offering guidance that overcame potential difficulties is identified below.

3.10.12.

*During the observation period the class only had regular access to one computer. It was, therefore, important that children worked at the computer at the times when it was available. In the following sequence Martin (M) was engrossed in producing a mathematical pattern and reluctant to take up his turn on the computer. Teaching Assistant (TA).*

*TA (looking in the direction of Martin)*

*Martin .. its your computer*

*(Martin continues with his pattern)*

TA     *you don't want to miss it*

*(teaching assistant turns towards the computer preparing software)*

*(Martin moves to the computer)*

The teaching assistant's first utterance is taken as a reminder that Martin should join her at the computer. However, rather than continuing to pursue her own agenda the teaching assistant seems to consider the situation from Martin's perspective. The positively framed, "*you don't want to miss it*" reminded Martin that he might regret missing his turn if he was slow and another child took his place.

Further examples of adults modifying their interactions in the light of children's responses to achieve shared meaning are found throughout the data, for example

3.4.6. shows a teaching assistant using verbal interaction, "*ok Steven ..*", "*and again Steven...*", "*that's lovely Steven.. good boy*" combined with gesture, beckoning, to support a shared meaning.

In this example the teaching assistant said she knew that the child had difficulties with sustained listening and interpreting meaning and used his name in each of her minimal utterances to help focus him on sustaining appropriate behaviour.

Example 4.6.5., shows an adult using physical means to encourage a child who was eager to speak to wait for her turn. The adult put her hands over her mouth to signal silence and smiled as if recognising how difficult it might be for the children to remain silent. In this way the child avoided making a socially inappropriate verbalisation.

The examples cited above show adults supporting children's developing awareness of linguistic skills, using physical means to support language and apparently trying to look at situations through the child's eyes. Further examples of adults helping children to create shared meaning are identified

in following sections of this chapter and in Appendix One. However, the primary focus of the next section of this chapter is the use of positive assertions.

## **MAKING POSITIVE ASSERTIONS**

The notion of positive assertions, that is utterances which comment on observable features, form a strong theme within this study. In this section positive assertions are treated as if they are a discrete aspect of the identified communication patterns, however, in reality this is not the case. Positive assertions are found in conjunction with, and rarely isolated from, other features of communication. Isolation here merely aids clarity in discussion. To support understanding of the range of functions that positive assertions fulfil within the Early Years Department they are discussed in eight categories. These categories are, providing guidance; suggesting means of achieving acceptable outcomes; anticipating appropriate behaviour; offering reassurance; giving permission; expressing approval or recognition; identifying causal and dependant relationships; adults monitoring their own thoughts or behaviour. Although these categories are treated as if they are isolated, in reality the first six categories operate as a continuum of supported interactions. The final two categories offer children insight into the adults' perceptions of situations. Functions of utterances frequently cross these artificial boundaries and conceivably operate within several categories simultaneously. To introduce the concept of positive assertions I have chosen to analyse an example which involves minimal verbalisation but fulfils functions across several categories. Following this first, multi-purpose example I propose to consider positive assertions using the discrete categories identified above.

### **4.4.6.**

*This segment involves the class teacher (T) working alone with nine children. Five children were completing written tasks, two were on the floor working in parallel building mathematical patterns,*

*one was working at the computer and one was preparing to play in the role play area. The teacher was occupied with the writing activity; she had her back to the computer, role play and a large walk-in cupboard. The cupboard was an “adults only” area because of the range of equipment it contained, some of which could have been dangerous if not adequately supervised.*

*After a while Martin (M) attempted to draw the teacher’s attention to Leanne, who was creeping quietly into the cupboard.*

*M Miss*

*(points to the cupboard)*

*T (barely glances up and continues as if engrossed in her writing at the table)*

*(pause)*

*T Leanne’s not in the cupboard*

*(with the intonation of a statement of fact)*

*After a slight pause Leanne moved away from the cupboard and back into the main part of the classroom.*

*(several seconds later the teacher looked towards Leanne, who was then working)*

This interaction demonstrates a recurring theme within the data. The teacher’s part in this interaction conveyed a non-urgent approach to the situation which was communicated through her verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Throughout the interaction the teacher was able to maintain a primary focus on her writing task, thus reducing Leanne’s inappropriate behaviour to an ancillary matter. Gaze is a major factor contributing to the impression that the teacher was not concerned with Leanne’s behaviour. For most of this interaction the teacher’s gaze was focused on her writing and not available to either Martin or Leanne. In Goodwin’s (1992) terms, the teacher’s refusal to establish reciprocal gaze failed to provide either child with an invitation to contribute to the interaction. Martin’s commentary was foreshortened by the teacher’s reluctance to look at him,



whilst Leanne was discouraged from countering Martin's claim because the teacher did not provide her with any acknowledging contact. As a result the teacher controlled the route the interaction took.

The teacher's non-verbal control of this interaction allowed her to maintain a non-confrontational stance as well as avoiding a potential argument between the children. Her verbal behaviour also minimised the interaction. Goodwin (1992) states that the interaction between speaker and listener enables them to mutually construct and modify discourse turn by turn. This is a concept which builds on Levinson's (1992) early work, in which he identified sequential utterances which related to and precipitated each other. The teacher's response to Martin's utterance effectively closed the conversation as she made a statement of fact which would have been difficult for the children to dispute, "*Leanne's not in the cupboard*". This utterance was framed in very simple terms as a positive assertion. By overtly failing to acknowledge that Leanne was in the cupboard the teacher avoided placing the child in a position of blame or guilt, and at the same time averted the need for reprimand. The child was also given a precise indicator of required behaviour whilst the associated issue of her actual, inappropriate behaviour was apparently ignored. The use of the child's name also reinforced the meaning that she, specifically, should not be in the cupboard.

Analysis of this small sample of interaction therefore, provides verbal and non-verbal indicators of the teacher's apparent detachment from the unfolding incident as Leanne entered the cupboard. This impression is compounded by the slow pace and gentle demeanour which was a feature of this and other recorded incidents. From the moment Martin noticed Leanne moving towards the cupboard until the entire incident was resolved spanned two minutes. This was an extended time frame for two short utterances and contrasts with Swift and Gooding's (1983) findings cited by Wood, Wood, Griffiths and Howarth (1986) that teachers' expected responses from children in "just over a second". In the current example pauses between the utterances were exaggerated and contributed to

the impression that the teacher was pre-occupied in an unhurried calm. The slow evolving pace of this interaction allowed Leanne time to decode the teacher's implicit meaning, reflect on the options available to her and then decide on which course to take. The slow pace of this interaction may be indicative of the teacher's stated awareness of the children's potential SLCD. Paul's (2007) recommends that interaction with children described as having SLCD should be slower than with typically developing children to allow for them access information and formulate responses.

The interaction between the teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviour is suggestive that she was not unduly concerned about inappropriate behaviour. The teacher's meaning, at and below surface level also conveyed a good opinion of Leanne and a clear expectation that she would not breach the class rules. At the same time she provided direction which enabled the child to revert to acceptable behaviour. Whilst carefully controlling the interaction, the teacher at no point attempted to control the children's behaviour. Both children made independent, but guided, choices about how to resolve this incident. The positive assertion can, therefore, be seen to provide guidance and advice as well as anticipating appropriate behaviour.

The teacher's behaviour throughout this incident can be interpreted as demonstrating what Mercer (2003a) terms, ground rules for conversation. Here the teacher discouraged Martin from telling tales which were likely to inflame the situation, by refusing to engage in discourse with him. At the same time the teacher made a clear statement of what she considered appropriate classroom behaviour for Leanne. By refusing to engage in conversation with Leanne the statement, "*Leanne is not in the cupboard*" marked this as an utterance, sometimes made by adults, which could not be disputed.

Mercer (2003a) states that on occasions where less experienced participants fail to recognise the ground rules for specific types of conversation they may be perceived as uncooperative or at some

other type of disadvantage. In the example cited above, the teacher used gaze and made a positive assertion which limited further discussion. Without such a clear indicator that there was no more to be said, the children might well have embarked on an argumentative sequence of utterances. In this case the teacher stated that she recognised the difficulty that some children have in deciding whether or not to participate in conversation. To mark this as a point where children should not participate any further, the teacher withdrew her gaze and apparently refused to engage with them. In this way she demonstrated a setting-specific ground rule, that is there are occasions when conversations are closed. This single example can, therefore be seen to provide children with ‘guidance and advice’, ‘anticipate appropriate behaviour’, ‘express approval’ and appear to ‘show an adult monitoring her own thoughts’. Further examples will consider the eight identified functions individually.

### **PROVIDING GUIDANCE OR ADVICE**

It is difficult to discriminate utterances which offer guidance or advice from directives without the benefit of transcribed intonation, emphasis or volume, features which are outside the remit of the current study. However, by returning to the original video evidence and considering context alongside paralinguistic features it is possible to offer some degree of assurance that the examples cited below are not directives even though the language used sometimes appears to suggest that this may be the case.

#### **3.9.3.**

*Four children were playing a listening game, “stop and go”, in the soft playroom with a teaching assistant (TA). Donald (D) was out and sitting at the side of the room waiting for his next turn.*

*While he was waiting Donald started talking and distracting the other children.*

*TA Donald . you playing the game . we’re playing stop and go . aren’t we*

*As the teaching assistant stopped talking Donald sat quietly waiting to re-join the game.*

The brief pause following Donald's name was indicative of the teaching assistant waiting to achieve acknowledgement from Donald that he was listening to her. The second part of the teaching assistant's utterance, "*you playing the game*" carried the main part of her message. Donald's inappropriate behaviour was ignored but the teaching assistant's utterance advised Donald of what she conceived as appropriate behaviour. The second pause in the teaching assistant's utterance may be interpreted as her waiting for Donald to be quiet and ready to re-join the game. When, once again, Donald failed to respond appropriately the teaching assistant offered further guidance by confirming that the children were playing 'stop and go'. The additional tag question, "*aren't we*" was used to confirm Donald's acceptance of her advice. Although Donald did not verbalise his acceptance of the teaching assistant's advice, his behaviour indicated that he had done so.

#### 3.9.4.

*Later in the same session when Donald was supposed to be playing but was actually sitting resting.*  
*Teaching assistant (TA).*

*TA Donald you're moving about . aren't you*

Once again the adult limited Donald's options for interaction by making a positive assertion which described required behaviour. During these utterances the teaching assistant maintained her gaze on the activity within the playroom and avoided direct eye contact with Donald. In this way she did not present him with any opportunity for reciprocal discourse, so avoiding potential arguments. The tag questions, "*aren't we*" and in 3.9.4., "*aren't you*" demonstrate a structural feature of discourse described by Levinson (1992), which he says invariably produces affirmative responses. Thus Donald's opportunity to dispute the teaching assistant's appraisal of the situation was further limited by her utterances.

Further examples of adults offering guidance or advice incorporating tag questions, which support acceptance of the advice include;

example 3.9.7.5., “*you’re not arguing are you*” to clarify that arguing was unacceptable.

Example 3.9.5., “*you’re not touching blue are you*” confirming that the children were abiding by the rules of the game.

Example 3.8.4.3., “*it is quiet in the book corner isn’t it*” an affirmation used to encourage a child to stop growling.

Example 4.7.1.6., “*you going to stand at the door really nicely aren’t you*”.

Positive assertions are also used to offer advice suggesting appropriate behaviour in specific settings, for example

2.1.5., “*Donald you need to close the door*”

2.3.14.3., “*you don’t need to touch that Leanne..*”.

3.5.4.19., “*you don’t need to get cross with me*”.

4.9.2., “*you need to look what you’re doing*”.

5.5.3.4., “*you need your shoes*”.

2.4.9., “*you need to get your top on*”.

3.7.2., “*you need a jumper*”, to a child who was slow to dress after physical activity.

The use of the verb ‘need’ in all these examples appears to place the adult’s perception of the child’s action as an imperative without the force of a direction. The adult utterances demonstrate concern for the children’s well-being as they suggest appropriate behaviour within specific situations. Within this setting these utterances do not appear to function as instructions but as suggestions, however, in other settings it is possible to see similar utterances being interpreted as directions. The subtle difference between utterances conveying suggestion and direction lies within the listener’s interpretation, in Searle’s (1994) terms, meaning remains within the listener’s domain and must be

re-negotiated by the speaker if a mis-match in meaning is evident. In effect these adult utterances create circumstances where the children are empowered to decide what happens next.

The contrast between suggestion and direction is demonstrated in 5.1.6.2. and 5.1.8. below, where the adult turns potential suggestions into more strongly assertive requests or directions.

5.1.6.2., "*Leanne...Leanne... you need to get a cloth ... clean the table please*" suggests how to repair a mistake.

5.1.8., "*Leanne you need to be in the line now*".

This change is achieved when the adult indicates of their personal emotional involvement in the situation. For example, in 5.1.6.2., "*you need to get a cloth*" can be interpreted as a suggestion until it is combined with "*clean the table please*", which functions as a request. Confirmation of the adult's perception of the situation and its resolution completely changes the force of the utterance.

Likewise with 5.1.8., the first part of the utterance, "*Leanne you need to be in the line*" could carry the force of a suggestion, but the additional, "*now*" moves it forcefully into the realm of a directive.

"*now*", takes the option of acceptable choice away from the child so that the adult utterance can only be complied with or rejected. In this situation the potential suggestion is confirmed as a directive. However, meaning dependent on paralinguistic features, which are outside the remit of the current study, does sometimes suggest that reduced volume and emphasis can also reduce the force of, "*now*", as the final word in an utterance and so limit the power of an apparent directive.

This is the case for 2.4.6. where conversation is about getting ready for lunch and the final, "*now*" appears to reflect a temporal state rather than an imperative.

The notion of offering suggestions continues in the next section as adults provide support to enable the children to envisage means of achieving specific objectives.

## SUGGESTING MEANS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES

As well as offering guidance or advice about the children's current behaviour adults used positive assertions to suggest means of achieving specific outcomes. In the example that follows, the teacher and teaching assistant made positive assertions about features of a queue which would enable the children to queue effectively and move on to their next activity.

### 3.11.2.

*The children were queuing up by the classroom door, ready to go out to play. This was often a difficult time liable to produce arguments and pushing. The teacher (T) approached the children apparently talking to the teaching assistant (TA). Both adults avoided any reciprocal gaze with the children in the queue.*

*T      let's see . this queue . is it a good one today*

*TA     their hands are by their sides*

*T      little gaps between everybody*

*(pause)*

*T      lead on .*

By positively stating those features of a queue which had been previously identified as helpful the teacher and teaching assistant offered the children clear indications of appropriate behaviour. At the end of each adult utterance the children were observed to monitor their own behaviour, looking to see that their hands were by their sides and that there were little gaps. Indeed, one child was softly repeating the adult utterances, like a mantra, as she checked her positioning. This could be interpreted as an example of Luria's (1961) second signalling system where children are observed to verbally monitor their own actions. The slight pause at the end of the adult's conversation enabled the children to actively queue in a quiet line before they left the room.

Other examples of adults using positive assertions to suggest means of achieving specific outcomes include,

4.6.6.3., “*make sure you’re in the right place*” sets a priority for an individual child.

3.10.12. cited on page 151, “*you don’t want to miss it*” to encourage a child to take up a work opportunity.

3.9.2., “*you don’t want to miss the next game*”.

As well as offering precise advice for acceptable behaviour in specific situations there is some evidence of adults suggesting strategies which have the potential to become embedded in a range of intellectual behaviours. These incidents may provide evidence of not just what to do, but more fundamentally, how to do it. This notion will be expanded in further discussion of these data.

The following examples all show adults suggesting how children might resolve particular problems;

6.1.7. on page 141, “*talk to him sort it out together*” shows an adult suggesting an appropriate course of action.

6.1.8.2. on page 141 also shows an adult offering guidance about a child’s interaction with others, “*why don’t you ask Toby see what he says*”.

Again, example 5.3.10.4., “*think it in your head . she wouldn’t like me to do it . so I’m not going to do it*” shows an adult offering guidance about how to behave.

6.1.11.3., “*why don’t you ask her*” suggests how to find out about other people’s ideas.

4.4.7., “*you could write to Charles and give it to him when he comes back . that’s what Emma . always does . she writes to Charles from Emma...*” suggesting how to communicate with someone from a different class.

6.2.7., “*you could be thinking about it when you’re . your turn you’d know which to say*” provides a positive suggestion to a child of a means of planning interaction.

The above examples provide advice about appropriate action but are all presented as positive



assertions, always leaving the opportunity for the child to make choices about its behaviour.

## **ANTICIPATING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**

Positive assertions used by adults to provide guidance or advice and suggest means of achieving specific outcomes provided the children with a choice about their behaviour. Tag questions are identified by Ten Have (2007) as increasing the probability of agreement between speaker and listener, thus acceptance of adult advice was high but the tone of interaction was not coercive and always presented children with guided choices. The notion of utterances that use positive assertions to anticipate appropriate behaviour is subtly different. In these examples the adult utterances were framed as if the children's appropriate behaviour was assumed. These utterances coincided with or briefly anticipated children's appropriate behaviour, as if by saying it, the action was achieved.

For example as the teacher made the positive assertion that Charles was writing, he began writing.

4.1.8., *"Charles's doing his writing"* .

3.10.2., *"oh he can get dressed Mrs F..."* anticipated Donald getting dressed after a playroom session.

6.1.12.4., *"you're playing in the house now Alex..."* to a child who moved away and then immediately returned to an activity she was supposed to be engaging with.

5.5.6., *"getting changed Donald"*.

4.2.6., *"I expect you're sitting in the book corner waiting for me"* followed by, *"you need to be sitting down"*.

Sometimes the adult utterance and the child's behaviour were so closely related that they merged, before one was complete the other was initiated. This rapid interaction between words and actions made it almost impossible to judge whether it was the adult or child who had initiated the

behaviour.

3.4.18., *“they’re sitting up ready for the next one”*, as children waited to take part in a game.

2.4.3.4., *“Donald will be really quiet this lunch time”* .

2.4.4.12., *“James you’re so sensible”* in anticipation of a child being able to remain calm in spite of his disappointment.

## **GIVING PERMISSION**

The notion of giving permission in this setting is not that encountered when an adult allows a child to participate in an activity in response to a request. In this setting the notion of giving permission is more akin to providing reassurance that the child’s response is acceptable. This is a subtle zone which is abutted on one side by the notion of offering guidance and on the other offering reassurance. It is part of a continuum of gradually reducing adult support or intervention. This may be akin to the notion of scaffolding discussed by Vygotsky (1982). That is, the process whereby skilled learners support the less skilled. The point at which the learner is able to operate with support, but not independently was termed by Vygotsky the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The subtle movement away from adult support for appropriate behaviour can be observed in the example below.

5.1.4.

*Harold (H) and Charles (C) were playing snakes and ladders after they had finished a set maths task. All adults were busy elsewhere. Both boys were intent on winning and Harold was trying to slip in extra turns. Without moving away from the task she was engaged with, the teaching assistant (TA) gave permission for Harold to take his turn.*

*TA      now its Harold’s turn . come on Harold your turn*

The teaching assistant's utterance is a positively framed assertion, "*now its Harold's turn*" which gives permission for Harold to take his turn. By remaining seated and continuing with her own task, rather than moving across to the two boys, the teaching assistant allowed them to resolve a minor problem. The positive assertion meant that neither boy was given the opportunity to incite an argument because the teaching assistant's statement was presented as a positive fact and so was difficult to dispute. This feature of positive assertions being used to reduce or dispel the impact of potential disputes has been identified many times within the data, for example

3.4.33., "*Alex is the leader of that team .. she is at the front*" confirming the order that children were joining a team game and by passing a potential disagreement between the children.

5.2.2.3., "*so you'll need to put the puzzle away properly when you finished*" is a positive assertion, giving permission for children working together to take joint responsibility for tidying up.

Previously the children had argued about tidying up but on this occasion they didn't.

2.4.6., is a positive assertion which gives the child permission to get ready for his lunch, so pre-empting an argument about him continuing with his preferred activity.

C2     *oh I want to do my pattern*

T       *(averts gaze)*

T       *good boy T.... you can wash your hands for dinner now*

Positive assertions are used to give permission rather than instructing, so that the child is left with a choice about what to do. Without access to further paralinguistic data the form and vocabulary used in these examples could be interpreted as instructing or directing. Conversation with the adults concerned, combined with video evidence suggest that the function of these positive assertions was not to instruct but to give permission. Several positive assertions used to give permission were accompanied by minimal gaze from the adult, as is the case in example 2.4.6 above. As previously discussed, Ten Have (2007) suggests that gaze can be instrumental in initiating and sustaining

conversation and withdrawal of gaze can be used to indicate a closure. In consequence some uncertainty remains as to whether gaze or positive assertions have the most impact when potentially problematic interactions, similar to the examples cited above, are closed down by adults.

The concept of presenting children with choice is further demonstrated in the following examples where children's tentative choices were supported by positive assertions giving them permission.

The children's dilemmas at the point when they were about to make a difficult choice were frequently resolved by adults using positive assertions to give permission. For example,

4.2.4., "*you can do them again because you been touching the bricks*", to a child who appeared reluctant to re-wash his hands before lunch after he had packed away the bricks he had been using.

4.2.5., "*it's not going to take you long putting those last pieces in*", to a child who seemed reluctant to complete one task before beginning the next.

6.2.1., "*you could come and be here now Donald...*", to a child who had to make a choice about conflicting demands on his time.

4.8.2., "*looking where you're going*", to a child engrossed in one aspect of a task at the expense of looking where it was going.

4.8.4., "*oh you can walk S...*", to a child rushing in to school.

2.3.2., "*we re doing our writing*", and 2.3.4.5. "*we're going to be doing the writing*", to children who knew that it was time to do writing but would have preferred other activities.

2.3.3.3., "*we're making a list of toys today.*", and once again to a child who knew what the task was but was reluctant to engage with it.

2.3.21.3., "*you could leave that gap*".

2.3.31.1., "*you can do it*", and 3.7.5., "*you can do your colouring*", giving permission for children to start work when they appeared reluctant to do so.

5.5.5., "*you can get changed on the carpet*" to Leanne, who knew she must dress after PE, but was

watching other children dress first.

3.9.3. page 157, “*you playing the game*”, to a child who became distracted during a game in the playroom.

## **OFFERING REASSURANCE**

Bennathan and Boxall (2000) say that children who frequently make mistakes and instigate, or become involved in inappropriate behaviour may not have a clear understanding of what is appropriate behaviour. For these children receiving reassurance when they are acting appropriately is essential. In the following examples members of the Early Years Team used positive assertions to actively support children’s appropriate decisions about their behaviour.

4.4.5., “*Leanne likes to say yes*” encouraging a child to accept others into her role play.

5.3.13.4., “*Alex... you want to be sensible*”.

3.10.5., “*you’re taking that to pieces carefully Charles ..*”.

Positive assertions are also used to offer reassurance to children who were uncertain about how to proceed or, perhaps, whether their behaviour was appropriate, for example

2.3.25.1., “*you can sit next to me .... I like to help the children*” is offered to reassure a child that help with his work was available.

2.4.1., “*she’ll notice you as soon as she comes in*” , to reassure a child that his behaviour was appropriate.

3.1.3.4., reassuring a child who was reluctant to come to school, “*and now you’re here it will be a lovely day*”.

4.6.7., “*oh you’re quiet . good girl*” , reassuring a child that her behaviour was acceptable.

5.3.5.7., “*Leanne you’re sitting beautifully*”, once again recognising and providing reassurance for appropriate behaviour.

4.9.3.3., “*oh you’ve got your hands on your knees . you’re a good boy.*” , and yet again recognising

and providing reassurance for appropriate behaviour.

5.3.6.4., “*Alex you’re sitting so quietly well done*”, providing recognition that sitting quietly is not necessarily easy for some children and giving the child reassurance that her current behaviour was entirely appropriate.

## **EXPRESSING APPROVAL OR RECOGNITION**

The balance between providing reassurance and expressing approval or recognition is very subtle. The vocabulary used is almost identical but the contexts in which these two categories of language are used are considerably different. In these examples children actively made appropriate choices without adult encouragement. The notion of behaviour which expresses approval or recognition demonstrates a steadily decreasing level of dependence on adults. Here the adults no longer provided guidance, suggested means to achieve outcomes, anticipated appropriate behaviour, gave permission or even offered reassurance; at this point adults were recognising that the children had made appropriate independent choices. These subtle changes are the focus of the next section.

2.3.31.4. cited on page 166, “*oh he can do it he’s very good at this*”.

4.2.1., “*I’m glad you’ve got very clean hands*”.

5.4.2.6., “*he likes people with kind hands*”.

2.3.13., “*I expect you’re writing it down*”.

4.6.9., “*I’m pleased you’re thinking now*”.

2.6.1.8., “*I’m sure he wants to eat some*”.

6.2.2., “*Alex has been standing quietly on the star*”.

5.3.1. the teacher’s utterance, “*and sitting quietly as well*” highlights appropriate behaviour among the child’s list of his positive achievements during the day.

## IDENTIFYING CAUSAL OR DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

As well as reflecting features of children's actual, or anticipated, behaviour, positive assertions are also used to state adults' perspectives. In the following examples positive assertions are used to identify potential chains of behaviour or perceived causal relationships. In 4.6.1. the teacher asked the child if she *"need"*ed to pick at the skin around her finger nails. In other words the teacher was ascertaining whether the behaviour was fulfilling a specific need for the child which she, the teacher, was unaware of. When the child responded that she did not need to pick her fingers then the teacher gave her permission to stop. The final turn in this episode is presented as a causal positive assertion, *"then don't"*. The context surrounding this utterance suggests it was not a direction. The utterance which drew the behaviour to the child's attention and then relieved her of responsibility for finger picking by confirming that she no longer needed to engage in it. The child continued to have ownership of the behaviour and the choice of whether to continue or stop, but the adult had provided her with a guided choice. The notion of children's needs is strongly embedded in the language used by adults within this sample. The content of this sequence is returned to later in the data, example 6.1.2 where the teacher provides further positive assertions which emphasise her duty of care for the child, *"I'll look after you . if you want to pick them I'll remind you you don't want to do it"*.

In these examples adults present outcomes which have causal or dependant relationships with observable features of the children's behaviour.

2.3.23.2., *"I won't be able to see you when its dinner time"*, to a child hiding under a table.

3.9.4.1. on page 158, *"I can't see you in there"* to a child hiding in the playroom.

3.14.1.1., *"you were shouting ...I can't ask you"*.

5.3.8.5., *"you sit down and I will say . do you want a drink"*.

Within the data there is one incident of a new teaching assistant communicating a causal relationship without itemising the potentially problematic features of the children's behaviour. The differences in this teaching assistant's style of communication and that of other members of the Early Years Team are critical because they demonstrate how consistent observable features of communication are among the established team members. Example 5.1.7. is, therefore, pertinent in evaluating the validity of data relating to established team members.

*At the end of playtime the children were arguing by the class room door. The teaching assistant (TA) was trying to organise the children in a quiet queue when the teacher (T) returned from her break.*

*TA we're going to practise tomorrow morning . again . cause its easier .*

*problem lining up again (directed to the returning teacher)*

*T oh no . any particular area*

*TA all of them . no C... was alright . but he was at the front of the line . wasn't he*

Without any preamble about why she wanted to practice lining up the teaching assistant said, "we're going to practise tomorrow morning ". This utterance does not provide explicit links between the children's behaviour and outcomes. Children were arguing in a queue as the teaching assistant said, "we're going to practise tomorrow morning . again . cause its easier ". Goodwin and Goodwin (2000) argue that emotional states can be expressed by non-semantic means, including intonation, timing and body posture. In this case it is not possible to make judgements about intonation but the issue of timing provides some indication of a raised emotional state. The pauses around the word, "again" serve a similar function to the breathy exhalations which Goodwin and Goodwin observed as indicative of emotional display. From the available data it is not possible, however, to determine exactly how the teaching assistant was feeling but her utterance, "we're going to practise tomorrow morning . again" suggests a degree of frustration. This could be an erroneous interpretation because, as previously stated the current level of transcription can always be mis-interpreted. However, within these data it is unusual to identify interactions where adults



could feasibly be displaying negative emotional states. For the most part the utterances of established team members appear to convey neutral or positive emotional states.

In addition to showing an increased emotional state the vocabulary that the teaching assistant used suggested that she was attempting to control the children's behaviour. "*we're going to practise tomorrow morning . again . cause its easier*", was a statement of fact which gave the children no choices, but stated that their behaviour would be controlled by an imposed sanction. This contrasts with the more prevalent strategy, within these data, of adult utterances guiding the children's options for their behaviour. As the teacher returned to the class the teaching assistant shared her difficulty, "*problem lining up again*". The teacher's response, "*oh no*" suggested disappointment, but it is not possible to say whether her dismay is with the children's behaviour or the teaching assistant's failure to negotiate queuing without incident. In either case the teacher unwrapped the problem with the query, "*any particular area*". At this point established members of the team might have commented on the appropriate behaviour of some members of the class. This was not the case for the inexperienced teaching assistant, her first utterance, "*all of them*", cast the entire class in a bad light. She immediately qualified this utterance with, "*no Charles was alright*". However, "*alright*" communicated limited approval of Charles' behaviour and was qualified with the tag, "*but he was at the front of the line*".

A more typical means of developing children's awareness of causal and dependent relationships is when adults appear to monitor their own thoughts and behaviour, this forms the focus of the next section of the data.

## **ADULTS MONITORING THEIR OWN THOUGHTS OR BEHAVIOUR**

The final section dealing with positive assertions shows adults apparently monitoring their own

thoughts or behaviour, providing commentaries on their motivations and expectations. In each case the adults monitor their own thoughts or behaviour alone, in the form of a commentary. When more adults become involved in the process of monitoring thoughts or behaviour, this study terms them 'laminated utterances'. Laminated utterances form the focus of a section below, the current section only identifies those features of discourse engaged in by single adults. These self monitoring adult utterances are frequently used to offer advice, encouragement or set routines, for example:

3.3.3 is typical of this type of self monitoring behaviour.

*Two children (C /C2)were noisily squirming on the window seat. Teacher (T).*

*T I'll be looking for some children to use this after when we come back from PE*

*C woow*

Here the teacher, almost absent mindedly, appeared to remember that the children would be using the new computer software after PE. Following the teacher's utterance the child started talking quietly.

6.1.16.1.,

*Teacher (T), child (C).*

*T oh . I asked the children to tidy up . I hope that's what they're doing*

*C didn't hear you*

*T good job I said it again*

*T oh . Alex you were playing in the house . do you think . put that table back in the corner and put the bench away please*

Here the first part of the teacher's utterance appeared to show her reflecting on a previous request that the children should tidy up. By apparently monitoring her own thoughts the teacher was able to return to her meaning, that the children should begin tidying up, but avoided increasing the force of her utterance. In this way she did not place increased demand on the children to tidy up but

provided a reminder and then moved on to prompting individual children about what they needed to do. The child's response, "*didn't hear you*", given as a reason for not having started to tidy up, suggests he was adopting a defensive position. The teacher quietly responded to the surface meaning of the child's utterance, rather than its deep meaning which she could have been interpreted as offensive. Thus sustaining the low key intervention of her original self monitoring utterance.

Example 4.8.8., "*oh have I chosen the wrong person ...*", shows the teacher apparently monitoring her own thoughts. At the same time, reflecting on her previous decision about which child could walk reliably in school. Following the teacher's self monitoring utterance Steven stopped trotting and began walking. By monitoring her own thoughts the teacher did not appear to place any blame on Steven who was trotting, but rather took responsibility for his behaviour by questioning her choice of who should lead the class queue.

5.6.1.4., "*I can't choose boys while they are arguing*" and then "*is this a good queue*" "*with gaps and the arms by our legs*". In this example the teacher again appeared to monitor her own thoughts, reminding herself of the criteria of a 'good' queue. She moved quickly on from the issue of children arguing to list the features of a good queue. In this way the argument between the boys was minimised and desirable behaviours replaced it as a focus for the children. Strategies for framing events in a positive way and minimising negative aspects of behaviour occupy a key position in these data, as do features which present cumulative learning experiences, the notion of how to form a successful queue is one such cumulative learning experience. The role of high profile positive utterances and cumulative learning experiences are central in discussion of these data.

## **LAMINATED UTTERANCES**

Within the video evidence there were occasions when several adults appeared to be holding private

conversations within the children's hearing. Some of these conversations functioned as adults sharing the monitoring of their thoughts or behaviours. In addition, these interactions followed the pattern of 'laminated utterances' described by Goodwin (2004), where there are two different listener roles within the discourse. In Goodwin's terms these are the *knowing* recipient and the *unknowing* recipient. In the current study these roles are filled by informed adult listeners who have shared objectives for acceptable behaviour, and the less-informed children who are being introduced to objectives for acceptable behaviour in the classroom situation. Whilst the children appear largely passive observers I would suggest, that although they do not make spoken contributions, the evidence of their involvement lies in their subsequent actions.

Within the current study, adult discourse which appeared to take place across the children is described as demonstrating laminated utterances. Adult participants reported that the intended audience was generally children, although the listening task was not specifically directed towards them. There were, however, examples of laminated utterances used to inform children alongside 'unknowing' adults. To support clarity, laminated utterances are categorised in terms of their ability to 'monitor ideas, thoughts and behaviour', 'defuse tension', 'state appropriate behaviour' and consider 'contrasting ways that adults used laminated utterances'. Each of these categories is discussed separately, although in reality there are overlaps between all the categories described.

## MONITORING THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR

### 2.2.2.

*Teacher (T) and two teaching assistants (TA, TA2) talking beside the playground door, one child remains outside in the rain.*

*TA           eee ...a silly fancy being in the rain*

*TA2   oh dear*

*T       look it's cold*

During playtime it started to rain, the children went indoors, Tyler remained outside. The adults stood at the door apparently monitoring their thoughts on the adverse weather conditions. Throughout this interaction the adults avoided reciprocal gaze with Tyler and, at a surface level, made no attempt to influence his behaviour. They showed concern for the child with the phrase, “*oh dear*” and “*look its cold*” but accepted his choice to be in the rain, “*silly . fancy being in the rain*”. The utterances did not contain any emotional imperatives directing the child to come indoors, the adults allowed the child to make his own decision but indicated the limitations of staying outdoors. Presenting facts which allowed the child to make choices meant that neither the adults nor the child were in a situation where either had to back down or lose face.

Further examples of adults using laminated utterances in order to guide the children towards more appropriate behaviour include;

2.4.3., “*Donald will be really quiet this lunch time*”, shows adults using positive assertions within a laminated utterance to guide a child’s behaviour without directly involving him. The child did not dispute the adult assertion. Had Donald been noisy at lunch time, conflict between adults and child could have been minimised because he had not been directly instructed to be quiet.

As well as being used to influence the behaviour of a single child, laminated utterances were used with larger groups of children to support their appropriate behaviour.

3.4.13., “*I can’t hear you Mrs M...*”, where one of the adults commented on her inability to hear what another adult was saying to the children. At a surface, level this utterance was not intended for children to respond to, but as the room quietened their response was evident. In this way the inappropriate noise level in the room was addressed without reference to particular children being too noisy. This utterance presented a factual observation of the adults’ and children’s requirement for a quiet work space.

4.1.4.5. , *“I expect they’ll be quiet people too” “yes . I’m only asking the quiet people”*. Once again, a factual discussion between two adults describes desirable behaviour and the outcome that it will achieve. By apparently excluding children from this discussion the adults were able to limit excessive emotional responses by the children. Children were made aware of the adults’ expectations for quiet as well as the criteria governing who would be chosen for the next activity without directly involving them.

2.5.2., *“Mrs B... can you see the quiet sitting up people”*, is a laminated utterance which showed adults reinforcing the notion of behaviour appropriate to the setting. Once again this utterance limits the children’s ability to participate in the conversation and as a result their potential for negative emotional engagement.

In large group settings adults also used joint monitoring of thoughts and behaviours to focus listening and thinking skills whilst encouraging responses similar to those which might be expected from direct questioning in a different educational setting.

Utterances which demonstrated adults enabling children to respond to indirect questioning can be seen in example 3.4.11.

*Two teachers (T, T2) talking together in a PE lesson as a teaching assistant places a quoit in front of each team.*

*T        I want the children to think of something to play*

*T2       oh I expect they are*

*T        what can we do with this .*

*what \*\*\*could we do*

*(children begin to put their hands up)*

Here two adults apparently monitored their expectations of the children. This time, however, rather than prompting the children towards exhibiting appropriate behaviour, the adults used laminated utterances to support the children to consider the next activity in a PE lesson. The challenge that the

adults presented was for the children to explain their ideas to the whole class. Laminated utterances allowed the adults to set the scene rather than questioning the children directly. Direct questioning could have been conceived, by some of the children, as threatening or intimidating, whilst offering a response in front of a large group presented an extreme challenge. The children were encouraged to volunteer to help the adults make decisions rather than attempt to second guess their preconceived ideas. The first adult set the challenge with, *“I want the children to think of something to play”* which was reinforced by the second adult’s utterance, *“oh I expect they are”* and then extended by the first adult who placed boundaries on the game that the children might choose, *“what can we do with this . what \*\*\* could we do”*. The visual input of the third adult placing a quoit in front of each team provided an additional element for the children to place their ideas against.

Example 3.4.12., provided a sequel to 3.4.11., as the adults considered the task of *“thinking”*, and which children might be *“good thinkers”*. Adult participants cited the key function of these utterances was to encourage children to participate in shared intellectual endeavour through repetition of both the outcomes, *“what sort of race it will be”* and how to generate ideas by, *“thinking about them”*. At the end of the sequence of utterances the adults reframed the rules of the race, *“not holding it”* (the quoit) by reiterating them to each other and recalling *“it’s a race”*, in the form of a laminated utterance. The adults repeated and clarified key issues between themselves without involving the children. Examples 3.4.14. and 3.4.29. return to this theme of enabling children to take part ownership of the content of activities in the PE lesson, adults once again used laminated utterances to prompt the children to explain or demonstrate their ideas for races. Example 3.4.30. also showed adults clarifying rules together, *“.. when they get here they need to touch the post . do they”*. Without overtly reflecting on the children’s interpretation or recall of the rules the adults were able to recast explanations using precise but simple language in a concrete context. Paul (2007) cites these features of communication as helpful for children who may have receptive

language difficulties.

Example 2.6.5., “*you won’t forget to remind the children about their reading books will you Mrs M...*” “*no . they’ll all get their reading folders from the sand tray*”, demonstrated the teacher and teaching assistant providing discourse to further the children’s ability to listen, think and make decisions. In this case the children had to make choices about whether or not they wished to take their reading books home. In the setting being studied most of the children had previous experience of failing to read and so both they and their parents were potentially sensitive or reluctant to extend reading beyond the confines of the classroom. As a result children were encouraged, but not consistently expected, to take their reading books home.

Laminated utterances were repeatedly used by adults to promote specific learning objectives, as in example 3.4.11. and 3.4.12 above. The role of laminated utterances in the children’s learning, therefore, provides a feature for further discussion.

## **DEFUSING TENSION**

In our conversations adults were clear that in most situations they would aim to de-escalate potential confrontations so that they could arrive at calm outcomes with the children. Throughout the data there is little evidence of confrontation stimulated by adult behaviour. This may be in part a result of the nature of the data collection process, which set out to examine discourse which supported and sustained appropriate behaviour, however, laminated utterances have the potential to extensively contain or dissipate confrontation. This is demonstrated by the following examples.

3.10.4.,

*The teaching assistant (TA) indicates to the teacher (T) why one children returned from the playroom before the rest of the group.*

*TA      Sorry Martin came back*



*T it was a shame . didn't get very long to play*

*TA did he tell you why*

*T no . he came in a bit of a cross mood . we haven't talked about it yet*

*(.....)*

*T I'm going to talk to Martin at play time Mrs B... about his playroom . he doesn't want to talk to me now*

In this example the child returned to the classroom upset and potentially very angry about only being in the playroom for a very short time, as a consequence of him being slow to complete his work. Rather than confronting the child directly the teacher and teaching assistant discussed a plan to talk the incident through with the child at playtime, thus providing time for Martin to calm down. The adult conversation provided the child with simple unemotional statements of what was going to happen next. In discussion with me the adults said that they wanted Martin to be able to calm down, so they set out to draw a line under this episode. However, they felt that his previous inappropriate behaviour should not pass unrecognised. By stating that they would discuss the the incident with Martin at playtime the adults and child all had time to consider the options coolly. A similar pattern is seen in example 5.1.2. when Leanne arrived at the lunch table without her shoes (because she had been kicking during the morning session). After sharing their regret that Leanne had no shoes on the teacher's explanation to the teaching assistant, "... *Leanne has lost her playtime . she can have her shoes and tights when I come back*" provided Leanne with a clear summary of the consequences of her behaviour within her earshot but without involving her in the conversation. By excluding her from the conversation the adults provided Leanne with time to reflect on the consequences of her behaviour without involving her emotionally. Laminated utterances, therefore, provided tangential routes for offering guidance to children which encouraged or discouraged specific behaviours. They also targeted the children's active listening skills whilst at the same time reducing potential confrontation.

## STATING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Examples of laminated utterances were frequent within the data but because it was naturally occurring discourse they were often embedded in conversation which demonstrated other pertinent features of discourse. In the following examples laminated utterances enabled positive assertions about appropriate behaviour to be stated as well as allowing a teacher to offer supportive asides to individuals and groups of children.

3.4.25./ 26./27.

*As part of the PE lesson the children were preparing for a collaborative race in which they shuffled across the floor in groups of four, each holding the child in front around the waist. Most of the children were chatting excitedly to other members of their group. The teachers were preparing to start the race.*

*(LT; lead teacher, T2; teacher 2)*

*LT oh Toby's got a very good caterpillar*

*(one group of children are quiet and ready to start the race)*

*T2 oh we can't do it until its quiet Mrs W*

*(several groups continue talking noisily)*

*LT most of the children are quiet Mrs M .. they're waiting sensibly*

*( less noise)*

*T2 don't lose any part of your body will you (prompt to a group of children)*

*(most children holding on to team member in front of them)*

*T2 don't lose the back of your caterpillars*

*(race starts)*

Here positive assertions, “*Toby's got a very good caterpillar*”, “*most of the children are quiet ..*

*they're waiting sensibly*" were made by the lead teacher. She used the physical setting to highlight appropriate behaviour by referring to visible models, for example Toby's caterpillar being "*very good*". The lead teacher also stated precise criteria for appropriate behaviour, "*children are quiet*" and "*waiting sensibly*". With her utterance, "*oh we can't do it until its quiet*" the second teacher enabled the lead teacher to echo the key features of appropriate behaviour. This type of repetition was frequently found within the data. Such repetition of key words, for example "*quiet*" provided the children with increased opportunities to respond with appropriate behaviour.

The second teacher introduced another feature of discourse which was strongly in evidence in this study; that is, her supportive stance towards the children. Schegloff (2007) suggests that the use of, "*oh*" in an utterance, as in the teacher's, "*oh we can't do it until it's quiet*" may signal a change of state. In this case the vocabulary used may suggest that the teacher was displaying a forceful attitude her general demeanour and soft voice suggested disappointment at being unable to start the game. Whilst her comment, "*don't lose any part of your body*" could be interpreted as a directive the additional, "*will you*" turns it into a supportive utterance, as if reminding children of something they had forgotten. In a similar vein her next turn also reinforced the notion of collaboration to achieve appropriate behaviour with a quiet reminder "*don't lose the back of your caterpillar*".

Example 2.3.22., also demonstrated adults working together citing criteria for acceptable behaviour, "*do you want to take children in an argument Mrs F..*" and affirming a shared belief, "*I don't think it would be safe..*" and then re-stating the criteria, "*if you hear anything like that again ....*". Whilst holding these conversations within earshot of the children, but without their active participation, the adults were able to avoid emotional condemnation of the child's behaviour or blame. Condemnation or blame might have exacerbated the situation by producing the confrontational behaviour that the adults had previously told me they aimed to avoid. Rather than confronting unacceptable behaviour

the adults made the features of acceptable behaviour absolutely clear. Within this example the boundaries of acceptable behaviour were re-stated so that the child who potentially had SLCD had several opportunities to decode meaning. During this process the child was able to make his own choices about the qualities of appropriate behaviour.

As previously noted with positive assertions, primary functions of laminated utterances were to offer guidance and encouragement for appropriate behaviours, discourage inappropriate behaviours and consistently present the children with choices about their behaviours. These functions are in evidence in the following examples of adult conversations held within earshot of the children but not overtly directed towards them.

3.4.21. adults cite appropriate behaviour before a race in PE can begin, “*...straight backs and hands on their knees*”, “*....in the right place*” .

3.4.26. on page 180, where “*quiet*” is the key attribute.

3.4.30. cited on page 177, where key rules for a game are repeated, “*... behind the line ...*” and “*... touch the post...*”, and avoided potential confusions.

4.8.3., where appropriate behaviour is identified, “*.. it isn't loud by J...*” and “*... L's waiting patiently*”.

4.8.6., where once again the focus is, “*quiet*”.

4.9.1. and 4.9.3., where, “*sitting*”, “*ready*” and, “*hands on their knees*” are once again itemised appropriate behaviour.

4.2.7., demonstrates adults' discourse being used to remind a child that he had returned to the classroom to wash his hands for lunch, “*.. he's come in to do his hands*” as they monitored his behaviour. Adult discourse focused on getting ready for lunch and as they talked about what the child was doing he gradually accomplished his toileting routine. The adult utterances acted as reminders of a sequence of activity, which Paul (2007) suggests can be difficult for some children

with SLCD to recall. Thus the adult laminated utterances may have helped this child to avoid distractions, delays and the potential for disturbance that he sometimes got involved in on other occasions when he forget exactly what he was meant to be doing.

Example 2.6.1. 4. cited on page 145, “*there’s a space right next to Mrs M...*” shows adults offering guidance which enables children to find their own places at a group table.

## **CONTRASTING PRESENTATIONS OF LAMINATED UTTERANCES**

Laminated utterances were used by adults to provide additional insights into children’s behaviour, for example, 5.3.7. This segment of discourse showed the nursery nurse and supply teacher collaboratively using laminated utterances to encourage appropriate behaviour whilst the class teacher offered overt support to James. The teacher’s utterance, “*you need both hands on your knees . then she’ll see you*”, however, drew the supply teacher’s attention to James’ effort to conform. In effect the class teacher’s utterances acted as a pivot, laminating meaning between the child and the other adults, and the adults and the child. She was a knowing partner in both the adult and child centred conversations but acted as if she was only aware of the child’s utterances.

Later in example 5.3.9., the teaching assistant took on the pivotal role of prompting James, “*be waiting . quickly . there might be another one*”, which, combined with eye contact between the adults prompted the supply teacher to recognise James’ appropriate behaviour.

Example 5.3.5., shows the nursery nurse, once again, supporting the supply teacher with laminated utterances, “*ask the quiet people Mrs C... if they’d like a bit of banana*”. However, when the supply teacher by-passed Martin with the fruit the nursery nurse anticipated his disappointment and provided the supportive utterance, “*we don’t make a fuss*”. This also provided the supply teacher with additional information that Martin’s calm demeanour needed acknowledgement. Together the adults were providing a mesh of utterances to support the appropriate behaviour of individual children and the group. Simultaneously the adults provided each other with feedback on the

behaviour of children, which might otherwise have passed unrecognised. These examples do not function in exactly the same way as those previously identified because a third adult was offering active support to the child, whereas in previous examples adults only provided suggestions for appropriate behaviour.

Examples 5.3.7. on page 184, 5.3.9. and 5.3.5. discussed above all showed members of the Early Years Department using laminated utterances to support the children and each other, however, there are a few examples of laminated utterances being used by less secure team members. Such interactions provide evidence of discourse which contrasts with the majority of data in this study. This contrast affords an opportunity to gain further insights into the acquisition, development and features of interactions within the Early Years Department. However, the inclusion of these atypical events also emphasises the similarities within the bulk of the data. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) suggest that the inclusion of atypical data and their analysis may serve as indicators of validity within the entire study.

Example 6.1.5., showed the class teacher and a teaching assistant using laminated utterances to specify the criteria they were using to select children to be invited to visit the local toy shop, “*two children who didn’t go last time*”, “*... finished all his work*”. However, rather than the concise utterances used by most members of the Early Years Team this teaching assistant’s utterances are longer. She offers causal explanations that seem almost redundant in contrast to the brief utterances of other team members, “*and we don’t get many lovely days this time of year . so I thought it be nice*”. Equally, the explanation preceding her rejection of Donald is convoluted and lacks fluency, “*well he wasn’t with me cause he said . at lunch ti . dinner time . when I said . did he want to go to the toilet . oh . it was time to go to the toilet he said he’d bin ... but we found out that perhaps he hadn’t been . so perhaps . if he’s saying no he hasn’t been (to Toys R Us) he must have been*”.

Example 6.1.17., recorded another sequence involving the same teacher and teaching assistant. In this segment the teacher appeared to be setting up a sequence of laminated utterances to encourage the children to tidy up the classroom prior to snack time, “*where’s Alex . oh she’s at the door ready for snack*”. However, rather than building on the teacher’s discourse as established team members regularly did, for example in 5.3.7, the teaching assistant terminated it with “*doesn’t look like it*”. At which point the teacher’s utterances became more typical of self monitoring behaviour as she alerted children to the next activity, “*... lining up for snack*”, “*I think it’s a very nice snack today*”.

The following segment of discourse demonstrates further contrasting styles of communication between adults. Although this segment of discourse is presented as a single event it can be considered as two discrete events. The first interaction between Donald and the teaching assistant precipitates the second, between the teacher and parent. The contrasts and relationships between these two linked segments of discourse provide the focus for the next section of analysis. As with previous examples, the first utterance can be viewed as a second turn response to a potentially problematic situation, that is, Donald’s excitable behaviour whilst dressing.

#### 4.1.5.

*The class was in the book corner. Children were changing out of their PE kits after a session in the soft play room. Donald (D), was known to be fairly slow to dress, easily distracted from the task in hand and very noisy. Getting changed was quite a difficult time for several of the children.*

*Unacceptable behaviour was often provoked by Donald’s ability to fill the space with noise and his activity level. While the children were dressing the teaching assistant (TA) was preparing some work for the children at the computer; the teacher (T) was preparing to finish writing tasks with some children; a parent helper (P) was setting up a task where children were going to be invited to*

*help her decorate cakes for the Christmas sale.*

TA *oh . if Donald isn't ready I won't be able to ask him to help me*

D *I'm being quick ... I'm being quick*

TA *James . come and help me*

D *oooooh*

*(continues fussing over dressing)*

T *I'm just listening to the quiet people . in the book corner*

P *Donald hasn't had a go here yet*

T *oh well .. if . Donald is quiet enough Ann . you could ask him to come and help you with the cakes*

P *I'll be listening then*

The teaching assistant's interaction with Donald contrasts sharply with much of the other data analysed. Her first utterance, "*if Donald **isn't** ready I **won't** be able to ask him to help me*" placed emphasis on the negative aspects of Donald's behaviour and her expectation that he would not have an opportunity to work at the computer. Although it has been noted that occasionally similar negative vocabulary can be found in the data the teaching assistant's intonation and demeanour suggested a hostility towards Donald that she had reportedly shared with other members of the team. In contrast, the teacher's statement, *I'm just listening to the quiet people . in the book corner*" promoted a positive focus on children achieving acceptable behaviour. The teaching assistant's utterances were also unusual because they did not provide the collaborative discourse between adults and children which was in evidence in other interactions and echoed that cited by Alexander (2001) in classrooms where dialogue was common. For example, the teacher's utterance, "*if . Donald is quiet enough Ann . you could ask him to come and help you with the cakes.*", has a supportive tone and helped to construct the expectation of a positive outcome. Although both the



teacher and teaching assistant used a conditional, “*if*” the teaching assistant’s utterances show repeated rejection of Donald, whereas the teacher offered encouragement. Indeed, the teaching assistant continued with dismissive rejection as the segment of discourse progressed. Donald’s urgent utterance, “*I’m being quick*”, imploring the teaching assistant to reconsider him, was ignored. Equally, his repetition, which could have re-opened the discourse, was not taken up by the teaching assistant, instead she went on to invite James to join her. Donald’s desolate, “*oooooh*” concluded this segment of interaction. The teaching assistant’s distinctive behaviour, which contrasted with that of other members of the Early Years Team could be explained by her only having worked in the department for a very few weeks so she was not an established member of the communicative community. The contrasting pattern of communication used by this particular teaching assistant provides some insights into the possible ways that a community style of communication evolves and is incorporated into the discussion that follows.

Once the teaching assistant’s part in this segment of discourse was completed the teacher did not refer back to it, as was the case in the previous example 6.1.17, but continued the interaction by defining the behaviour that she was expecting, “*I’m just listening to the quiet people*”. In this way she appeared to distance herself from the negative statements that the teaching assistant had made. As the teacher picked up the conversation she framed the requirements for appropriate behaviour as positive assertions. The key word that she used each time she referred to Donald’s behaviour was, “*quiet*”. She highlighted the active task, whilst apparently ignoring the noises that Donald was making. As in the previous examples the child was being focused towards the positive outcomes of acceptable behaviour. He was made aware of the choices that he was taking with his own behaviour, without highlighting the negative aspects.

In the above segment of conversation the criterion for Donald to join the activity he was likely to

find most desirable, that is, working at the computer, was cited by the teaching assistant as, “*being ready*”. The teacher's stated aim was to maintain a calm equilibrium in the classroom so once it became clear that Donald had missed his first choice of activity she stepped in to counter Donald's predictable disappointment. The teacher's utterance, “*I'm just listening to the quiet people . in the book corner*” offered the merest suggestion that appealing alternative activities were available. The parent then extended the topic by ‘reminding’ the teacher that Donald had not helped with the cake decorating. This gave the teacher a further chance to talk about Donald being quiet and the parent rounded off the episode by re-affirming the criteria for joining her group. The parent helper, who had been a member of the Early Years Team for two years, further extended and refocused the interaction by drawing attention to the potential for positive outcomes. She suggested that Donald might be able to join her cake decorating group if his behaviour was appropriate. The teacher also presented her own part in this episode as one of supporting Donald to achieve a desirable outcome. For example “*oh well if Donald is quiet enough Ann you could ask him to come and help you with the cakes*”. Teacher and parent positively avoided giving the impression of preventing Donald from either joining desirable activities or continuing with his noisy unacceptable behaviour. Ultimately adults and child were working together to resolve a situation, they were not in opposition. This flexible, collaborative interaction could be seen to reflect the core criteria of dialogic teaching, which is discussed further in the chapter reflecting on pedagogy.

Throughout the segment of conversation the parent and teacher remained focused on their interaction, they did not involve or respond to Donald's comments. Gaze was once again instrumental in maintaining conversation within the adults' control. Neither the parent nor the teacher used gaze to invite Donald to participate in the conversation nor, indeed, to pay attention to it. The restricted participation that Donald was permitted, through the adults' careful use of gaze, also provided him with reflective distance. He was discouraged from showing his frustration

because he was not directly involved in the conversation because no-one appeared to be responding to him. This calm interval provided Donald with time and a more reflective attitude to consider ways of resolving his frustration.

When two or more adults are involved in discourse, as in the above example, core ideas are repeated. Such repetition not only slows the pace of interaction but at the same time, provides the child with several opportunities to interpret meaning. In all, Donald had five opportunities to engage with the idea that the quicker he dressed the greater the choice of activity that would be available to him. Adult control, repetition and the pace of conversation may have helped enable Donald to make choices and take control of his own behaviour. Paul (2007) states that repetition and pace are critical factors in enabling those children who potentially have difficulty understanding the key elements in spoken language to participate in the interactions.

The few incidents described above provide exceptional examples of laminated utterances because they took part between experienced team members and a teaching assistant who had only recently joined the department. Although these examples demonstrate adults collaboratively itemising criteria for children's behaviour, they lack the fluency of similar interactions between more experienced team members. These differences in communicative style may provide potential insights into how members of the Early Years Team developed a community style of communication. They are considered in detail as part of the discussion that follows.

## **STRUCTURAL DEVICES**

Hopper (2005) suggests that linguistic structures provide the framework on which the creative aspects of meaning are overlaid. The structural devices within these data are the procedural structures known as adjacency pairs and preference organisation and the structural feature that this

study terms extended patterns of interaction. This section begins by identifying features of adjacency pair routines.

### ADJACENCY PAIRS

Levinson states that an utterance should not be viewed in isolation but in relation to what precedes and follows it. This feature of conversation is most readily seen in the case of questions which demand answers. For example, in 4.4.2 cited on page 140 the teacher's question, "*you want to ask Leanne to come and play*", precipitates a simple response, "*yes...*" or in example 6.1.9. on page 148 the teacher's question, "*what have you forgot to do*" receives the response, "*put name*".

Adjacency pairs do not just operate in single sequences but can stimulate extended chains of utterances. For example, 4.1.4. shows a sequence of questions and answers between the teacher and teaching assistant in which questions and answers alternate as previous answers generate additional questions.

- 1        T        *mrs. F . are you looking for anyone else .*  
                  *who hasn't got toys in their mouth*
- 2        TA        *I will be*
- 3        T        *I spect they'll be quiet people too*
- 4        TA        *yes . I'm only asking quiet people*
- 5        T        *people who aren't waving their shirts around*
- 6        TA        *can't hear it . if they're loud*
- 7        T        *you wouldn't choose anyone who was waving their shirt around . would you*
- 8        TA        *no . it would be dangerous by the computer*

Initially, the teacher's question at turn five, "*people who aren't waving their shirts around*" does not appear to relate to the teaching assistant's response at turn six, "*can't hear it . if they're loud*".

Indeed, the teaching assistant appears to have continued with a subsidiary, delayed response to turn

three which prompts the teacher to rephrase and repeat her turn five question at turn seven. This segment of interaction demonstrates how each speaker is able to prompt the next to recast or elaborate previous utterances. In this way a gradual picture of appropriate behaviour was built up for the listening child. In addition the sequence of turns allowed the speakers to add content that the other may have neglected, in this case the issue of waving t-shirts was introduced in turn five, and reiterated in turn seven and further expanded in turn eight.

The role of adjacency pairs to determine further utterances is, however, not limited to questions and answers. 3.4.13., on page 175, for example, shows each segment of conversation between the two teachers providing links in a chain of utterances. The statement, *"I can't hear you"* produces the observation, *"it's far too noisy"*. Together these utterances produce a short sequence linked by observations about noise levels within the room. A longer sequence where each turn builds on the preceding ones is illustrated by example 3.11.2., where teacher and teaching assistant were commenting on a group of children in the process of lining up. Following on from the teacher's initiating utterance, *"let's see . this queue . is it a good one today"* the teaching assistant observed that the children had their hands by their sides. With her next turn the teacher added a further feature of a 'good' queue, *"little gaps between everybody"*. Thus, each turn can be seen to take on the content of the previous turn and feed into the turn that follows. The cumulative effect of gradually unfolding conversation that maintains a core topic, for example how to achieve appropriate behaviour as in 4.1.4 on page 190, is well placed to meet the listening and comprehension skills of young children who may have receptive language difficulties.

A development of the concept of adjacency pairs is that of preference organisation which stems from the early work of Sacks (1992). This provides a significant focus for the current study. Schegloff (2007) states that preferred responses are those statistically most likely to follow a given

utterance whilst dispreferred ones are less likely to do so. Levinson (1992) suggests that preferred responses often agree with the utterance directly preceding them. Indeed, Pomerantz (1992) states that preferred responses frequently show evidence of emphasised agreement. Following Pomerantz's observations Schegloff (1996) suggests that second turn repetitions are frequently used to confirm a view. Data from the current study concur with these observations, for example, in an extract from example 3.4.11. on page 175 the teacher's utterance, "*I want the children to think of something to play*", was echoed and endorsed by a second teacher, "*oh I expect they are*" and similarly, example 3.4.18. on page 164, "*we haven't done that 'put the quoit on the post race' for a long time*" is confirmed by the second teacher with, "*oh we haven't*". Simple agreement between adult utterances is also reflected in apparent shared uncertainty, example 3.4.14. on page 177 shows two teachers confirming their mutual uncertainty, "*I wonder what race we're going to be doing next*" "*oh I don't know*".

Davidson (1992) states that preferred responses are powerful motivators in discourse and goes on to suggest that speakers go to lengths to maintain them. She observes that a pause towards the end of the first speaker's utterance anticipates the second speaker's turn. If the pause is not filled by the second speaker then the potential for a dispreferred response becomes apparent to the first speaker. At this point the first turn speaker may use a tag question to avoid a dispreferred response. Extract 5.3.7. on page 184, follows Davidson's observed format. When the nursery nurse's comment, "*I expect you're looking for the people with their hands on their knees*" failed to elicit an immediate response from the supply teacher, the nursery nurse continued with the tag question, "*aren't you*". This tag question can be seen to elicit the supply teacher's response, "*I am*". The nursery nurse, therefore, provided the supply teacher with a key to stimulate her further communicative action in a particular direction. Indeed, the expectation of agreement between turns is such that without strong agreement there is the potential that weak agreement may signal disagreement in following turns.

This, in part, explains the supply teacher's extension of her initial response of, "*I am*" to the stronger affirmation, "*I am . yes*".

Further evidence of emphatic endorsement is found in example 4.1.4. on page 190 where adult utterances complement each other. The teacher's comment, "*you wouldn't choose any one who was waving a t-shirt around . would you*" precipitated the teaching assistant's utterance, "*no it would be dangerous by the computer*". The teaching assistant's utterance not only agreed with that of the teacher but enhanced and extended it by emphasising how dangerous swinging t-shirts could be. In turn the teaching assistant's comment precipitated the teacher's response, "*oh . it would wouldn't it . yes . very dangerous*". This built on and further emphasised agreement with the two segments, "yes" "very dangerous".

Conversation which elicited preferred responses was initiated by all the established members of the adult team with little regard to their roles within the department, for example; in 5.3.7. on page 184 the nursery nurse prompted the supply teacher's utterance; in 4.1.5. on page 185 the parent prompted a teacher's utterance; in 3.4.13. on page 175 a supporting teacher prompted the lead teacher's utterance.

5.3.7.

*(J...pushes biscuit tin off the table)*

- |   |                     |  |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | TA                  | <i>oh dear it's nearly time for food</i>   |
| 2 | Nursery Nurse       | <i>I expect you're looking for the people with their hands<br/>on their knees aren't you Mrs C....</i> |
| 3 | Supply Teacher      | <i>I am . yes . I can't see any one at the moment<br/>(passing banana to Tyler)</i>                    |
| 4 | Child               | <i>neerrr</i>  |
| 5 | Established Teacher | <i>you need both hands on your knees then she'll see you</i>   |

- |   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 6 | <i>Established Teacher</i> | <i>oh look there s a good place here</i><br><br><i>(offering chair to James)</i> |
| 7 | <i>Supply Teacher</i>      | <i>A..... you're sitting really nicely . would you like a piece</i>              |
| 8 | <i>TA</i>                  | <i>banana smells really nice</i>   |
| 9 | <i>Nursery Nurse</i>       | <i>mmm</i>   |

This segment opens with the teaching assistant's only utterance, "*oh dear it's nearly time for food*". Neither the supply teacher nor nursery nurse treated the teaching assistant's utterance as the first part of an adjacency pair. Failure to respond to the teaching assistant's utterance by echoing or extending it marked it as a free standing comment which had little influence on what followed. This suggests that they did not perceive it as helpful and rather than following it they abandoned discourse based on that initiation. Indeed, consideration of the effect that this utterance had on the children's behaviour shows that it was either neutral or negative because the supply teacher and nursery nurse continued working to calm and settle the group after the teaching assistant finished speaking. It is, however, an adaptation of the predicted structural pattern which evolves after the teaching assistant's first turn which is of interest now.

The nursery nurse's role in this interaction was fundamental. She initially supported the supply teacher to help restore calm to the classroom. The nursery nurse's use of a question, "*I expect you're looking for people with hands on their knees aren't you Mrs C?*" provided the supply teacher with an opportunity to use a preferred response and agree with her, "*I am . yes*". However, rather than directly echoing the previous utterance, "*looking for people with their hands on their knees*" which positively stated expected behaviour, and was an observed pattern within the data, the supply teacher stepped back into a negatively framed utterance, "*I can't see any one at the moment*". The supply teacher's confirmation and continuation utterance, "*I can't see any one at the moment*", falls in line with the expected pattern of responses that Schegloff (1996) identified but is never-the-less



atypical within the current data. Following the second turn, which confirmed the nursery nurse's opinion, established team members may have used an echoing strategy to further define the expected behaviour, "*people with their hands on their knees*". This pattern of defining behaviour can be observed in examples 3.4.25/26/27. on page 180, example 4.1.4. on page 190 and example 4.1.5. on page 185. Following turn three the sequence appeared to stall momentarily until the established teacher re-directed discourse towards the topic of sensible sitting, with a definition of appropriate behaviour, "*you need both hands on your knees . then she'll see you*". The class teacher initiated a confidential conversation with James. In this aside the teacher re-affirmed the required behaviour and its consequence, "*then she'll see you*", an audible prompt for both James and the supply teacher. The teacher continued in the role of James' helper by identifying and offering him a chair. Once James was seated the supply teacher was able to respond to the teacher's prompt and comment positively about James' behaviour, "*you're sitting really nicely*" and offered him a slice of banana. In this tiny incident more established members of the Early Years Team supported visiting or new members. Both the nursery nurse and the teacher quietly provided the supply teacher with the means to sustain appropriate behaviour within the class and shared their established rapport with the children. At each point in this sequence of utterances the supply teacher was observed to act on the utterances of established team members in order to enable children to achieve and sustain appropriate behaviour. These sequential responses may be considered indicative of one means by which newcomers are gradually introduced to the prevalent style of communication used within the Early Years Department.

## **EXTENDED PATTERNS OF INTERACTION**

The features of creating shared meaning, positively framed assertions, laminated utterances, adjacency pairs and preference organisation which have been the main foci of analysis so far are equally relevant in the following section. However, here the main foci are the structural foundations

of expanding patterns of interaction.

4.1.4.

*The teaching assistant (TA) was on the point of asking Ryan to work with her at the computer when the teacher (T) noticed that he was sitting chewing a plastic toy and swinging a t shirt around his head.*

*T        mrs. F . are you looking for anyone else .*

*who hasn't got toys in their mouth*

*TA       I will be*

*T        I spect they'll be quiet people too*

*TA       yes . I'm only asking quiet people*

*T        people who aren't waving their shirts around*

*TA       can't hear it . if they're loud*

*T        you wouldn't choose anyone who was waving their shirt around . would you*

*TA       no . it would be dangerous by the computer*

*T        oh . it would wouldn't it . yes . very dangerous*

*(Ryan puts his t shirt away)*

This conversation between the teacher and teaching assistant has the quality of a laminated utterance, where a third participant, in this case Ryan, is taking on the role of less-informed listener and gleaning new information from the discourse of the other two participants. However, it is possible to view this conversation as a cumulative routine that is, it has a structure which is a common feature of interactions within this setting.

As is the case with all the data used in the current study, the child is considered to initiate the sequence of discourse. Ryan was sitting chewing on a toy and swinging his t-shirt. This behaviour precipitated one of the adults to initiate a conversation anticipating future events. In this instance,

the teacher asked the teaching assistant whether other children would be joining her shortly. The teacher's utterance was a question, "*are you looking for anyone else*", which gave the impression that the teaching assistant would be choosing another child to continue the activity she was already engaged with. The teaching assistant's use of "*will be*" left the time when she would choose a helper as some unspecified point in the future. In this way neither teacher nor teaching assistant tied themselves to an agreed course of action which could prove difficult to deliver, if, for example the mood in the classroom changed dramatically or the session ended before the activity was completed. As a coda to her first question the teacher began to suggest criteria for choosing children, "*who hasn't got toys in their mouth*". The teaching assistant's response confirmed the teacher's expectations that she would be choosing other children and because she did not counter the teacher's ancillary comment conveyed agreement with it. Together the teacher and teaching assistant were beginning to construct a context in which activities appeared to be being planned. Simple utterances confirmed that more children would be working with the teaching assistant as well as defining the behaviour of the chosen children. Additional features which contributed to the context that these adults were creating included the teaching assistant's task, working with children at the computer.

In her second turn the teacher provided additional information for the child listener, "*they'll be quiet people too*", precisely stating another criterion for working with the teaching assistant. In response the teaching assistant endorsed the teacher's comment that she would be asking quiet people. She then followed the teacher's lead by echoing her utterance, "*quiet people*" but increased its potency with the word "*only*", "*I'm **only** asking quiet people*". The practice of presenting the criteria for acceptable behaviour, "*people who aren't waving their shirts around*", agreeing, repeating, recasting or expanding the criteria continued through each turn. Once again providing several opportunities for those children who have SLCD to access the meaning of spoken messages.

As she took up her third turn the teaching assistant introduced a logical causal relationship, “*can’t hear it . if they’re loud*” thus suggesting that noisy children would not be able to engage with the computer software because they would be too loud to hear it. In her fourth turn the teaching assistant continued to justify her thinking by suggesting that waving shirts could potentially topple the computer monitor. The teacher went on to confirm the teaching assistant’s opinion that waving t shirts would be dangerous near the computer with the utterance, “*oh . it would wouldn’t it . yes . very dangerous*”. Goodwin (2003) suggests that “*oh*” at the beginning of an utterance frequently signals a change in cognitive state. In the teacher’s case it could be that she had not considered waving t shirts by a computer particularly dangerous and just needed a moment to assimilate the new idea. “*it would wouldn’t it*” , was used by the teacher as an automatic statement of agreement. This is described as an automatic agreement because when we later discussed this incident the teacher assured me that she would rarely disagree with a teaching assistant in a strategic conversation. However, as the teacher’s utterance developed, her endorsement of the teaching assistant’s statement became more weighty. “*yes*” is a wholehearted affirmation and is given greater credence by the additional use of “*very dangerous*”.

Following the child’s first turn behaviour, which initiated adult interaction, the pattern of interaction can be identified as,

- question,
- confirmation of an opinion,
- definition of appropriate behaviour,
- expansion and agreement.

Beyond turn 5 a range of options were seen in the data. These included; repetition and expansion of turns 4 and 5, the introduction of justification, as in the example above, or a gradual fade out of

discourse as illustrated in 5.3.7 below.

*(The class were preparing for afternoon snack. Nursery nurse (NN), teaching assistant (TA), supply teacher (ST), teacher (T), child (C.)*

*(Jamie pushes biscuit tin off the table)*

TA *oh dear it's nearly time for food*

NN *I expect you're looking for the people with their hands on their knees aren't you Mrs C....*

QUESTION

ST *I am . yes . I can't see any one at the moment*

CONFIRM OPINION

*(passing banana to T....)*

C *neerrr*

T *you need both hands on your knees then she'll see you*

DEFINE BEHAVIOUR

T *oh look there s a good place here*

EXPAND

*(offering chair to J..)*

ST *A..... you're sitting really nicely . would you like a piece*

NN *banana smells really nice*

T *mmm*

This structured expanding pattern of interaction provided a framework for predictable interaction within which the specific content emerged in response to each individual incident.

Further examples of this structural sequence include, 3.10.7. In this sequence Tyler was in the process of packing away a jigsaw puzzle, looking miserable. In an apparent attempt to engage him in an activity more profitably, the teacher initiated an interaction with the teaching assistant who was working at the computer.

T *has Tyler done it yet (worked at the computer)*

QUESTION

TA *no*

CONFIRM

<i>T</i>	<i>Tyler pop your puzzle on the table . then you can do the computer . with Mrs F...</i>	DEFINE BEHAVIOUR
<i>TA</i>	<i>make another happy face</i>	AGREE /EXPAND
<i>T</i>	<i>spect so</i>	AGREE

3.10.10. follows the same structure. In this example the teaching assistant invites Donald to join her to work at the computer and the teacher helps her to develop the conversation.

<i>TA</i>	<i>Donald would you like to come to the computer with me</i>	QUESTION
<i>D</i>	<i>of course I would</i>	CONFIRM
<i>T</i>	<i>isn't that nice . he said .of course</i>	DEFINE BEHAVIOUR
<i>TA</i>	<i>yes very polite</i>	AGREE
<i>T</i>	<i>he's having a much better day already you know</i>	EXPAND
<i>TA</i>	<i>oh good</i>	EXPAND/AGREE

3.11.2. , is initiated by some children jostling in a queue waiting by the classroom door.

<i>T</i>	<i>lets see . this queue . is it a good one today</i>	QUESTION
<i>TA</i>	<i>their hands by their sides</i>	CONFIRM/DEFINE
<i>T</i>	<i>little gaps between every body</i>	DEFINE/AGREE
	<i>Lead on</i>	EXPAND

Example 4.1.2., is initiated when a teaching assistant returns to the classroom to change the group of children she has been working with in the playroom.

<i>T</i>	<i>well . I've got Harold ready . he'll just need to wash his hands quickly ... and I'm not sure about Martin T... today .</i>	
----------	--	--

	<i>Mrs F...is Toby at a convenient stage</i>	QUESTION
TA	<i>yes</i>	CONFIRM
T	<i>Toby can go to the play room</i>	CONFIRM
	<i>(Toby goes to talk to Alex)</i>	
TA	<i>Have to be quick Toby</i>	DEFINE
	<i>Cause Mrs W ... be going in there soon</i>	EXPAND
T	<i>bye</i>	AGREE/EXPAND

The entire sequence was demonstrated again in example, 2.3.24. Here the teacher was working with Steven, helping him to begin to engage with a writing task.

T	<i>oh . there you are</i>	
	<i>(touches child's face) I'm glad to see you</i>	
	<i>(accepts child's work)</i>	
S	<i>( averts his gaze)</i>	
T	<i>Do you want me to help you</i>	QUESTION
S	<i>mmmmm</i>	
T	<i>yes</i>	QUESTION
S	<i>( stands up straighter)</i>	
T	<i>I can help you ... what I'd like to do</i>	CONFIRM OPINION
S	<i>(holding his face in his hands)</i>	
T	<i>you can sit next to me if it will help</i>	DEFINE BEHAVIOUR
	<i>(pulls out a chair next to her)</i>	
S	<i>( moves towards the chair)</i>	
T	<i>(drawing lines on the paper)</i>	
S	<i>(sits sideways at the table still holding his hands over his face)</i>	

*T (drawing child's gaze to the paper)*

*T there we go . only four . that wont take us long .. there's a page with toys on already*

AGREE AND EXPAND

*(points to the picture dictionary)*

*T Do you want to borrow that book*

QUESTION

*S (picks up paper stands up walks to seat near dictionary indicated)*

*T (gaze follows S)*

*S (sits down hides his head in his hands)*

*T you can sit next to me . if you want to . I like to help children*

CONFIRM OPINION

DEFINE BEHAVIOUR

*S (moves next to T)*

*T (patting seat)*

*Here you are Steven*

AGREE AND EXPAND

*(begins organising S's papers and the dictionary, looking at and talking to Toby)*

*S (sits down in good posture for writing)*

*S (starts writing)*

*T oh good . football*

The example cited above demonstrates two cycles. This repeating pattern can also be found in example 3.4.12. cited on page 177, where two teachers engage in a 4-turn sequence when they create a setting for children to offer suggestions for a race. Following this 4-turn sequence the same two teachers and a teaching assistant use the same question, confirm, define, and expand pattern of interaction to clarify with the children the rules of the race.

Further examples of this expanding pattern of interaction of question, confirm opinion, define



behaviour, agree and expand include,

5.1.1., question, confirm, define, agree, expand.

4.2.2., question, confirm, define, agree, expand.

3.10.10.1.cited on page 216, question, confirm, define, agree, expand.

2.3.4., question, confirm, define, agree, expand

2.3.24.2. question, confirm, define, agree, expand.

These examples were recorded between adult dyads and adult and child dyads. In each case they demonstrated the functions taking place in the same order.

Infrequently there were examples where participants disagreed. This was the case in example 4.1.6. where the pattern became; question, confirm opinion, define behaviour, disagree and expand. The expansion of this sequence returns to the process of confirming opinion and defining behaviour so that the adult was able to support the child with his writing task. In this way the teacher achieved the point of agreement and potential to extend the sequence. These extended patterns of interaction show adults working to understand the children's perspective in a way that is reminiscent of that described by Alexander (2001) in classrooms where dialogue was used as a teaching medium. Like the classrooms observed by Alexander these sequences demonstrate a flexible approach to content and do not take a narrow path to a preordained teaching objective, rather they explore the ground collaboratively with the child.

In each of the above examples the sequential functions occurred in the same order, however, some variations were found. The examples cited below all followed the same functional sequence although they were foreshortened. The first foreshortened example omits the confirmation stage, but it is of particular interest because the children's physical actions assume the role of defining behaviour.

3.11.1., the sequence is initiated when the lunch bell goes and the children stand up.

*T have I asked anybody to get ready*

QUESTION

*(Children sit down)*

CHILDREN

DEFINE EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

*T let me see . the children are ready for dinner*

AGREE

*(names children)*

*Charles be at the door*

*Steven be at the door*

EXPAND

Example 4.1.6., showed a version of the sequence which omitted expansion and only included four elements including, questioning, confirmation of opinions, defined behaviour and presented agreement.

6.1.5. on page 184, illustrated exactly the same sequential pattern although the questioning phase took place over four turns.

3.10.7.1. on page 199, also demonstrated a four part sequence but included differing elements, questioning, confirmation of opinion, defined behaviour and expansion.

Variations of 3-part sequences also maintained the original order whilst omitting differing elements, for example

2.6.5. illustrated, questioning, confirmation of opinion and definition of behaviour.

4.2.7. on page 182, showed utterances defining, agreeing and expanding.

3.11.2.1 cited on page 200 showed questioning, defining and agreeing.

Sequences which showed a 2-part sequence included confirm and define behaviours, for example

4.4.6. confirm and define.

4.2.6. confirm and define.

2.3.21.cited on page 166, confirm and define.

There are some examples of sequential utterances which do not follow the identified pattern. These include 6.2.5. cited on page 151, which has a question, define, disagree and confirm structure. Other examples where evidence of this sequential pattern is inconclusive are unusually short and could conceivably misrepresent the data.

In the discussion which follows I return to the questions that initiated this study. I consider any evidence for patterns of interaction these data may reveal and their potential implications for practice. In addition consideration is given to how a community style of communication may be transmitted between members of the Early Years Team.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION PART ONE: PEDAGOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on an interpretation of the recorded interactions between adults and children and the impact that these interactions may have on the children's learning. Discussion will develop from consideration of what Potter (Languse, 2007) describes as "mundane processes" embedded in discourse which encompass potential changes in children's cognitive states. These key issues will emerge from reflection on, and submersion in sequences of interaction which provide insights into patterns of communicative functions. Edwards (1997) argues that there is a 'symmetry' between participants in discourse. That is, the participants have joint responsibility for the creation of a reality that unfolds as conversational turns pass between them. In this way participants, and only participants, use intersubjectivity, to support their own reality. The current study acknowledges this interpretation, and as a result analysis attempts to reconstruct the participants' reality. This position increases the demand on the analyst to constantly review interpretations from the perspective of the participants and recognise the uncertainty of her own position. The validity of this analysis lies in recognition of repeated patterns of behaviour which are observed throughout the data. Its potential weakness, however, is that it is a personal and individual interpretation of these data which provides recognition of the identified patterns. This apparent weakness can be countered by rigorous reflection on alternative interpretations in the search for repeating patterns. In the course of the current discussion every effort is made to deal with the data openly but it is only with the reader's active consent to question and interrogate the evidence that a full picture will be achieved. I recognise that this places the reader in the position of a co-worker in the project but believe that the outcomes will be legitimised by this rigorous process.

The discussion begins with consideration of the question which originally prompted this study, that is whether identifiable patterns of interaction are discernible in interactions between adults and children. Developing out of the discussion of patterns of communication is their unexpected meaning for pedagogy. When this study began I wanted to investigate the concept of patterns of communication and had no notion of how they might reflect pedagogy. It was only as the study evolved and I became increasingly aware of the relationships between communication and pedagogy that I was drawn towards consideration of the notion of behaviour supportive learning. The second question that this study set out to investigate was, how do interactions impact on children's behaviour? Originally I intended to examine interactions and assess their short term effect on children's behaviour. However, methodological inadequacies, for example my selection of data defined as supporting or sustaining children's appropriate behaviour (discussed on page 138) meant that all the selected interactions had favourable outcomes. As this study progressed a wider view of how interactions may affect children's behaviour became evident. Increased awareness of an engagement between, social, emotional and cognitive development mediated by language changed my concern from a short-term view of behaviour to the long term notion of behaviour supportive learning. The notion of behaviour supportive learning is integral to the current discussion.

## **IDENTIFIED PATTERNS OF INTERACTION**

For clarity of analysis 94 of the transcribed interactions were identified in discrete categories. In reality these categories are not discrete and each sequence of interaction may contain features from more than one category. The problems involved in categorising spontaneous interactions are notorious and, in common with Alexander (2001), I found myself constantly returning to both the video evidence and transcribed events, in order to evaluate the validity of my categorisation. Although categories arose from familiarity with the data overlaps between categories often made the categorisation of individual sequences of interaction difficult to arrive at. However, the number

of events that emerged in each category suggests an innate plausibility within the data, similar to that described by Scott and Morrison (2006).

Although categorisation of the data has assisted in the identification of patterns of interaction it is by no means the critical feature. It is merely an aid to working with the data which enables reflection on the underlying patterns revealed by the interactions. Discussion of patterns of interaction form the focus of the following section, this begins with consideration of how meaning is shared between participants and the potential this has for the development of shared intellectual engagement.

## **THE ROLE OF SHARED MEANING IN BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTIVE LEARNING**

Beyond the notion of shared meaning which operates at a surface linguistic level Mercer (2003b) suggests there are contexts where participants in discourse co-ordinate their interactions and in doing so engage in intellectual activity. These interactions go beyond the surface reciprocity of shared meaning and active engagement between participants which precipitates changes in cognitive states. Mercer terms this inter-thinking. The subtle distinction between surface level interaction and interaction where changed states are perceptible is the focus of the current section. In Mercer's study inter-thinking was achieved through the reciprocal exchange of utterances. This is an infrequent phenomenon in the current study, where the children rarely take an equal part verbal part in interactions. Within the data the process of sharing meaning has been observed as adults provide opportunities for children to develop linguistic concepts, support meaning with physical and locational indicators, and through prior knowledge, observation and interpretation of contexts seek to appreciate the children's perspectives. This discussion reflects on disruptions in discourse, including unfilled turns, the use of repair strategies and stepwise transitions which enable participants to steadily move towards a state of inter-thinking, in which cognitive engagement is

achieved.

This study endorses Searle's (1994) view that meaning is that which the listener takes from an utterance. In typical conversation, Searle suggests, both speaker and listener strive to negotiate shared meaning through linguistic strategies including, questioning, repeating, re-casting and clarifying utterances. However, despite skilful collaboration in typical discourse, there is always the potential that intended meaning is either lost or distorted between speaker and listener. From the perspective of the current study, the ability to establish shared meaning sometimes appears very difficult. Shared meaning may be impaired by the children's language or communication difficulties, for example in segment 3.4.8. on page 142, when James appeared to misinterpret the word 'hopping'. Equally, the children's emotional turmoil can be seen to impact on attention and concentration and impose limitations on shared meaning, this was the case in segment 2.3.24. on page 203 when Steven's concerns about a writing task set by his teacher prevented him from viewing her as the route to solving the problem. Equally, adult objectives, including the need to maximize the use of scarce resources, for example the computer, or satisfy timetabling constraints by arriving promptly for assembly, may obliterate sensitivity to developing shared meaning.

Within the data indicators of disruptions to shared meaning abound. These disruptions are indicated by verbalisations, vocalisations, physical reactions or silences. For example, 6.2.6 shows the children talking together at a point when in order to take part in the lesson they needed to listen to the teacher. These conflicting expectations of a situation demonstrate a disruption in shared meaning which was gradually resolved as the children quietened down in response to the teacher's minimal utterance, "*who hasn't had a turn yet*". Cognitive engagement was created between the teacher and those children whose behaviour quietly encouraged their peers to recognise the teacher's meaning.

Example 3.10.9. on page 149 shows another disruption to shared meaning with Steven's verbal refusal to dress after a PE lesson. His behaviour once again demonstrated that there was a mismatch between adult and child meaning. The adult may have viewed the need to dress as a means of keeping warm and satisfying social convention, whilst from the child's point of view dressing was a potentially difficult task which had no immediate benefit for him, because he was still warm after a PE lesson. Shared meaning was established with the teaching assistant's utterance, "*just put your t shirt on you don't have to wear your jumper Steven if you re hot*" when the teaching assistant saw that Steven was still warm. The teaching assistant's utterance created the potential for shared cognitive engagement.

Vocalisation which signifies disruption to shared meaning can be demonstrated in example 3.10.12. on page 151. This example shows a teaching assistant encouraging Martin to take his turn working at the computer when he was busy with pattern work. Opportunities to work at the computer were limited and placed pressure on the teaching assistant to see that all the children had a turn. This could have given the impression that, the teaching assistant placed less value on the pattern work which was available throughout the day. Martin's behaviour showed that his priority was the pattern and that he did not share the teaching assistant's understanding that the computer had restricted availability. Focusing on his pattern Martin did not anticipate his potential future disappointment if he missed his turn using the computer. Unlike the teaching assistant, the meaning that was most important to Martin, at that moment, was to complete his pattern work. This sequence demonstrates a disruption to meaning shared between the child and the adult.

Physical reactions which indicated disruptions to shared meaning can be seen in examples 3.4.8. cited on page 142, 3.9.4. on page 158 and 6.2.3. on page 146 and below. Segment 3.4.8. on page



142 shows James running at the beginning of a hopping race apparently misunderstanding the meaning of '*hopping*'. The teaching assistant's utterances and physical actions helped to create shared meaning of '*hopping*' which the child acknowledged through physical action. At the moment that the child and teaching assistant were both focused on 'hopping' there was a symmetry in their interaction which demonstrated a shared cognitive state. However, as the interaction evolved the child showed that he did not share the teaching assistant's meaning of a 'race', when he offered to return to the start line in order to repeat the entire course. Once again shared meaning was lost and so shared cognition could not develop. In example 3.9.4. on page 158 Donald's failure to move about the playroom indicated that he did not share the teaching assistant's meaning that, games in the soft playroom involved constant movement. Shared meaning was only re-established through the teaching assistant's repeated verbal prompts suggesting that Donald should move about. Donald's resistance to moving suggests that in this instance the symmetry of shared cognition was not fully achieved. A further example, 6.2.3. on page 146 shows a child immediately quenching his thirst from a tap at the time when a teacher was preparing to offer him a drink from a cup. The child and teacher showed different interpretation of satisfying a basic need although they may have had a shared meaning of the concept of drinking. This example indicates shared meaning which did not result in a shared cognitive state until after the teacher adjusted her interpretation of the situation. By recognising and legitimising the child's overwhelming thirst the teacher was able to construct a symmetry within the interaction which enabled shared cognition to develop.

The examples of disruptions in shared meaning cited above show the three styles of adult response which were in evidence throughout the data.

Examples 6.2.6 and 3.9.4 on page 158 illustrate situations where the adults maintained their meanings but provided verbal and non-verbal support to enable the children to share it with them and arrive at the point of inter-thinking. Further examples of this type of behaviour include;

2.3.4 on page 203 where the meaning that was shared was, the writing had to be completed.

2.3.23. on page 181 where the meaning that was shared was, hiding under a table was unacceptable and completed work needed to be offered to the teacher.

2.3.31. on page 166 where the meaning that was shared was, having chosen a jigsaw puzzle it should be completed.

2.6.3. on page 145 where the meaning that was shared was, everyone should sit quietly at the snack table if they want to share the food.

Example 3.10.9. cited on page 149 shows adults modifying their initial meanings in response to a re-evaluation of the children's meaning. In this case the adults also provided verbal and non-verbal support so that they were able to create shared meaning with the children and, thus arrive at inter-thinking. Further examples of this type of behaviour include;

2.3.2. on page 166 where meaning was modified so that the child could choose to do writing or colouring.

2.3.14. on page 159 where meaning was modified so that the child could make a choice about where she wanted to sit.

2.4.6. on page 160 where meaning was modified so that the child could finish a pattern before getting ready for dinner.

Examples 6.2.3. on page 146 and 3.4.8. on page 142 show adults almost rejecting their own original meaning in order to share the children's meanings and inter-thinking. Further examples of this type of behaviour include;

3.1.3 cited on page 167 where meaning focused on anticipating PE rather than the overtly inappropriate 'bag swinging'.

2.3.22 on page 181 where meaning focused on enabling children to go to the playroom rather than

children arguing.

In Alexander's (2008) terms these data show teachers and children occupying a dialogic relationship. Real collaboration is taking place in which adults and children are using discourse and context to discover the others' views. The adults are not distributing pre-conceived ideas but flexibly considering the meanings embodied in the children's behaviour. Together they are negotiating a route forwards which is acceptable to both. Alexander states that dialogic teaching challenges both adults and children as they each explore the others' understanding and move forward together. It is admittedly difficult to evaluate the children's active collaboration in the sequences of interaction where they make minimal verbal contributions. However, the outcomes of the interactions suggest that the children were cognitively engaging with the adults and actively collaborated to achieve these outcomes.

The data suggest that meaning which is not accessible to both adults and children requires re-interpretation. The children's failure to respond, or unexpected responses are treated as misunderstandings which demand further exploration of uncertain intentions. In the context of dialogue, discussed by Skidmore (2006), this type of exploration can be conceived of as adults probing children's understanding in order to assess the next step in the child's learning. Within the data mis-matches in meaning are treated as indicators of the child's need for additional support to develop shared meaning, for example,

5.3.7. on page 184 *shows the nursery nurse (NN), supply teacher (ST) and teacher (T) using repetition and recasting to describe appropriate snack-time behaviour to the child (J) until they arrived at a point of shared meaning.*

NN *I expect you're looking for the people with their hands on their knees aren't you Mrs C....*

ST *I am . yes . I can't see any one at the moment*

*(passing banana to Tyler.)*

J      *neerrr*

T      *you need both hands on your knees then she'll see you*

T      *oh look there's a good place here*

*(offering chair to James.)*

ST     *Alex.. you're sitting really nicely . would you like a piece*

The following segment from 2.5.2 on page 175 also shows adults using re-casting to clarify the meaning that the dinner bell sounding is a signal to quietly prepare for lunch, rather than rush about the classroom.

*As soon as the dinner bell rings children rush to tidy up books. Teacher (T), teaching assistant (TA).*

T      *Mrs B can you see the quiet sitting up people*

TA     *J...s sitting quietly H.... T.... A....*

Repetition, extension, expansion and re-casting are features of discourse, which Schegloff (2007) recognises as being used to repair apparent misunderstandings in typical discourse. These features also form the conjunction of interaction between adults and children where shared meaning can be established. Whether repetition of specific vocabulary or extension of key ideas actively promote shared meaning it is not possible to tell. However, when the children's and adult's responses are well matched they suggest that meaning is shared and there is the potential for symmetry in intellectual activity.

In typical discourse, for example that cited by Ten Have (2007), repair strategies are usually cited as taking place between a speaker and listener. In the current study children can appear to withdraw from discourse, a feature cited by Paul (2007) which can be suggestive of SLCD. As a result repair does not always take place in simple dyads. Laminated utterances provide opportunities for

communicative partnerships to evolve between knowing adult participants within the hearing of the children. The repetition emphasised in laminated utterances may also be indicative of adults accommodating children's potential difficulties in the comprehending spoken language. Adults work together using laminated utterances to develop symmetry between adult and child participants. For example,

#### 4.1.4.

*The teaching assistant (TA) was on the point of asking Ryan to work with her at the computer when the teacher (T) noticed that he was sitting chewing a plastic toy and swinging a t shirt around his head.*

*T Mrs. F . are you looking for anyone else .*

*who hasn't got toys in their mouth*

*TA I will be*

*T I spect they'll be quiet people too*

*TA yes . I'm only asking quiet people*

*T people who aren't waving their shirts around*

*TA can't hear it . if they're loud*

*T you wouldn't choose anyone who was waving their shirt around . would you*

*TA no . it would be dangerous by the computer*

*T oh . it would wouldn't it . yes . very dangerous*

Together the teacher and teaching assistant repeated and re-cast their shared criteria for appropriate behaviour. Their discourse can be seen to model and substitute adult symmetry for that which it would be desirable to create with the child. In this way the two active participants developed the conversation until there was evidence that Ryan not only shared meaning with them but was participating in the process of inter-thinking. Ryan actively tidied up his t-shirt and walked towards the computer indicating that he not only shared the adult's meaning but was able to construct inter-

thinking with them.

Further examples of pairs of adults using repetition and recasting to share meaning with the children include;

4.1.4.5. on page 195, *"I expect they'll be quiet people too"* *"yes . I'm only asking the quiet people"*.

2.6.5. on page 204, *"you won't forget to remind the children about their reading books will you Mrs M..."* *"no . they'll all get their reading folders from the sand tray"*

2.3.22. on page 181, *"do you want to take children in an argument Mrs F..."*, *"I don't think it would be safe.."*, *"if you hear anything like that again ..."*.

Adults and children working together to establish shared meaning which has the potential to develop into the symmetry commonly identified in inter-thinking can be likened to a model of learning which has evolved from the work of Vygotsky (1978). The notion of experienced participants nurturing and extending the awareness of the less experienced mirrors the Post-Vygotskian interpretation of learning discussed by Daniels (2001a). In this conceptualisation of learning which has been extended into a model of pedagogy by Alexander (2008), Skidmore (2000) and others, social interaction is critical. Alexander and Skidmore suggest that effective classroom interaction supports and challenges all the participants by demanding active engagement and collaboration. The creation of points of shared meaning which evolve into inter-thinking are linguistically based, but their cognitive and social challenge produces the symmetry between participants which is observed in this study. This provides evidence of the cognitive engagement between adults and children which the study identifies as behaviour supportive learning.

The examples cited above demonstrate strategies used to develop shared meaning and support the symmetry which promotes inter-thinking. However, these examples could be considered to show

children collaborating with adults because to do so was in their own best interests, for example, because they wanted to join in sharing the snack food or participate in games during a PE lesson. Examples of adults attempting to share meaning with children in situations which are potentially more confrontational are sparse. This is in part because the original design of this study set out to investigate practice which supported or sustained children's appropriate behaviour and so the data usually show well moderated outcomes. The most compelling example of adults and children developing inter-thinking which are not immediately rewarding to the children is example 4.1.8. on page 163. Charles had just scattered plastic letters on the floor when the teaching assistant came into the room. Turns one and two suggest that the teacher and teaching assistant initially interpreted the child's reluctance to speak to them as being associated with a difficulty he had with the writing task set by the teacher. Both adults offered to help Charles.

- 1      TA      *do you want some help .C....*  
                   *. oh we . tell you what I'll just pick these letters up . if you want my help I'll help you*
- 2      T      *I said there's a chair next to me as well if he wants me to help him*
- 3      T      *I like helping the children with their writing*  
                   *(C sitting on the floor at the far side of the room)*
- 4      TA      *do you want any help ..do you need some help*  
                   \*\*\*\*\*

When the child failed to respond to offers of help following turn two, the adults continued with utterances offering him “*help*”. These utterances suggest that the adults did not interpret Charles' behaviour as defiant or inappropriate, instead offers to “*help*” appear to confirm an interpretation suggestive of misunderstanding between the meaning that the adults and child have placed on the situation. In consequence the adults continued to search for a resolution where the meaning that the child took from the interaction was compatible with their own. The teaching assistant indirectly moved the meaning on from Charles' apparent refusal to engage in the writing task to helping her to

carry his writing equipment from the room.

4.1.8. cited on page 163,

5      *TA*      *where's your pencil*

6      *T*      *I think he left it on the table Mrs B.....*

7      *TA*      *oh we'll collect it on the way through*

8      *TA*      *do you need any more books now . for this*

*(looking at his paper)*

9      *TA*      *can you carry this for me .. it's quite heavy*

*(passing him a box containing pencil pots and a dictionary)*

*(both stand up)*

10     *TA*      *thanks very much come on then*

*can you manage.. or I do it as well .ok. that's great . thanks very much*

in this way neither the adults nor child were required to change their initial position. The teacher did not withdraw her expectation that Charles should do some writing and Charles did not withdraw his refusal to start work. However, once Charles had withdrawn to the activity area he completed the writing task with help from the teaching assistant.

Example 4.1.8., where the child's meaning was difficult to interpret, showed adults using sensitive tenacity to achieve a transition from direct opposition to shared meaning between themselves and the child. In these circumstances adults may be seen to both reinterpret their own and the child's intended meaning in a process which begins to imitate what Pomerantz (1992a) calls, stepwise negotiation between partners in discourse. Pomerantz (1992a) and Davidson (1992) observe that discourse between adults consistently moved conversation to a point of close agreement through progressive turns. They observed participants reducing potential disagreement, signalled by pauses, silence or phatics, over a series of turns to weak agreements which went on to be successively enhanced. In this way Pomerantz and Davidson suggest that the participants in discourse structured



turns until a point of equilibrium was reached. Discourse demonstrated a steady progression from diverse opinion, through muted agreement to emphatic agreement. Example 4.1.8. shows a similar pattern of stepwise transition from the point where Charles was refusing to work, through a muted acceptance of offering help to the teaching assistant, until he willingly engaged in the writing task.

Example 4.1.8 also demonstrates similarities between the current data and additional features of dialogue identified by Alexander (2008). As in previous examples collaboration between adults and children plays a critical role in this interaction. Together the adults adopt a flexible approach to achieving the outcome of Charles joining the writing task. They actively search for an understanding of the situation which is compatible with the child's behaviour. The teacher's utterances suggest that she is respectful of the child's diffidence about writing and is supportive of his difficulties. The teaching assistant's questions are authentic, she doesn't ask the child things she already knows but tries to find out more than she already knows. None of the adults' utterances show any suggestion of blaming Charles but are sympathetic to his difficulty. Indeed, the teaching assistant's utterances are uplifting of the child's abilities when she asks for his help. The teacher does not use her role to control the situation and she is able to recognise that Charles' difficulty may be better resolved by him working with the teaching assistant who had not set the work. The adults' ability to negotiate and modify aspects of this interaction enable the child to take an active part in deciding how he will engage with learning. In total this incident portrays a collaborative flexibility within the boundaries of the learning task which is consistent with a dialogic approach.

## **THE ROLE OF POSITIVE ASSERTIONS IN BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTIVE LEARNING**

Discussion up to this point has focused on how adults and children share meaning and develop contexts within the setting of the Early Years Department. The next section considers how the

collaborative role of sharing meaning and supporting inter-thinking contributes to behaviour supportive learning. Reflection on utterances, which this study has described as positive assertions provides an introduction to this theme.

Eight functions of positive assertions have been observed, of these six functions can be envisaged as a continuum of supportive interactions. These six functions are offering guidance, suggesting means to achieve acceptable outcomes, anticipating appropriate behaviour, offering reassurance, giving permission and expressing approval or recognition. These functions reflect a continuum of interactions ranging from utterances which consistently guide children's choices to those which offer subtle recognition and approval. This concept of a continuum of interaction draws on the work of Vygotsky (1978) and in particular the concept of scaffolding within the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky offers a model of social learning where unskilled learners draw on the support of more skilled learners to carry out tasks which they would find impossible without aid. The concept of social activity learning is further developed by Daniels (2001a) when he suggests that the relationship between skilled and unskilled learners is reciprocal. That is to say, skilled learners are able to sensitively match their interventions to the needs of less skilled learners. The notion of social learning where skilled learners gradually reduce the level of support they provide within the zone of proximal development can be illustrated by reflection on the function of positive assertions within this study. This is best illustrated by reference to examples from the data. 3.9.3. on page 157 is an example of a positive assertion used to guide Donald towards behaviour which the adult viewed as acceptable.

*Four children were playing a listening game, "stop and go", in the soft playroom with a teaching assistant (TA). Donald was out and sitting at the side of the room waiting for his next turn. While he was waiting Donald started talking and distracting the other children.*

*TA Donald . you playing the game . we're playing stop and go . aren't we*

*As the teaching assistant stopped talking Donald sat quietly waiting to re-join the game.*

In this example the question, *“Donald . you playing the game”* was followed by a brief pause. Using Schegloff’s (2007) concept of turn taking routines the pause in adult discourse may be interpreted as the child’s unfilled turn. Preference organisation suggests that silence in place of a turn in conversation may be viewed as signalling potential disagreement. The positive assertion, *“we’re playing stop and go”*, followed by second unfilled turn clarified the nature of the children’s activity but once again failed to elicit the child’s agreement. The adult’s use of the tag question, *“aren’t we”* concluded the sequence of utterances and pauses and in line with Pomerantz’s (1992) findings produced agreement between participants. The Donald’s failure to speak following each of the teaching assistant’s utterances can be interpreted as dispreferred responses, however, following the tag question his behaviour confirmed his acceptance of the rules of the game. In this example, the adult’s use of a positive assertion combined with a tag question led Donald to acceptance of her guided choice of behaviour. Further examples of positive assertions which demonstrate adults offering guidance or advice incorporating tag questions, which led to acceptance of the advice include;

example 3.9.7.5. on page 159, *“you’re not arguing are you”* to clarify that arguing was unacceptable.

3.9.5. on page 159, *“you’re not touching blue are you”* confirming that the children were abiding by the rules of the game.

3.8.4.3. on page 159, *“it is quiet in the book corner isn’t it”* an affirmation used to encourage a child to stop growling.

4.7.1.6. on page 159, *“ you going to stand at the door really nicely aren’t you”*.

These examples show adults framing positive assertions in their most extreme and directive presentation. From this point positive assertions are gradually softened, providing children with opportunities for increasingly independent choice and control over their own behaviour.

Positive assertions were also used to offer advice suggesting appropriate behaviour in specific settings. In the examples below the word, “*need*” suggests the force in each utterance, giving an implied meaning that the child had a choice about its actions without displaying an adult imperative. This contrasts with the previous positive assertions which were followed by tag questions which offered the children less choice and were potentially more directive.

3.5.4.19. on page 159, “*you don’t need to get cross with me*”.

4.9.2. on page 159, “*you need to look what you’re doing*”.

5.5.3.4. on page 159, “*you need your shoes*”.

2.4.9. on page 159, “*you need to get your top on*”.

The notion of a continuum of reducing adult direction is maintained when adults use positive assertions to anticipate appropriate behaviour. In these examples the adults’ use of positive assertions involving the present tense appear to assume that the children are engaged in appropriate activities. In this way direction is negated.

4.1.8. on page 163, “*Charles’s doing his writing*” .

6.1.12.4. on page 163, “*you’re playing in the house now Alex...*” to a child who moved away and then immediately returned to an activity she was supposed to be engaging with.

The directive power of adult positive assertions is further reduced when they are used to offer reassurance to children. This function of positive assertions can be seen in the following examples, 2.3.25.1. on page 167, “*you can sit next to me .... I like to help the children*”, to reassure a child that help was available.

2.4.1. on page 167, “*she’ll notice you as soon as she comes in*” , to reassure a child that his behaviour was appropriate.

3.1.3.4. on page 167, reassuring a child who was reluctant to come to school, *“and now you’re here it will be a lovely day”*.

4.6.7. on page 167, *“oh you’re quiet . good girl”* , reassuring a child that her behaviour was acceptable.

This concept of steadily reducing adult direction can be developed further by examination of positive assertions which give children permission to engage in an adult preferred behaviour. Here adult utterances suggest the children were experiencing a certain reservation or uncertainty about engaging in appropriate behaviour. The act of giving permission is used as light touch encouragement for the children to proceed. For example,

4.2.4. on page 166, *“you can do them again because you been touching the bricks”*, to a child who knew the rule that he should wash his hands before lunch but seemed reluctant to re-wash them after he had finished tidying his bricks.

4.2.5. on page 166, *“it’s not going to take you long putting those last pieces in”*, to a child who knew the routine of completing one task before beginning the next, but had a preference for the second activity.

Positive assertions which have the least directive force are those which make overt recognition and approval of specific aspects of children’s behaviour. In the following examples the adults’ comments are observations on acceptable behaviour which is in the process of being demonstrated by the children. These are, therefore, utterances which monitor that which is achieved rather than subtly directing future behaviour.

2.3.13. on page 168, *“I expect you’re writing it down”*.

4.6.9. on page 168, *“I’m pleased you’re thinking now”*.

2.6.1.8. on page 168, *“I’m sure he wants to eat some”*.

6.2.2. on page 168, *“Alex has been standing quietly on the star”*.

Each of these functions of positive assertions accentuates collaboration between adults and children to discover appropriate routes to achieve mutually acceptable behaviour. It has been argued that the cited examples suggest a gradual reduction in the degree to which adults influence the child's behaviour, however, without access to the original video recordings or transcribed paralinguistic features this is an area which is questionable. The participants delivered positive assertions with gentle voices, relaxed or smiling facial expressions and their demeanour was friendly towards the children. At a surface level, however, positive assertions have features in common with directives, for example, 2.3.14.3. on page 159, *“you don't need to touch that Leanne..”*, 4.2.5. on page 166, *“it's not going to take you long putting those last pieces in”* and 3.9.7.5. on page 159, *“you're not arguing are you”*. It is difficult to ascertain *whether* the child participants were able to discriminate between directive utterances and positive assertions. However, Wootton (2005) suggests that a typically developing, but younger child than those in this study, was able to differentiate the use of directives and requests in different settings. Giving this notion some credence was an unsolicited statement, made at a later date by a child in my class who was not a participant in this study, *“you don't tell us what to do . you help us know”*, as he reflected on his different experiences of adults in the schools he had attended. It is, therefore, possible that children in this study were able to contrast directives and positive assertions.

Discrimination between the functions of directives and positive assertions seems to be highly significant. The function of a directive for example, *“sit down”* leaves the listener with only two alternatives, to either sit down or not. The speaker has stated required behaviour the listener can only accept or reject the directive. There is no room for a middle ground or negotiated compromise. Indeed, failure to conform to the directive by the listener could well produce an escalation in

demand from the speaker, for example “*sit down now*”. With each refusal to carry out the directive there is the probability that the speaker will increase its linguistic force. In this way it is conceivable that a simple directive could result in a substantial confrontation which it would be increasingly difficult for either party to resolve. In contrast a positive assertion leaves the options of negotiation and compromise without loss of face. For example, “*you can sit down*” where the adult utterance both gives permission for the children to sit down and makes an observation of fact. “*you can sit down*”, therefore, makes no demands and so reduces the potential for a confrontational situation to evolve. In addition, positive assertions provide a level of guidance which enables adults and children to arrive at mutually acceptable resolutions to their interactions.

The differences between positive assertions and directives have much in common with Skidmore's (2006) distinctions between monologic and dialogic discourse. Monologic discourse is rigidly controlled by the teacher with little input from the children, with its structure and direction pre-ordained and not subject to alteration. In a similar way directives can be rigidly controlled and their use confined by the speaker for example, “*sit down*” giving the listener no flexibility in response. In contrast dialogue is flexible and mutually constructed as are positive assertions. For example, it is the listener's interpretation and not the speaker's intention which gives meaning to the positive assertion, “*you can sit down*”.

How language is used can be seen to influence the outcomes for behaviour but I would suggest that as well as observable features, for example children sitting down quietly, language plays an additional and more pervasive part in supporting appropriate behaviour. At the point where adults limit their use of directives and move towards the use of more collaborative strategies, for example positive assertions, they move away from a controlling role and substitute a supportive role in the children's learning. This is a major change which fundamentally alters the adult and child learning

relationship. In this situation the adult cedes, at least part of, their power role and develops dynamic, collaborative interaction with the children. The subliminal effect of this change in relationship can not be under estimated as once established it has the potential to permeate all aspects of interaction. Indeed, Alexander's (2008) work in curricular contexts identifies the benefits for children's thinking and learning in classrooms where adult and child interactions are more fluid and present more equality in intellectual curiosity.

Antaki (2008) suggests discourse creates a reality, in this case the means to collaborative working between children and adults. Positive assertions to support children's appropriate behaviour can be viewed as experienced learners sharing learning opportunities with less experienced learners, in a manner identified by Daniels (2001a) and building on the work of Vygotsky (1978). In the case of positive assertions, as the children demonstrate awareness of the boundaries for acceptable behaviour the adults appear to match their level of supportive direction to the children's level of need. The adults' apparent sensitivity to the developmental needs of the children shows features of Mercer's (2003b) notion of inter-thinking. That is, discourse where participants jointly create cognitive engagement which develops and changes in the course of interaction.

By demonstrating openness to collaborative learning members of the Early Years Team initiated the possibility for negotiated learning between adults and children. In their attempts to clarify meaning adults re-stated the routes to acceptable behaviour that they viewed as most appropriate. They reduced barriers to shared meaning and opened up potential solutions to the children's difficulties. The data show adults supporting children to establish contexts where the routes to outcomes were not fixed and indeed the outcomes themselves could be modified as meaning developed between participants.



## THE ROLE OF STRUCTURAL ROUTINES IN BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTIVE LEARNING

Patterns of interaction form the core of this study. Interpretation of these patterns provides some indication of their possible meaning. These interpretations remain tentative because although they are the result of intense engagement with the data they are a personal interpretation which may be modified according to the individual perceptions of the analyst. However, the evidence that there are structural routines which are repeated by different members of the Early Years Team is pervasive. Extended patterns of interaction are evident within the data and frequently form the basis for communicative routines.

In typical discourse structural routines have been shown to provide a foundation for communication. These range from the reciprocal routines developed between pre-verbal infants and their carers, which have been observed by Christie, Newson, Newson, and Prevezer (1992), to the complexities of preference organisation discussed by Boyle (2000) and others. I would suggest that the extended patterns of interaction identified in this study are the structures from which cumulative routines are generated. Such cumulative routines can be considered to contribute to the fundamental learning context.

For example

3.10.10. cited on page 200

TA	<i>Donald would you like to come to the computer with me</i>	QUESTION
D	<i>of course I would</i>	CONFIRM
T	<i>isn't that nice . he said .of course</i>	DEFINE BEHAVIOUR
TA	<i>yes very polite</i>	AGREE

<i>T</i>	<i>he's having a much better day already you know</i>	EXPAND
<i>TA</i>	<i>oh good</i>	EXPAND/AGREE

and example 3.11.2, on page 200, which follows a similar pattern

<i>T</i>	<i>lets see . this queue . is it a good one today</i>	QUESTION
<i>TA</i>	<i>their hands by their sides</i>	CONFIRM/DEFINE
<i>T</i>	<i>little gaps between every body</i>	DEFINE/AGREE
	<i>Lead on</i>	

contribute to secure routines. Familiarity with interactions based on repetitive structural routines provides participants with opportunities to experience varying roles associated with the routines. These roles include those of active, passive or unknowing participants. That is to say, sometimes participants are actively involved in interactions as Donald, the teacher and teaching assistant are in example 3.10.10. On other occasions adults or children may be actively aware of an interaction but not actively participating in it. There will also be occasions when adults and children could potentially be aware of the interaction but are in fact oblivious to it. With each repetition of a given experience, Alexander (2008) suggests that understanding is developed. In his terms, each time a situation is encountered there is the potential for learning to take place. He suggests that each repetition allows for understanding to be adapted to take account of fresh insights, in this way progressive development may be possible. Mercer suggests that even when not directly involved in discourse individuals recast ideas to either confirm or refute what is said. He goes on to say that the cumulative effect of being present and either observing or actively participating in these interactions is, therefore, supportive of the learning process. Each repetition of extended structural routines may, therefore, extend the children's experience and awareness of adults' expectations within the classroom.

The next section of this report goes on to consider how the features of interactions may be employed together to create an environment which fosters behaviour supportive learning.

## **SIMILARITIES WITH TYPICAL CLASSROOM DISCOURSE**

Burns and Myhill (2004) in the Exeter Talk Study found teachers pursuing an academic control based agenda. These teachers largely failed to take up children's ideas when they were at odds with anticipated learning intentions. Indeed, teachers in the Exeter study were more likely to direct talk towards learning objectives rather than clarifying children's learning experiences. These features of firmly controlled, academically focused interactions which followed a predetermined route selected by the adult are the features of monologic discourse Skidmore (2000) observed in classrooms he visited. The prevalent questioning routines observed in English schools by Skidmore (2000), Burns and Myhill (2004) and Alexander (2001) showed teachers asking none authentic questions, that is questions to which they already had an answer. In these classrooms children were encouraged to try to find the answer that the teacher was thinking of, rather than think around the question and offer alternative responses. Alexander suggests interactions which focus on finding a 'right' answer encourages competitive bidding for attention from some children, whilst others are disengaged from the activity. Those children who do participate in answering none authentic question are most frequently engaged in the process of guessing what the teacher might be thinking rather than actively learning. In consequence the level of interactive thinking and learning in these classrooms is said to be low. Collaborative support for children's learning is equally low as individual children compete to 'right' rather than explore ideas together.

The patterns of interaction identified in the current study show marked contrasts with the pedagogy described above. However, they are comparable with features of dialogue discussed by Alexander (2008) and Skidmore (2006). Dialogic teaching is strongly collaborative, teacher's ask authentic

questions to which they did not know the answers, teachers seek to explore the children's ideas and how they arrived at their conclusions. By probing and focusing on the children's perceptions dialogic teaching created classrooms where the children were truly engaged with the process of learning. Within the current study there is strong evidence which shows adults and children working to share meaning, for example 2.6.3 on page 145, 3.3.1 on page 148, 3.4.8 on page 142, 4.4.1 on page 139, 6.2.5. on page 151, 6.2.3 on page 146 and 6.2.6. Within these sequences of interaction adults are seen to search for the breakdown between their own interpretation of discourse and that of the children. They actively negotiate shared understanding of the child's position and when that is secure they consider how closely they are able to align themselves with it. This process has much in common with dialogic teaching which explores the child's thinking.

Sharing meaning is one aspect of collaborative engagement but there are others including collaborative problem solving. Example 2.3.25.1. on page 167, *"you can sit next to me .... I like to help the children"* further expresses the adult's willingness to engage collaboratively with the children. However, it is unclear from this sample whether the adult was attempting to develop the child's thinking skills or merely provide the security of proximity to initiate a task that the child was expected to work at independently. Within the data there are, however, examples of children being encouraged to actively recognise and plan the process of thinking, for example

6.2.7. on page 162, *"you could be thinking about it when you're . your turn you'd know which to say"*

5.3.10.4. on page 162, *"think it in your head . she wouldn't like me to do it . so I'm not going to do it"*

and

3.4.11. on page 175,

T     *I want the children to think of something to play*  
T2    *oh I expect they are*

In common with practice observed by Alexander (2001) the teachers in the current study provided some boundaries to focus the children's thinking, in this case a rubber quoit.

*T        what can we do with this .*

*what \*\*\*could we do*

*(children begin to put their hands up)*

The data are, therefore, suggestive of interactions where the children's views and collaborative interactions feature strongly.

In his discussion of dialogue Alexander (2001) recognises teacher's flexibility as a critical ingredient to the development of interactive thinking. He observes that when teachers accept the challenge to follow a child's line of thinking then a powerful engagement in the learning process can be achieved. Within the current study adult's flexibility is observed when they reconsider their points of view and adapt to meet the children's needs. For example,

6.2.5. on page 151,

*The class were preparing to start an activity at the group table. Leanne was approaching the table slowly. The teacher (T) invited Leanne (L) to join the group*

*L        (quietly laughing in the manner of the cartoon character 'Mutley')*

*T        Leanne do you want to come and sit with us there's a chair behind  
(offers a chair)*

*L        n*

*T        you'd rather be over there*

*T        alright*

3.10.9. on page 149,

*Steven (S) is refusing to dress after a playroom session. Teacher (T).*

*S I don't want to get changed*

*T just put your t-shirt on . you don't have to wear your jumper Steven .. if you're hot*  
*and*

6.2.3. on page 146,

*The teacher (T) and a group of children were settled at the table ready for their afternoon snack.*

*The teaching assistant was preparing drinks at the sink. James (J) was late arriving and before he sat down began drinking directly from the cold water tap.*

*T James ... sitting down*

*(James continues drinking from the tap)*

*T he could have a drink from the red one Mrs C*

There are, therefore, significant similarities between dialogic teaching and behaviour supportive learning. Features the patterns of interaction identified which may be considered consistent with dialogic teaching include;

- collaboration – sharing learning opportunities
- sensitivity to the children's needs
- negotiated outcomes
- searching for jointly shared meaning
- flexibility

In addition, the behaviour of adult participants in the current study suggests that they have a recognition that effective communication, in which near complete meaning is passed between participants, demands awareness of both the listener's needs and the means by which desired outcome may be achieved. For the participants in this study this requires recognition of the children's potential difficulties with language and communication. Although some of the adult

participants revealed that they were not consciously aware of the children's language and communication needs their behaviours demonstrate features of interaction which Paul (2007) suggests are helpful to children identified as having SLCD. Mercer (2003a) suggests that effective discourse has to take into account the strengths and limitations of co-participants as well as the outcomes that discourse is expected to achieve. It is only when all these features are brought together that the power of language to engage with minds is achieved and shared communicative contexts realised. These features of truly collaborative interaction are key to the interpretation of the data in the current study.

## **REFLECTION**

The current study recognises the dynamic nature of communication which is not static but alters and evolves in response to features of time and place. It would, therefore, be a misinterpretation of the study to assume that it intends to promote particular pathways in the education of young children described as having SEBD. It does, however, aim to provide insights into the learning experience. It draws on and extends awareness of existing approaches to the education of children described as having SEBD. It is not their differences but their similarities with typically developing children of a similar age which have provided the most enlightening experiences. The collaborative nature of learning highlighted by Alexander (2001) which appears to be fundamental to all settings is a key issue.

Dialogic teaching observed by Alexander (2001) suggests that resilient, robust learning which can be sustained over time and may be generalised to a number of situations is the result of a true learning process in which the child is inducted into an environment where each person is enabled to take absolute responsibility for their own behaviour. This notion of each learner claiming their own learning territory and working collaboratively to achieve an evolving understanding of the

parameters of that learning experience is at the centre of Post-Vygotskian learning theories. This is the ground that the current study occupies. Adult participants identified apparent discrepancies between their perceptions of specific settings and those of the children they are interacting with. By constantly searching for shared meaning, stating and re-negotiating criteria for situation-appropriate behaviour the adults and children together resolved potentially problematic situations and achieved mutually acceptable working environments. Thus adults are seen to be working with the children to achieve appropriate behaviour. This is not scaffolding in the traditional sense where the skilled learner leads the less skilled and initiates them into new learning. It is facilitated collaborative learning. Features of adult behaviour which demonstrate this include their awareness of the children's learning needs and their ability to provide for them. Children were enabled to experience opportunities for gradually increasing involvement in decision making whilst cumulative routines employed within the group drew on previous learning experiences. This pattern of interaction supports children's communication skills, it is non-confrontational, non-accusatory, and allows for the diffusion of potentially problematic situations as the adults anticipate and re-interpret potential difficulties. However, the methodological inconsistencies, previously identified in this study preclude accurate assessment of the impact that this style of interaction may have on the children's behaviour. Therefore, at this point there is no way of assessing whether the benefits of this type of intervention are eventually internalised and as a result sustained over time.



# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **PART TWO DISCUSSION – HOW IS THIS STYLE OF COMMUNICATION GENERATED, SUSTAINED AND DEVELOPED?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been argued that team members have developed a distinctive communicative community which operates in the Early Years Department. How this has been achieved is a key issue for this enquiry. The process of how a group communicative style is generated and sustained, therefore, provides the focus for this chapter. The discussion is organised in three main sections which consider each of the three questions; how is this style of communication generated? how is it sustained? and how is it developed? Critical issues identified as influential in this community style of communication are, the interaction between language and shared philosophy and principles, and linguistic frameworks. Aspects of the data which reflect these themes will be presented against the background of Mercer's (2003b) ideas about the role of language in communities.

### **PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES**

At the point where adults become members of the Early Years Team, either as paid employees or voluntary helpers, they actively subscribe to the team's philosophies and principles as a result of discussion with the school's leadership team. The philosophies and principles are also purposefully transmitted to prospective team members through the school prospectus (see appendix two), combined with their own observations when they visit the department and meet the established team prior to appointment. However, in the same way that Searle (1994) suggested spoken meaning is inconsistent between speaker and listener, interpretation of philosophy and principles is unique and

individual for each team member. If, as Coulter (2005) suggests ideas are hidden until exposed through language then inconsistencies between individual interpretations only become transparent through interaction. It is Mercer's (2003a) notion of language and communication developing dynamic shared meaning which enables individual ideas to become guiding principles, accepted by the whole team. This is an ongoing process subject to constant adaptation. This study suggests that the ongoing interaction between language and communication strategies and individual commitment to evolving philosophy and principles is at the heart of the development of the style of interaction observed during the course of this study.

The Early Years Department's philosophy and principles are integral to the early years policy, (see appendix 2). However, Faupel (2005) is concerned that policies may become written visions handed down by senior management, rather than dynamic expressions of how learning can be achieved. School policies are considered appropriate at the point in time when they are written but rapidly need adjusting as circumstances change. In the Early Years Department we have found that the process of reviewing and re-drafting written policies can revitalise team awareness but Faupel suggests it requires active commitment to sustain enthusiasm for written policies. Faupel maintains that staff ownership of a policy, which defines philosophy, principles, practice and procedures, should be incorporated into the day to day process of sustaining consistent expectations for behaviour. In other words, consistent expectations develop from principles and philosophy which are internalised within a system by its practices and procedures, however, the problem remains, how to achieve this. The current study suggests that spoken language can provide a day to day dynamic interpretation of philosophies and principles and affirmation of their ongoing relevance.

Mercer (2003b) suggests that there are four features of community interaction which promote what he terms collective thinking. These are history, a collective identity, reciprocal obligations and

discourse. Mercer describes history as an accumulation of experiences and knowledge which are shared by community members. Shared history provides a grounding for members joining the group. Collective identity is described as being achieved through familiarity with the community history, engagement in collaborative processes and acceptance or initiation procedures. Reciprocal obligations relate to the mutual responsibilities and expectations which enable members of the community to fulfil their differing roles. Finally Mercer cites “discourse” as instrumental in promoting collective thinking. He views discourse as the process whereby communities mould and create unique adaptations of language which are ideally suited to the contexts in which they operate. These adaptations of language enable problems and potential solutions to be passed between community members, negotiated and renegotiated until satisfactory outcomes are achieved. With each developing interaction, Mercer suggests that bonds within the community become stronger and more clearly defined, reinforcing a shared community identity. Each of the four features that he identifies can, therefore, be considered as mutually interactive and reinforcing.

In the context being studied, Mercer's model of collective thinking suggests that language and communication have the potential to develop practice which is consistent across a team and yet maintains the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances. It suggests the ability to integrate practice and the language used to fulfil that practice, to perpetuate and extend philosophical principles. Commitment to a common philosophy reinforces practice through shared language and engagement in practice is able to reinforce a common philosophy which is expressed through language. Using this model it appears that language and communication are grounded in shared team philosophy, principles and practice. In consequence, the community style of communication identified in the Early Years Department may be regarded as evidence of a unity of purpose between philosophy and practice. Exploration of the functions and structures of language that enable this development form the focus of the next section of this study and will provide insights into how it is

generated, sustained and developed. For clarity, discussion will identify features of language, their relationship to practice and the philosophy and principles that they espouse.

## **HOW WAS THIS STYLE OF COMMUNICATION GENERATED?**

Crystal (1985) in his discussion of the evolution of language recognised that it is not a static phenomenon but is subject to gradual change over time. The time frame for data collection within the current study precluded longitudinal observation to record changes in the style of communication used by adult team members. Failure to thoroughly consider this aspect of the study at the outset meant that methods employed were insufficient to provide adequate appropriate data. This limitation of the study has helped me to appreciate the true relevance of Pole and Morrison's (2003) assertion that every aspect of an ethnographic study is inter-dependant and as such their relationships should be regularly re-assessed as the study unfolds. In this way internal validity can be achieved and the questions that initially prompted the study fully explored.

If data were available which tracked individual team members' changing use of language and their perceptions of interactions this could potentially provide insights which are currently not available. Of particular interest would be any perceptible changes in the interactions of new team members as they established themselves. Comparisons of a series of interactions undertaken by both new and established team members, regularly observed over an extended time frame could also provide new insights. In addition, supplementary data recording the views of participants would improve the potential of evaluating these data.

Despite the limitations of the data it is possible to briefly discuss two features which may provide some evidence of how this style of communication was generated. The first of these considers the available data in relation to Mercer's (2003b) notion that community interactions are generated in

response to a perceived need. Secondly, comparisons between the interactions of established team members and those who are fairly new to the team can be tentatively explored.

## **COMMUNICATION TO ACCOMMODATE A PERCEIVED NEED**

Mercer suggests that communicative communities do not adopt a universal style of interaction. One of the critical features that he observes is the ability of communities to re-shape interactions to meet new communicative demands. We have no way of knowing the prevalent style of communication within the Early Years Department at any point in the past. What is clear from Crystal's work, and that of others, is that there is some probability that it was different from the current style. However, there is evidence which enables some exploration of the notion that community styles of interaction develop in response to a perceived need.

The data reflect adults using features of communication which Paul suggests (2007), accommodate the needs of children described as having SLCD. These features include; using touch and visual prompts to support meaning, for example 2.6.3 on page 145, 3.4.7 on page 145, 3.6.1 on page 145, 4.4.3 on page 140 and 4.6.5 on page 152; repeating and recasting utterances, for example 2.3.22 on page 181, 2.6.5 on page 204, 3.4.11 on page 175, 3.4.12 on page 175, 3.4.30 on page 177 and 4.1.4 on page 195; reducing noise levels and focusing attention on listening tasks, for example 2.5.2 on page 175, 3.4.11 on page 175, 3.4.13 on page 175, 4.1.4 on page 195 and 4.8.3 on page 182; building routines, for example when the children line up established adult team members provide similar verbal monitoring behaviours including example 3.11.2 on page 181 and 5.6.1 on page 173; suggesting how to construct interactions, in example 4.4.2 on page 140, 6.1.7 on page 141, 6.1.8 on page 141 and 6.2.7 on page 162; interpreting minimal utterances and limited explanations, for example 3.10.9. on page 149, 6.2.3 on page 146, 6.2.5 on page 151.

I would, therefore, suggest that this style of communication may have in part been generated in response to what Mercer (2003b) calls the changing demands of the community. That is, using physical and visual prompts, repeating and recasting utterances, reducing noise levels, encouraging children to focus on listening tasks and building routines may all contribute to enhancing the comprehension skills of children with some receptive language difficulties. Indeed, even the complex utterances that are in evidence in this study are embedded in repetitive contexts where children can take meaning from a number of features. Rehearsing interactions, modelling verbal monitoring routines and laminated utterances may also be supportive of children with expressive language difficulties. The data from this study suggests that adults were, maybe inadvertently, creating interactions with features that Paul (2007) suggests support communication for children described as having SLCD. I would suggest, in line with Mercer's view, that some aspects of unique community communication are generated in response to particular problems. In this case, the Early Years Team's style of communication may in part be generated as a response to the children's language and communication needs. This is clearly a tentative proposition because there are no baseline data but it could be the subject of further research.

## **HOW IS THIS STYLE OF COMMUNICATION SUSTAINED?**

The current study suggests that team philosophy and principles are nurtured and grow out of small, apparently insignificant, interactions. In Mercer's (2003b) terms this could be described as developing a collective identity. That is, using philosophy and principles to nourish daily interaction where individuals work together for a common cause which recognises and values the different contributions made by members of the community. In the context of the Early Years Team this notion can be illustrated by consideration of utterances made throughout the data and discussed below.

Example 3.11.2. on page 181 shows the teacher and teaching assistant using positive assertions to cite criteria for a good queue, *“let’s see this queue . is it a good one today”*, *“their hands are by their sides”*, *“little gaps between everybody”*. On several different occasions other established team members used similar utterances as they encouraged children to routinely line up to move around the school. For example 5.6.1. on page 173, *“with gaps and the arms by our legs”*, *“remember your gaps”*, *“look at those straight backs you’ve all got”* and 3.7.8 *“are there spaces”*. These examples show established team members noting the features of a ‘good’ queue and allowing the children to act on their utterances. They do not quantify negative features of the queue or use directives to try and control or influence the children's behaviour. These are collaborative situations where children have choices about the best courses of action for them to take. These examples also incorporate considerable repetition combined with some visual cues, for example adults standing with their hands by their sides, and quiet, calm conversational voices. These features are all described by Paul (2007) as helpful to children with SLCD. This suggests that the adults recognised the children's SLCD and modified their interactions to meet the children's learning needs. Although not every member of the Early Years Team articulated awareness of the children's potential SLCD they all expressed the core value of concern for the children's well-being on the occasions when we discussed the children's needs.

Positive assertions also support the development of a shared philosophy through the vocabulary that established team members use. The notion of overt care for the children’s well-being is exemplified by the use of the word *“need”*, in phrases like,

4.9.2. on page 159, *“you need to look what you’re doing”*,

5.5.3. on page 159, *“you need your shoes or*

3.7.2. on page 159, *“you need a jumper”*. In these examples the adults offered suggestions of

behaviours which could be conceived as being in the child's best interest. The use of, "*want to*" serves a similar function. For example,

5.3.13. on page 167, "*A... you want to be sensible*",

3.10.12. on page 151, "*you don't want to miss it*".

Further, utterances which express the positive emotions that adults may feel in relation to the children include,

4.2.1. on page 168, "*I'm glad you've got very clean hands*".

4.8.6. on page 182, "*I hope the children are quiet*",

4.6.9. on page 168, "*I'm pleased you're thinking now*",

## **COMPARATIVE COMMUNICATION**

The original focus of the study was to uncover patterns of communication used by the Early Years Team and with this in mind the majority of observations involved established team members. There are, however, some language samples obtained during observation of two relatively new members of the team which contrast with data involving more established team members. In consequence these data provide some insights into how the identified style may evolve within the team.

Features of the data involving newer members of the Early Years Team include complexity associated with long explanations involving causal relationships and personal perceptions for example, 6.1.5, on page 184. The complexity of the form and the extraneous content, in this case the comments about unseasonably good weather, buried meaning that may have been more pertinent to the children. The key topic for the afternoon was which children would be going shopping, but the teaching assistant gave this a low profile in comparison with her comments about the weather. Complex form, unbalanced content and limited concise repetition suggest that in this example the teaching assistant was unaware that her utterances could be inaccessible to young children who



potentially had SLCD. This makes a stark contrast with the interactions of established team members who provided shorter, factual utterances which were developed through repetition and expansion, for example 2.3.2. on page 166, “*we re doing our writing*”, and 2.3.4.5. on page 166, “*we’re going to be doing the writing*”. The utterances of established team members were, therefore, potentially more supportive of the language needs of the children.

Example 5.1.7 on page 170, shows a new team member talking to children as they lined up by the classroom door. she did not provide the children with any indications of how to form a queue and seemed unaware that supportive utterances might help the children. The contrast between ‘queuing’ interactions initiated by established team members and this less experienced team member are marked. Example, 5.6.1. on page 173, shows an established team member verbally itemising the positive features of a queue, “*with the gaps and arms by our legs*”. All the established team members were observed using similar repetitive utterances marking out precise features of a queue. The slow and repetitive behaviour of established team members offered the children familiarity with both the vocabulary and the process of forming a queue. Both of these features are viewed by Paul (2007) as beneficial to those children who have difficulty interpreting spoken language.

There is no deigning that the new teaching assistant was inexperienced and had few resources to draw on when the children were lining up. However there are other aspects of her interactions with the children which suggest that her atypical utterances were not only a reflection her inexperience but also unresolved differences between her philosophies and those of other team members. In example 5.1.7 on page 170 she attempts to control of the situation with the statement, “*we’re going to practice tomorrow morning . again .*” which threatened a sanction. She does not attempt to support resolution of the situation by returning the problem to the children, as more experienced team members regularly did. Unlike established team members she failed to recognise, and draw on,

the positive aspects of this incident, for example that Charles was able to queue appropriately. Indeed, rather than emphasising the positive aspects of Charles' behaviour she commented that it was, “*alright*” and qualify that with the implied meaning that it was easy for him to line up because he was at the front of the queue. The teaching assistant did not use factual descriptors of the difficulties children were experiencing in lining up but said the problem was the children, “*all of them*”. It is possible that her attitude towards the children and their behaviour may have prejudiced her ability to search for a joint resolution with the children, because her utterances suggest that she sees the children themselves as the problem. Having failed to recognise the potential for the children to resolve the problem themselves, the teaching assistant quickly passed responsibility for problem solving to the teacher.

This episode shows the adult failing to collaborate with children or the teacher to solve a problem. Indeed, her threatened sanction suggests that the only resolution she saw was to control the children. She only identified negative aspects of the situation and viewed the children themselves as problematic rather than experiencing problems. None of these features of interaction are in evidence in any other sample of the data, they are exceptional. The teaching assistant's negative view of the situation, her expectation to control rather than collaborate and her dismissal of the children's needs reflect different values from other members of the team. Not only does this example demonstrate the differing styles of interaction between the new teaching assistant and established team members it also suggests evidence of differing principles and philosophies embedded in practice. Critical differences identified relate to collaboration with adults and children, shared responsibility, concern for and awareness of the children's needs and a positive view of the children's difficulties. All these fundamental concepts are demonstrated in the language patterns used by established members of the Early Years Team. They are, however, less evident in the interactions of the inexperienced teaching assistant cited above. The new team member's interactions suggest that she was not at one with the

Early Years Team's core values but in Coulter's (2005) terms her hidden meanings were exposed through language.

As Mercer (2003a) suggests, language was used to define and resolve the problems that the community encountered, creating a consensus for development. Shared opinions and beliefs sustained the interests of the community. Within the Early Years Department language was used as a functional tool to carry out day to day activity, supporting children's learning. At the same time, the process of communication also supported the establishment and evolution of team identity among members of the department. The process of integrating philosophy and practice was not explicit within the Early Years Team but, respect for the children, their carers and team members was promoted through daily interaction and casual conversation. In a similar manner, a no-blame culture where adult team members recognised their role as one of mediating learning and helping children to succeed in each situation, were dominant features of daily practice. In consequence it is suggested that philosophy and practice occupy a dynamic, co-dependant position which is observable through language and communication strategies, all of which are potentially subject to change over time. The demonstrable interaction of philosophy with practice, language and communication suggests that they are mutually reinforcing. The engagement between these key features is the route by which this community style of interaction is sustained.

## **HOW IS THIS STYLE OF COMMUNICATION DEVELOPED?**

The continued influence of evolving philosophy and principles exemplified in the language used in day to day practice underscores all this study. However, linguistic structures used by participants play a fundamental part in developing this community style of communication. This section begins with discussion of structural features, including adjacency pairs, preference organisation and the structural features which are unique to the study.

## ADVANTAGES OF EXPLOITING TURN TAKING ROUTINES WITHIN THIS SETTING

The concept of adjacency pairs, described by Levinson (1992) is particularly relevant to the on-going development of the community style of communication which is the focus of this thesis.

Levinson (1992) states that an utterance should not be viewed in isolation but in relation to what precedes and follows it. Each turn is precipitated by the previous turn and influences the turn that follows, for example a greeting usually precipitates a returned greeting “*hello*”, “*hello .. I haven't seen you for ages*”, whilst the follow up question, “*how are you?*”, provokes a response which can initiate further conversation “*I'm very well...I've just got back from Italy .....*” .

To explore the notion of adjacency pairs in the context of this study it is necessary to recall Cooper's (2001a) concerns about the pressures that are potentially placed on the adults who work with children described as having SEBD. He says that the behaviour of children described as having SEBD can erode the self esteem and confidence of teachers, leading to a cycle of blame, guilt and self doubt. Experience suggests that the vulnerability that adults may feel when working in these settings can be such that accepting help from other adults can be really difficult. However, turn taking routines within the data suggest the potential for adults to support other team members' vulnerabilities. For example, in 3.4.12. on page 177 the children were noisy and restless during a PE lesson.

*Lead teacher (T), supporting teacher (T2).*

*T        ahhr who do you think*

*T2      just looking to see who's thinking about it*

*(children quieter some hands up)*

*T        thinking about what sort of race it could be*

*T2      mmm ..E.... s usually a pretty good thinker*

The lead teacher's vocalisation at the beginning of turn one shows a vowel lengthening, "*ahhr*" which Goodwin and Goodwin (2000) suggest can be indicative of a non-semantic display of emotion. Exactly which emotion the teacher was experiencing it is not possible to say, but the data show her requesting help from the second adult with the utterance "*who do you think*". This question provoked the response, "*just looking to see who's thinking about it*", and equilibrium was restored with the sequence of interaction. Together the adults constructed a conversation which regained the children's attention, and the lesson continued. If asking for support can become sufficiently ingrained within the system that it may not be conceived as a sign of weakness then offering support can happen without any sense of reproach. The teachers in example 3.4.12 later talked about their absolute trust in one another and willingness to openly share difficulties. The use of adjacency pairs in this case can, therefore, be considered to exemplify supportive practice. Example 3.4.12 is, however, is not unique, example 4.4.2 on page 140, example 4.1.4 on page 195, example 3.4.13 on page 175 and example 3.4.14 on page 177 operate in similar ways.

A refinement of the notion of adjacency pairs is preference organisation. Schegloff (2007) describes this as a feature of turn taking routines where some responses are statistically more likely to follow a given utterance, these are known as preferred responses. Responses statistically less likely to follow a given utterance are termed dispreferred responses. The notion of one speaker guiding the next towards a preferred response can be found in the current data. In these data preference routines are employed by adults to collaboratively negotiate routes through potentially problematic interactions. Examples of this feature include; 5.3.7 on page 199 where the children were noisy and excitable waiting for the afternoon snack to begin, the nursery nurse's utterance, "*I expect you're looking for the people with their hands on their knees aren't you Mrs C...*" suggests a way of calming the children and leads the teacher to the preferred reply, "*I am . yes .*"; in 4.1.5. on page 185 the parent offers a suggestion that Donald could join her to decorate cakes, which is taken up by

the teacher; in 3.4.13. on page 175 a supporting teacher prompted the lead teacher's utterance; and in example 2.3.22 on page 181 the teaching assistant leads the teacher towards consideration of how dangerous it may be for a child to swing his t-shirt around near the computer.

In an after school conversations none of the adult participants in this study overtly referred to turn taking routines, however, they all related instances of using preference organisation and turn taking routines as a means of calming situations down. Members of the Early Years Team said that these interactions were not planned but, *"just happen because it works"*. The data show all the established members of the adult team used preference routines to promote supportive discourse. These interactions guided discourse along non-confrontational routes which enabled resolutions to potentially problematic situations. The feature of these routines which is the focus of the current section is their ability to offer support to other adults, however, it is recognised that these interactions also had other functions, for example to provide repetition and recasting of utterances which could help the children's comprehension of interactions.

When communication strategies based on procedural structures were used by all members of the team they potentially offered adults support and reassurance in unsettled situations. This strategy could, therefore, help to counter what Cooper sees as a major pressure for adults working with children described as having SEBD. The notion of interaction being used to offer support to colleagues also draws on Mercer's (2003b) model of the development of community thinking when he suggests that language is used in specific ways to provide routes to the resolution of community problems. These exceptional ways of using language and communication to solve problems are incorporated into community history and drawn on by new members in the process of what Mercer terms adapting language to meet the specific needs of the community. The data suggest that members of the Early Years Team have adapted turn taking routines not only as a means of meeting

the children's communication needs, but also as a collaborative means of resolving their own issues of vulnerability.

## **EXTENDED PATTERNS OF INTERACTION**

Turn taking routines are not the only structural mechanisms identified as supportive of a community style of communication. Features, which this study terms 'extended patterns of interaction', provide consistent structures which generate and sustain a particular communication style. Extended patterns of interaction have been identified by the ordered sequence of functions that they exhibit.

These functions are;

- question,
- confirmation of an opinion,
- definition of appropriate behaviour,
- agreement,
- expansion

As previously discussed sequences do not always follow the entire pattern but foreshortened or extended examples always maintain the identified sequential order, question, confirm opinion, define behaviour, agree and expand. This sequential pattern can be identified in many examples within the data including; 2.3.4 on page 203, 2.3.24 on page 203, 2.6.5 on page 204, 3.4.12 on page 177, 3.10.7. on page 199, 3.10.10 on page 200, 3.11.1 on page 204, 4.1.2 on page 200, 4.1.4 on page 195, 4.1.6 on page 204, 4.2.2 on page 203, 4.2.7 on page 182, 5.1.1 on page 203, 5.3.7. on page 184 and 6.1.5 on page 184.

Hopper (2005) suggests that consistent linguistic structure provides the framework on which the variable creative content of utterances can be arranged. Each sequence of extended patterns of interaction demonstrated a consistent structure but the content of utterances was uniquely

responsive to individual situations. It can be argued that it is the structure of the language which helps to provide the sense of continuity described as a community style of communication. In order to consider this concept it is helpful to examine the prevalence of other structural frameworks identified in conversation. Soon after birth the early reciprocal interactions involving infant gaze, gesture and vocalisation observed by Christie, Newson, Newson and Prevezer (1992) provide a structural framework for communication. These early structures typically develop to include the turn taking routines observed by Schegloff (2007) including the use of, adjacency pairs, and preference routines. Within the classroom setting structural frameworks are also implemented during teacher and child interactions. For example, the Exeter “Talk Project” (Burns and Myhill 2004), noted the continuing high dependence of teachers on the question, response, feedback ( QRF) structure within classroom interactions. This framework was originally observed by Sinclair and Coulter (1975) and later by Edwards and Westgate (1994). Alexander's (2001) work on dialogue does not at this stage identify different structural routines although there are clear interactive procedures involved as children are selected or volunteer to engage in discourse. Structural routines can, therefore, be observed in a range of communicative settings.

Hopper (2005) suggests that structural features are fundamental to effective communication. They are typically used without any apparent thought and as such have the potential to be readily assimilated within communicative communities. Within the present study, turn taking routines and the identified extended patterns of interaction provide frameworks which the Early Years Team have adapted to fulfil the needs of their communicative community. The structures evident in the data, for example adjacency pairs and extended patterns of interaction are resilient, however the content of interactions is subject to creative change. I, therefore, suggest that the identified structural features promote the development of this style of interaction. The creative content of each interaction is unique and responsive to changing circumstances demonstrating its potential for development



whilst the structural framework provides the boundaries of each interaction. The notion of change with stability may be of particular benefit to the Early Years Team where a small number of children have unique and highly individual needs. Because this is education on a small scale the changing combinations of children's unique needs can bring about dramatic social changes. The secure linguistic structures that the study has identified potentially provide a framework upon which a flexible individually appropriate content may develop.

## **REFLECTION**

This study does suggest that within the Early Years Department community language and communication patterns are strongly in evidence. They are generated, sustained and potentially evolve as part of a dynamic relationship with the team's philosophies and principles. The record of language and communication patterns used within the Early Years Department demonstrates a mutually reinforcing engagement between practice and procedures, principles and philosophy. Features which demonstrate this are embedded in the structure of communication. Preference organisation sustains discourse and helps to disseminate philosophical positions through negotiated agreement in practical settings. Laminated utterances and extended patterns of interaction also facilitate engagement between philosophy and practice as they promote a structure which embodies negotiated, non-confrontational, collaborative learning between members of the community. In consequence, interaction is seen to both demonstrate philosophical stance and provide the practical means of achieving it. Recognition of the children's potential SLCD is not articulated by all members of the Early Years Team, however, their interactions are moulded by an awareness of these needs. Together these features contribute to the notion of a community style of communication.

To conclude this study the next section considers the process of research and how my understanding of it has evolved.

## **WHAT HAVE I LEARNED DURING THE PROCESS OF THIS STUDY?**

Reflection on the process of undertaking this study takes me in two directions, what I have learnt and how I might have improved the study if I were to repeat it.

At the beginning of the study I was uncertain about exactly how it would progress and found the notion of grounded theory helpful in addressing my uncertainty. However, there comes a point when it is necessary to re-evaluate the direction the study is taking and focus the work with absolute clarity. I have found this increasingly difficult as I have allowed myself to be drawn into exploration of relationships between learning and pedagogy. Patterns of interaction were pursued to the detriment of my other research questions. I did not give adequate attention to how I would assess the impact of interaction on children's behaviour at the early stages of this study. This inadequacy could have been remedied had I constantly re-evaluated the interaction between my questions, methodology, data and analysis.

During the process and development of this study I have come to realise the veracity of Pole and Morrison 's (2003) statements that ethnographic studies occupy unique positions in terms of time and place. Although it may appear possible to replicate the process of this study in an other setting it is unlikely that the findings would show similarities to mine. Indeed, if I repeated the study myself the likelihood of arriving at similar conclusions is small. Changes in context and participants clearly influence outcomes, but equally importantly selection of data and their analysis can not be maintained from one ethnographic study to the next. The perspective of the researcher is subject to change and ideas that had clarity in the past may no longer apply. In effect, even drawing on the same video material and embarking on this study again I may well arrive at different conclusions because in the intervening time experiences have changed my understanding and perception of events.

Originally this study was conceived as an opportunity to develop practice within the Early Years Department. With limited research experience I did not see the need to adequately record team discussions. Research time was very limited and I felt under pressure to use it in the most beneficial way. At the time the research process seemed secondary to the practical issues of gathering data and examining the research questions that were driving my curiosity. There was a high level of consensus within the team which led me to think that I would be able to recall colleagues' comments and our discussions. However, this failure to record the views of my colleagues means that a critical dimension has been lost. The views of all my colleagues and extended notes of our discussions would have provided additional rigour to my interrogation of the data. It would have been beneficial to frequently weigh my analysis against colleagues comments so that discrepancies could be explored. In this way the study could be much stronger.

Gathering data in an unfamiliar setting was fundamental in the development of my awareness of the research process. Only when I started to work in the Reception Class did I truly recognise the veracity of many of Robson's (2003) observations about ethnographic research. In this unfamiliar setting I found the quantity of potential data overwhelming. Initially it was very difficult to identify which features of behaviour would be useful, but the process of reflection gradually enabled me to refine my observations and make selective judgements.

This study has also demonstrated the benefits of being able to collect and analyse data as an almost simultaneous process, as Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest. Constraints on my time meant that transcription and analysis happened at a distance from data collection. This meant that apart from re-viewing the video evidence I was unable to draw on participant's perspectives or challenge my own interpretation of the data. This puts into question many of my judgements and makes evaluation of their validity difficult.

The process of transcription was my greatest frustration and if I had to repeat this study that would be one of the areas that I would pay renewed attention to. I was intent on producing detailed and accurate transcriptions. These two elements of transcription were absolutely critical in order to undertake analysis using linguistic ethnography. As the work progressed I gradually realised that greater detail would have enabled a far more robust analysis. No doubt part of the problem arose because of my limited experience of transcription. The transcription of patterns of sounds is an exceptionally skilled task which Jefferson (2004) says takes years to develop effectively. I was unable to transcribe at this level and so features of prosody were lost. This was detrimental to the interpretation of mood and would have added massively to my analysis of utterances where vocabulary was open to a range of meanings, for example, 6.1.13 “*are you two playing or are you looking at the computer*”. It would be helpful to consider more advanced technology to support transcription of prosody. However, whether the available technology is sufficiently refined to work at this level is questionable. At a simpler level, accurate timing of pauses and overlapping utterances would have also been supportive of identifying participants motivations and emotional states. Computer technology could now be used for greater precision in timing utterances and pauses. Guidance in this area is available from on-line communities, for example languse, who frequently discuss the suitability of specific technology for ethnological research purposes, however, financial implications may make this an untenable proposition. In any similar project I would aim to allocate a sustained period of time to transcription and its review in order to further refine my skills.

In the course of this study I have come to value the interacting skills of scepticism and precision. In an ethnographic study such as this awareness and examination of precise details is critical but without the ability to constantly re-evaluate ones own perspective, test and shed ideas the process is superficial and worthless. This reflective process draws together the core skills of critical reading

and disciplined, precise writing. For ethnographic research which focuses on rich text descriptions the later is particularly challenging. The desire to provide clarity in written text is constantly frustrated as subtle alternative meanings emerge from apparently simple ideas.

The process of working through this study has helped me to recognise that research does not unfold tidily. I have developed the confidence to unwrap a mesh of ideas until clarity emerges, at the same time I now recognising that however much ideas and text are honed it is not possible to arrive at a point of comfortable satisfaction. There is no idyll where absolute certainty can be found because there are always side issues to explore which alter ones perception of the data and develop findings. Confidence that all researchers have to accommodate these feelings has enabled me engage with on-line groups, that until recently I would have found intimidating. This has given rise to a sense of humility about how little I know combined with the excitement of how much there is to uncover and learn.

I was astonished at how often I found the data contained practical evidence of adults behaviour which appeared to focus on supporting children's SLCD. Until I analysed the data I was really unaware of how frequently interactions could be interpreted as such. It is interesting to note that several of the participants did not identify SLCD when they talked about the children's needs although their practice seems to suggest that they were responsive to these needs.

## **FURTHER QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THIS STUDY**

At the beginning of this study my interest was in simply finding out whether there were identifiable patterns of interaction and how they affected the children. With each stage of the study I was surprised to find more questions arising. Questions that I would currently like to research further include;

Are the fundamentals of this style of communication employed in other settings?

Does this style of communication promote long term changes in children's behaviour?

Does this style of communication promote development of children's language and communication skills?

Are there common features between this style of communication and what is known of the language patterns used by parents or carers?

How are curricular interactions structured in the Early Years Department?

# APPENDIX 1

## TRANSCRIPTIONS

### Key

A / A 2 / A3 / A4

C / C2 / C3 / C4

Capital single letters, e.g. J....

Italicized text in brackets

Non-italicized text in brackets

\*\*\*\*\*

...

Whole words in capital letters

adult

child

proper names

contextual comments

linguistic features

inaudible

pause

raised voices

### TRANSCRIPTION TAPE TWO

**Activity 1: in the activity area children preparing to go out to playtime.**

#### 2.1.1.

1 A wash your hands please good girl.

#### 2.1.2.

1 C keep running in and don't come out

2 A go in the garden please L

3 C no its raining

4 A do your coat up put your hood up then.

5 A off you go

6 A Mrs F and Mrs C are s.... if it's too hard if it's raining hard they'll say come inside but it can't be raining hard . so be ...  
(girls talking while they put their coats on)

#### 2.1.3.

1 C can't ..my zips

2 A would you like some help

3 C yes can't do the up

4 C my zips so hard

5 A that one right down to the bottom.. look

6 A stand still please

7 A right down to the bottom before it can

#### 2.1.4.

1 C should send the children in

2 A the children are not coming in

3 A bet they'll be worried were you are. They're looking for you now

4 A there you are you'll be fine

5 A in snowing you'll be fine as well

6 A oh it's catching there in it

7 A there you are you're fine off you go

**2.1.5.**

*(Child playing by the playground door)*

1 A Dave you need to close the door

2 A oh look at the toilet

**Activity 2: children coming into school after play time.**

**2.2.1.**

*(Response to child pushing )*

1 A T... can you go back and walk quietly please

2 A good boy

*(Response to child talking loudly as he wandered back to his classroom.)*

3 A Alright S...

**2.2.2.**

*(child reluctant to come in from the playground.)*

1 A1 eee..a silly fancy being in the rain

2 A2 oh dear

3 A3 look it's cold

**Activity 3: literacy tasks in the classroom.**

**2.3.1.**

*(class writing)*

1 A what you doing S..

2 A what shall we do today..teddy bear

*(S... slouched in his seat not looking as if he wants to work)*

3 A which one shall we find

4 A if you went into this shop which one would you like  
(shared gaze)

5 C none of them

6 A none of them. (2sec.) are you sure

7 A what would you get if you walked into this shop

8 A like any of these toys

*(S..looking at the picture book)*

9 A train would you like...you can get toy trains

10 A see if you can find train

11 C (inaudible)

**2.3.2.**

1 A we're doing our writing

2 C what we doing

3 A writing

4 C don't want to do writing

5 C no

6 A you can do colouring if you don't want to do writing



7 C don't want to  
 8 A that's a shame don't want to do colouring don't want to do writing  
 9 C don't want to  
 10 A here it is  
 11 A everybody's doing it

### 2.3.3.

1 C miss am I allowed to do that one  
 2 C are we allowed to do them  
 3 A we're making a list of toys today  
 4 C they're toys there . are we allowed to do them  
 5 A are they toys or is that from the funfair

### 2.3.4.

1 A do you want me to help you ....if you want me to help you I will  
 2 C don't want to do the picture want to do the writing  
 3 A yes I'd like you to do the writing too  
 4 C I said want to do it ...leave.is so.annoying  
 5 A that's why I stopped you doing the colouring now...we're going to be doing the writing  
 6 A no I wasn't going to ask you to do it  
 7 A how many lines have we got  
 8 A not much

### 2.3.5.

1 A L... do you want to share the book  
 2 C no  
 3 A then why are you touching it if you don't want to share it  
 4 A if you lie it down its easier to look at  
*(Child put the dictionary flat on the table both girls continued working side by side)*

### 2.3.6.

1 C bullet guns are very good  
 2 A why are you talking about guns . we don't talk about guns

### 2.3.7.

1 C teddy bears that's one teddy bears  
 (shouting at teacher as if to gain attention)  
 2 A are you shouting at me  
 3 C teddy bears (soft voice)

### 2.3.8.

1 A it's too loud.. H... is shouting in this ear M... shouting in that one  
 (focusing on turn taking among children and teacher A speaking quietly)

### 2.3.9.

1 A T.... its very loud near you

**2.3.10.**

- 1 A oh I know what's the trouble with that . .  
 2 A sometimes if you drop the pencils they break all the way down inside.. and  
 when you sharpen it they  
 fall out .that's why we want to be very careful with our pencils  
 3 A I didn't really want to throw the pencils out that would be a waste  
 (matter of fact intonation - not actually talking about children not throwing pencils  
 around the classroom.)

**2.3.11.**

- 1 A have you been to the toy shop with Mrs C yet  
 2 C no  
 3 A maybe if you carry on being quiet she'll take you

**2.3.12.**

- 1 A mind you're not covering up this word because M....'s copying it  
 careful your hands doing it.. you could wait till M....'s finished if you want to

**2.3.13.**

- 1 A I expect you're writing it down (*child was patently not writing*)

**2.3.14.**

- (*child pushing chair into a very small space*)  
 1 A hello L... .. would you like to sit next to me L... I'm not sure that we're  
 going to have room actually  
 (*child fiddling with papers on the table*)  
 2 A you don't need to touch that L.... thank you  
 3 A I don't think we can sit you there... because that's where H... 's coming  
 back to...would you like to be near me...if I put you on the other table just there ...  
 you'd be near me then wouldn't you...  
 4 C Miss..L. can sit here  
 5 A that's kind of you M.... but I just going to pop her over here  
 6 A oh L.... do you want to sit there or there  
 (*child returns to original seat*)

**2.3.15**

- 1 A I' ve got a piece of paper on my table and I don't know who it  
 belongs to ...it just sort of been left here  
 2 A2 you might have to put in the bin I suppose  
 3 A I don't know where I might think someone hasn't finished their work if I  
 don't know who it belongs to  
 4 A I don't know where yours A... . Where did you put it

**2.3.16**

- 1 A (hands on her ears)  
 2 A ouch is it getting loud

**2.3.17.**

- 1 A I hope he said it politely Mrs B

**2.3.18.**

1 A Mrs F I'm going to start thinking about the playroom in a minute

**2.3.19.**

1 C baby . I didn't write baby on there  
 2 A which one you copy the baby  
 3 C hu I didn't write baby  
 4 A I wonder. which one it is...see if you can find it for me . I think .it might  
     be one with..someone playing on a mat ..with bricks  
 5 C (*looks at picture dictionary*)  
 6 C I never wrote . I never wrote baby  
 7 C (*slams down paper*)  
 8 A there's a picture of a baby playing with bricks . on a carpet . you thought it said  
     bricks . it actually says baby  
 9 C doll  
 10 A we could leave it as baby and put doll next to it. so it's a baby doll if you  
     wanted .rather than rubbing it out..how would we spell doll ..d oll  
 11 C d and oh next to it  
 12 C l there miss  
 13 A do l  
 14 A yes

**2.3.20**

1 A good boy.. just your name H...  
 2 (*C drops paper in front of A*)  
 3 A don't forget your second name ...then it goes in your tray  
 4 A (*C completes writing*)  
 H... I asked you to put this in your tray

**2.3.21.**

1 A brilliant robot S.. . even better than mine  
 2 C how you gona know what that one is  
 3 A you could leave that gap... do the next word on this line  
 4 C mean I have to do another one  
 5 A oh . you could do  
 6 C er the think it's the ending won't make sense  
 7 A yes it will  
 8 C .....  
 9 A how about that one  
 10 C nerrr ..I just  
 11 A or a car

**2.3.22.**

1 A Mrs F (\*\*) children to the playroom  
 2 A2 would you like me to take them  
 3 A yes L.... go and read A..erm T... D.....  
     (*children start to undress ...*)  
     (child A...and D.... arguing)  
 4 A do you want to take the children in an argument Mrs F.  
 5 A I heard that D....

6 A2 I don't think that would be very safe to take  
 7 A if you hear anything like that again you wont want  
 to take him

### 2.3.23.

(child C creeping under a table 1 minute)  
 1 A I don't know what you're doing under there C...  
 (1 sec. pause. glance towards the side table the returns gaze to helping  
 children at the work table)  
 2 A I won't be able to find you when it's dinner time  
 ( 20 seconds C creeps out from under the table and offers work to A)

### 2.3.24

1 A ( gaze to child) oh there you are (touches child's face) I'm glad to see A .. you  
 (accepting child's work)  
 2 (child averts gaze)  
 3 A do you want me to help you (gaze directed at child)  
 4 C mmmm (gaze averted)  
 5 A yes ..  
 (child stands up straighter)  
 6 A I can help you ...what I'd like to do  
 (looks at child then directs gaze towards his work)  
 (child holding his face in his hands)  
 7 A you can sit next to me if it will help  
 (gaze directed towards child. pulls out a chair next to her and looks at it)  
 8 (child moves towards chair indicated A starts drawing lines on his paper)  
 9 (child sits down side ways to the table holding his hands over his eyes  
 facing parallel and opposite to A)  
 (A drawing, gaze to task)  
 10 A there we go only four that wont take us long .. there's a page with toys on  
 already  
 (points to picture dictionary)  
 11 A do you want to borrow that book  
 12 C ( picks up paper stands up walks to seat near dictionary indicated)  
 13 A (gaze follows C)  
 14 C (sits down hides head in his hands on the desk)

### 2.3.25.

1 A you can still sit next to me if you want to .I like to help the children  
 (C stands up moves to seat next to A)  
 2 A (patting chair)  
 3 here you are Charles  
 (organises C's papers and book whilst talking to and looking at another  
 child)  
 4 (C sits down tucks chair in good posture for writing)  
 5 (C picks up a pencil starts writing)  
 6 A oh good . football

**2.3.26.**

1 A I'm glad you're quick M.....

**2.3.27**

1 A you could write car  
 2 A why don't you try and see  
 3 A you could start with the letter c  
 4 A how about bus you could write b  
 5 A while you're in the playroom I could draw the car  
 6 A let's write it

**2.3.28.**

1 A C... 's just finished his writing L.... you could finish yours

**2.3.29.**

*(child A... arguing with D....)*

1 A I expect A.. 's got her quiet voice on as well today  
 2 C I don't want you to tell what I have to do  
 3 A it's not nice being told by other children is it D... You don't like to tell  
     other children what to do either do you  
 4 C no  
 5 C are you the boss around here  
 6 A do you want to say that  
 7 C yes  
*(A returns to working at table task)*  
 8 A I'm glad you're doing a puzzle properly H...  
*(A gaze averted,)*  
*(C wandering around the room)*

**2.3.30.**

*(D.... and child A.... arguing)*

1 C stop it  
 2 A if you're not comfortable there I would move A....  
 3 C2 so would I  
 4 A otherwise if you choose to stay there please don't complain to me about it  
 5 C I don't want to stay here

**2.3.31.**

*(C... refusing to order alphabet puzzles)*

1 A you can do it T...  
 2 C2 -- come on T...  
 3 C2 -- he shouldn't have done choose it then  
 4 A oh he can do it he's very good at this .. he's got a very good brain on him  
 5 A I expect he'll do much better than even he thinks he can  
 6 C I'm putting them in alphabetical order ...f . g . h  
 7 A its nice when the children do what they're asked  
*(undirected comment)*  
 8 C Miss how's that ....any more in order  
 9 A brilliant

10 A yeah there you are I thought you could do it

**Activity 4: children preparing to go to the playroom and returning to the classroom from the playroom.**

**2.4.1.**

1 A she'll notice you as soon as she comes in . I expect C....  
(cuing the second adult and prompting child to sit on the carpet)  
(D... shouting by the classroom door)

**2.4.2.**

1 A do I need you to tell me that . I already know  
(hands on her ears)  
2 A if Mrs F wants me to know she will tell me  
3 A Mrs F I'd like you to take C... and S...if . possible please  
(cuing children to sit on the carpet waiting to go to the playroom)

**2.4.3.**

1 A2 mmm yes  
2 C can you wait for me  
3 A2 mmm right  
4 A2 D... will be really quiet this lunch time  
5 A I hope so he's had a relatively quiet morning today  
6 A2 yes . bad words came out of his mouth at the end of  
the playroom  
7 A oh well he wants to keep it inside  
8 A2 he's got his quiet voice now  
9 A I do so like him when he's quiet  
(A2 and children leave for playroom)

**2.4.4.**

1 A if you're very quick J... you might just get in there  
2 C ok  
(tidying up and getting ready for the playroom)  
3 A hello you two you look worn out  
(to children returning from the playroom)  
4 C2 yes  
5 C ahhr  
6 A dear J.... what does that mean if the boys have come back  
7 C not (\*\*\*) again  
8 A I'm not sure Mrs F will have any more time now  
9 A we could ask her she's just coming  
10 C ohh  
11 A hello Mrs F did you have a nice time in the playroom  
(C gets dressed again)  
12 A J... you're so sensible ...maybe next time the ladies go to the playroom

**2.4.5.**

- 1 A L... 's not standing on there (*a window seat*)  
I worry about you
- 2 A I don't want to worry do I (*walking towards L... friendly touch*)
- 3 C C....
- 4 A if you said Mrs F she'd know that you were talking to her
- 5 A2 that's what everybody calls me . so that I know they're talking to me .  
and they say it
- 6 A the children call you Mrs F. I might call you C . we're grown ups  
. and we call each other our first names sometimes
- 7 A2 if someone forgets and calls me something else . I might not hear it
- 8 A no you won't know L.... wants to talk to you unless she \*\*\*

**2.4.6.**

- 1 C2 oh I want to do my pattern
- 2 A (*averts gaze*)
- 3 A good boy T.... you can wash your hands for dinner now

**2.4.7.**

- (L... making a noise)
- 1 A I hope it wasn't the playroom Mrs F
- 2 A you know what we would do if we thought that don't you

**2.4.8.**

- (*C runs into room shouting*)
- 1 A T.... its quiet here

**2.4.9.**

- 1 C that camera around that camera  
(*moving away from dressing*)
- 2 A you need to get your top on its chilly  
(*returns to dressing*)

**Activity 5: children preparing to go to lunch.****2.5.1.**

- 1 C miss miss I found this in the sink
- 2 C miss I found this
- 3 A M.... you don't need to show me . you can put it in the dustbin . not  
disturb me at all

**2.5.2**

- (*dinner bell rings children rush to tidy up books*)
- 1 A Mrs B can you see the quiet sitting up people
- 2 A2 J...s sitting quietly H.... T.... A....  
(*two children fighting on the floor*)
- 3 A2 I'll come back when you're both quiet
- 4 A2 Oh no I chose her because she was quiet

5        A2        sit down I'll come back when you're quiet

**Activity 6: end of afternoon snack children sitting around the group table.**

**2.6.1.**

*(noisily finding seats around a table)*  
1        A        you were in the wrong place  
          *( A moving C away from the group)*  
2        A2        oh look Mrs M.. 's got chocolate  
3        A3        oh I like that  
          *(C shouting about which chair he wants to sit on)*  
4        A4        there's a space look right next to Mrs M..  
5        A        here we are  
          *(C2 wandering around the table)*  
6        A        Miss R... can you \*\*\*\* to cut the chocolate cake  
7        A4        then I can be looking for J... while I'm cutting it  
8        A        I'm sure he wants to eat some  
          *(C2 sits down C starts walking round the table)*

**2.6.2.**

1        A        oh dear T... how can you be in the right place if you're not sitting on a  
          chair  
2        A        oh well don't worry if you don't want this chair I'll save it for someone  
          else who wants to sit next to me  
          *(both children leave the table)*  
3        A        ok \*\*\*\*\*  
          *(C2 sits down)*  
          *(C tries to retrieve a piece of paper from C2)*  
4        C        he's got mine  
5        C        he's got mine  
6        A4        don't worry I've got yours here  
7        C        no  
8        A4        I'm looking after it for you I'll put them up here  
          *(both boys return to seats)*  
9        C        no  
          *(C moving the table)*  
10      A        please leave our table alone

**2.6.3.**

1        A        please put your hands on your knees and leave the table alone  
2        C        I can't I'm too loud  
3        A3        a lovely chocolate snack  
4        A        well I can't ask T.... he does understand what I say  
5        C        I can I said (shouting)  
6        A        can you sit down  
7        C        I can I said I can I said (shouting)  
8        C        I can I said ...I can ..I said I can (shouting)  
9        A        the children are sitting quietly round the table  
10      C3        the chocolate cake is nice



11 A3 yes the chocolate cake is nice we like this  
 12 A I've made the bits very small Mrs C ..so there'll be enough for everybody..  
 13 A if you are quiet you'll hear what the ladies are saying to you  
 (commenting quietly to C)  
 14 A3 gosh Mrs M... its certainly quiet now  
 15 A it is just how we like it Mrs C... knows who to offer the cake to  
 16 C oh I haven't had any cake (soft voice)  
 (cake passes C by)  
 17 A you need to show that you can understand the ladies T.....  
 18 A3 sorry did I miss  
 19 A \*\*\*\*\*

#### 2.6.4.

(group deciding what to sing....C starts singing)  
 1 A are you asking for suggestions and the children will put their hands up  
 (C puts his hand up)  
 2 A were looking for another suggestion Miss R  
 3 A oh we're waiting for it to be quiet

#### 2.6.5.

1 A2 you won't forget to remind the children about their reading books will you  
 Mrs M....  
 2 A no they'll all get their reading folders from the sand tray

### TRANSCRIPTION TAPE THREE

#### Activity 1: children coming into school at the start of the day.

##### 3.1.1.

(A arrives some problem with C on the transport)  
 (A moves across to coat pegs to talk to C)  
 1 A you alright S...  
 2 C \*\*\*\*  
 3 A you feel sick ..oh dear  
 (taking his hand)  
 4 A ohh you're probably a bit travel sick  
 (A leads C to classroom )  
 (later A checking register in the classroom)  
 5 A2 morning (smiles)  
 6 A2 this is normal  
 7 A have we got everybody here this morning  
 8 A2 mm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 yes I have  
 9 A is S.... feeling better now he was feeling  
 10 A2 yes  
 11 A a little bit poorly  
 (strokes S...s head)

12 A2 he had a drink and a little bit of \*\*\*  
 13 A and he feels a little bit better

### 3.1.2.

1 C I done it  
*hung coat up)*  
 2 A well done

### 3.1.3.

1 C I don't want to come to school today  
 2 A no nor did I S.....  
 3 C H..... I didn't want to come to school today I want to stay at home but  
 4 A and now you're here it will be a  
 lovely day  
*(moving towards the classroom)*

### 3.1.4.

1 C Mrs T ..hello Mrs T...  
 \*\*\*  
 2 C yeah  
*(C walks into the classroom)*

## Activity 2: children settling into the classroom and beginning the first task of the day.

### 3.2.1.

*(Listening to J... news about moving house whilst setting other children to work)*  
 1 C I at a new house today . I at a new house today  
*(A gaze directed to C)*  
 2 C I show this is my bedroom and that's a box and that's a . and that's a box  
 and  
*(C2 tries to talk to A)*  
 3 C2 What are we  
 4 A J.....'s trying to tell you about his new house  
*(points to C)*  
 5 C I'm just.. we didn't stop.. we didn't where we..we we unpack  
 6 A yes  
 7 C we unpack we didn't unpack everything  
 8 A *(reaches across to touch C3 gaze remains with C)*  
 9 A \*\*listening  
 10 C we just done some of it  
 11 A oh right  
 12 C4 J... J....  
*(children continue talking about moving house)*

### 3.2.2.

*(L... wanders away from the table)*

- 1 A are you in the right place L....  
2 C yes *(returns to A's side)*

### 3.2.3.

- 1 A *(looks at work)*  
2 A you've forgotten Daddy's legs and arms again tt *(shrugs and smiles)*  
3 C *(takes book to complete work)*

### 3.2.4.

*(More children arrive in the classroom. They come in unsettled A doesn't react just carries on setting work)*

*(C standing up fiddling with a pencil pot...not working)*

- 1 A are you alright there M.... ....a chair's comfortable  
2 C yeah

## Activity 3: children preparing to go to PE.

### 3.3.1.

*(Undressing for PE)*

- 1 C I'm glad I got my PE kit *(swinging bag)*  
2 A so am I .. come on get ready for PE then

### 3.3.2.

- 1 A if you can get undressed quietly I can start working on the computer that I  
got for later  
2 A I've got the new computer again

### 3.3.3.

*(C /C2 noisy squirming on the window seat)*

- 1 A I'll be looking for some children to use this after when we come back from  
PE  
2 C woow

## Activity 4: PE lesson.

### 3.4.1.

*(C lying on the benches)*

- 1 A D.... are your legs in the right place  
*(C sits up)*

### 3.4.2.

- 1 A2 are you waiting... find a place J...  
*(to child pacing up and down)*

**3.4.3.**

- 1 A2 C... C.... you've been quiet be a leader  
 ...ahhr think we better have E... as well you re a sensible leader  
 aren't you.....M.... T.... see if you re a sensible leader today  
 ....A... see if can be a leader...\*\*\*\*\*...A.... be a leader...B..... be a leader....C...  
 see if you can do it...do you want to choice the other teams
- 2 A aah you're getting on with it really well Mrs W.....
- 3 A2 no I don't know  
*(carries on choosing children)*

**3.4.4.**

- 1 A2 M.... do you think you can be a very helpful boy today and take J...  
 behind E....  
 J.... and L.... you be in C.... C....s team you can help J.....  
 J..... here's your place  
 D... P..... can you help little S.... ..young S... be behind B.....L... you've  
 got nice feet today *(you're not kicking)* what about S.....L.....would you  
 help S..... \*\*\*\*  
 S... go and be with little S... in that team by D... P....  
 We've got some nice big teams today it should be good fun when we  
 come to do the altogether races
- 2 A ohh yeah  
*(A explains race then asks children for clarification)*

**3.4.5.**

- 1 A3 waiting *(child started running before it was his turn)*

**3.4.6.**

- 1 A3 ok S... (beckons)  
 2 A3 and again S...  
 3 A3 that s lovely S... good boy

**3.4.7.**

- (trying to gain children's attention, fairly noisy)*
- 1 A oh look at that group their hands on their knees their straight backs  
*(children quiet sitting up)*
- 2 A oh wonderful

**3.4.8.**

- 1 A3 S... S.. its hopping ..hopping one leg *(demonstrates)*
- 2 C I ll go back
- 3 A3 ok alright then . . that's it

**3.4.9.**

- (end of the race regaining children's attention)*
- 1 A2 oh I hope I've chosen the sensible helpers for that team
- 2 A I hope so

3 A2 show J.... how to behave  
(*children sitting up quieter*)

**3.4.10.**

1 A2 (*visual cuing at the end...hands on knees*)

2 A3 (*visual cuing jumping during the race*)

*Praise and verbal encouragement during the race but not possible to hear properly on the tape*

**3.4.11.**

(*A3 puts quoit in front of each team*)

1 A I want the children to think of something to play

2 A2 oh I expect they are

3 A what can we do with this .

what \*\*\*could we do

(*children put hands up*)

**3.4.12.**

1 A (to A2)

ahhr who do you think

2 A2 just looking to see who s thinking about it

(*children quieter some hands up*)

3 A thinking about what sort of race it could be

4 A2 mmm ..E.... s usually a pretty good thinker

(*children suggest a balancing race A checking concept of balance*)

5 C not holding on to it

6 A it must be able to....

(*Several children shout, fall*)

7 A N.....(*child who had not shouted out*)

8 C2 balance

9 A yes it must be able to balance ... it must be able to..

L.....yes

10 C3 fall

11 A fall off . you can't hold on to it

(*race starts*)

12 A remember not holding it

13 A2 not holding it

14 A3 good girl

15 A2 remember it's a race

**3.4.13.**

(*gaining attention for the next race*)

1 A Mrs F... is putting the hoops out

2 A2 I can't hear you Mrs M.....

3 A oh it's far too noisy

(*quieter*)

**3.4.14.**

1 A I wonder what race we're going to be doing next

2 A2 oh . I don't know  
 3 A I m looking for someone who's thinking  
*(children putting hands up)*  
 4 A2 do you think S..... knows  
 5 A what are we going to do next S.....  
*(child explains a race)*

### 3.4.15.

1 A2 brilliant  
 2 A well done

### 3.4.16.

1 A remember to stop at the post  
 2 A it s always easier if you toss it in two hands  
*(race starts)*

### 3.4.17.

1 A3 you've got it good boy  
 2 A3 quick well done  
 3 A3 oops  
 4 A3 good boy  
 5 A3 two hands well done

### 3.4.18.

1 A2 well done they're sitting up all ready for the next one  
 2 A we haven't done that put the quoit on the post race for a long time  
 3 A2 oh . we haven't

### 3.4.19.

1 A I can tell they're listening when they're looking at my face  
 2 A oh . I can see any people who aren't looking  
 3 A \*\*\*\*\*  
 4 A oh look at all these sensible children looking up

### 3.4.20.

1 A give it to your friend *(implication that all are friends)*  
*(Child playing with quoit drops it on the floor and retrieves it before the race starts)*  
 2 A2 oh bother  
 3 A is that the quoit or is it the hand  
*(no one touching quoits)*  
*(race starts encouragement difficult to hear)*

### 3.4.21.

*(regaining attention for the next race)*  
 1 A they've got straight backs and hands on their knees  
*(two children move away from their team)*  
 2 A2 I'm glad M.... T.... was a leader he's a good boy he's in the right place  
 3 A he might have trouble doing the next race . I was going to say a tunnel

4 A2 oh how's he going to do a tunnel by himself  
 5 A I'm not sure  
 6 A2 oh dear  
 7 A I hope his friends are going to be there cause he needs them for a tunnel  
 8 A2 all the children need to stand up for this race  
*(children remain seated)*  
 9 A if they were listening they would have heard you  
 10 A everybody stand up

#### 3.4.22.

1 A oh hope \*\*\*  
*(children loud)*  
 (A stops talking)  
*(children quiet)*

#### 3.4.23.

*(more instructions about how to play)*  
*(children unsettled J... shouting)*  
 1 A2 oh the grown up children will know how to do it  
*(regaining attention J... shouting)*

#### 3.4.24.

1 A I want to have an altogether race  
 2 A2 oh . I would like to have an altogether race today . we've got longer teams  
 it will be more fun won't it  
 3 A I don't know how to \*\*\*\*  
*(moves across to help A4 calm J...)*

#### 3.4.25.

1 A sit down please  
 2 A2 don't miss it  
*(removing children's attention from J...)*  
 3 A were going to do the caterpillars  
 4 A2 T.... said they got four people  
 5 A stand up  
*(children prepare for the race....some discussion)*  
 6 A2 oh T.'s got a very good caterpillar

#### 3.4.26.

1 A oh . we can't do it till its quiet Mrs W.....  
*(children continue talking noisily)*  
 2 A2 most of the children are quiet Mrs M... they re waiting sensibly  
*(a little less noise)*

#### 3.4.27.

1 A don't loose any part of your body will you  
 (children are holding on to each other preparing to move across the hall)  
 2 A don't loose the back of your caterpillars

*(race starts comments inaudible)*

**3.4.28.**

*(A/A2 visual cuing individuals to be quiet)*  
*(children talking)*

- 1 A how many \*\*\*\* are looking at my face  
( children quieting down) Mrs W.....  
2 A2 oh that's good

**3.4.29.**

- 1 A can we do pink faces this morning  
2 A2 do you want to see some pink faces  
3 A yes please  
4 A2 I know how to make faces go pink  
5 A I wonder if anybody else knows ..what do you think *(to the children)*  
*(several children put hands up)*  
6 A what do we do  
7 A2 D... . D.... H.... show us how you make your face go pink  
*(child scuttles across hall on all fours)*  
*(children continuing to talk)*  
8 A you're all watching D... (points towards DDH, *so that they know how to do it*  
*(children quiet)*  
9 A2 well done  
10 A \*\*\*\*\*  
11 A2 oh yes

**3.4.30.**

*(children prepare to race)*

- 1 A all the bits behind the line ...hands behind the white line  
2 A2 when they get here when they get here they need to touch the post do they  
3 A oh . yes . touch the post  
4 A hands behind the line  
5 A ready steady go

**3.4.31.**

- 1 A2 have you been H... . it's your turn

**3.4.32.**

*(children talking L.... moving about among the children)*

- 1 A2 the quiet  
2 A oh dear how can I see her if she's not in the right place  
*(children arguing about who should sit at the front of the team)*

**3.4.33.**

- 1 A2 A.. is the leader of that team ..he is at the front  
(intonation as a statement not a direction)  
*(children return to original positions)*  
good boy



2 A oh look Mrs F..... it's on the twelve . it's ten o'clock . can you see any one to help you

### 3.4.34.

*(children lining up to leave the hall)*

1 A2 you're talking loudly I don't want to hear it  
2 A I'm looking for some one\*\*\*\*

## Activity 5: children in the classroom dressing / returning to writing task.

### 3.5.1.

1 A find someone who has dressed nicely and has been quiet and settled in PE  
Mrs F... *(to work at the computer)*  
2 A2 they can do writing later . right .*(Turns to look at the children dressing)*  
3 A oh . we'll need some more paper won't we . we'll need some more paper  
Mrs F....  
4 A2 yes . I'll try not to write so much this time (laughs)  
*(children dressing quietly)*

### 3.5.2.

*half the children are dressed and started work)*

1 A have you made your choice yet Mrs F.....  
2 A2 oh I thought I might ask A.... but  
3 A2 I think I chose the wrong person A.... still not dressed  
(not directed to any particular listener)  
4 C \*\*\*  
5 A2 I might be able to choose you next

### 3.5.3.

1 C2 *(staring into the camera)* is it too close . is it a bit too close  
2 A S... shall we get on with this *(pulls out his chair)* here we are  
3 C3 *(sits down)* is it too close

### 3.5.4.

1 A did you put them on the right feet first *(looking at T... 's shoes)*  
2 C4 they are on the right feet dick head . they are on the right feet . they are  
3 A *( looking puzzled at T... 's shoes)*  
4 A well they're definitely on the wrong feet at the moment T....  
5 C4 no they're not  
6 A ....they are  
7 A put your foot down . the toes are pointing the wrong way . toes pointing out instead of in . see  
8 C4 yeah . but they do they point out  
9 A *(stands up to show T...)*  
10 A *(offers to take his shoes away)*  
11 C4 NO  
12 A pardon . do you want to shout at me  
13 C4 (shakes his head)  
14 A then don't shout

15 A do you want to put your shoes on  
 16 C4 (nods his head)  
 17 A (*places shoes right way round in front of T...*)  
 18 C4 IDIOT  
 19 A you don't need to get cross with me about it  
 20 A tell your mum . I can't buy you new shoes T....  
 21 A it might just be that they are so new that they're . not soft enough yet  
 22 A please don't put your feet up on the table T... .. in case they're dirty  
 23 C4 they are they got ten on the back of them

### 3.5.5.

(*children queueing to have their work marked, C pushing in*)  
 1 A are you waiting (maintains gaze on books)  
 (*C lowers book and scowls*)

### Activity 6: children preparing to leave room for assembly.

#### 3.6.1

1 A let's see who's ready  
 (*chooses the children who are still on task not moving around the room*)  
 2 A T....  
 3 A H...  
 4 A oh look H... 's going to tuck his chair in  
 5 A A...  
 (*remaining children tuck chairs under the table*)

### Activity 7: children gathering in the activity area to go out to play.

#### 3.7.1.

\*\*\*\*\*

1 C Mrs B...  
 2 A hello  
 3 C I'm coming in to the toilet  
 4 A would you like to use the class room  
 5 C Mrs W.....'s  
 6 A D... you could use our classroom toilet please  
 (*starts to take his clothes off*)  
 7 A D... wait til you get in the toilet please

#### 3.7.2.

1 A A... you need a jumper

#### 3.7.3.

1 A B... do your shoe laces up before you fall and trip

#### 3.7.4.

1 A S.. . S.. did you wash your hands . You wash your hands  
 (intonation as a question)

**3.7.5.**

- (*B...attempting to join in S.. 's play activity...S... reluctant to share*)
- 1 A B.. . you can do your colouring . good boy . remember your coat tomorrow  
then you can play in the garden

**3.7.6.**

- (*S...packing toy in a box*)
- 1 A is the lid going to go down like that
- 2 C nahh
- 3 A take them all out . just need to take some of them out  
(*adjust the toy together*)
- 4 A tricky
- 5 A I think
- 6 C doesn't work
- 7 A down . side . the other
- 8 C I know a way  
\*\*\*\*\*
- 9 A there we are take it to the cupboard

**3.7.7.**

- 1 A B... . S...you can be first in the line  
(*not line up*)

**3.7.8.**

- 1 A are there spaces

**3.7.9.**

- 1 A2 I don t think you need a drink of water  
(*to T... who was pushing and fighting in a queue at the water fountain*)

**3.7.10.**

- (*children distracted by the video*)
- 1 A where you going..... come on quickly this way

**Activity 8: children continuing work in the classroom.**

**3.8.1.**

- (*T.... refusing work )*
- 1 A how can Mrs F.....choose you for the computer . or the playroom if you're  
not getting on with what you should be doing  
(*gaze directed towards her own writing*)
- 2 C well I \*\* I not spending my time looking the picture and ....then picture .  
and write . picture . write . picture
- 3 A T... do I have to say door
- 4 C NO
- 5 A pardon
- 6 C no
- 7 A stop shouting at me please

8 C2 T.... just silly  
 9 A and you're ignoring him . well done

### 3.8.2.

1 C there found it  
 2 A do you want to say it to me like that  
 3 C (shakes head)  
 4 A do you want to  
 5 C n  
 6 A what word do you want  
 7 C now you made me loose it  
 8 A it's because you're getting cross M.....  
 that's what's making you loose it  
 9 C hate people when they say that  
*(sits sulking)*  
 (no response)

### 3.8.3.

1 A Mrs B.... would you mind taking some children to the play room today  
 2 A2 no . mmm  
 3 A I'll get some children ready *(looks around)*  
 4 A H..... and D.....  
 5 C2 can I go  
 6 A get on with the writing first then I'll be able to choose you  
 7 C3 did you say me Mrs M.....  
 8 A yes I said you . you're getting on with the writing  
 9 C I'm that far now *(holds up work)*  
 10 A I'm glad you're talking nicely now

### 3.8.4.

1 A you want to find....  
 2 A2 it alright I'll choose somebody don't worry about it  
*(to a child asking for a turn on the computer)*  
*(D... growling in the book corner)*  
 3 A oh Mrs F... it is quiet in the book corner isn't it  
 4 A2 it is now

## Activity 9: children in the playroom.

### 3.9.1.

1 A oh L.. s still moving . be on the bench

### 3.9.2.

1 A are you listening to the game . you don't want . to miss . the next game .  
 do we

### 3.9.3.

*(D... talking and distracting peers)*  
 1 A D... .. you playing the game .. we re playing stop and go aren't we

**3.9.4.**

- 1 A C... I can't see you in there  
*(inside a hole in the soft playroom)*  
 We're going to play the game .. keep moving please  
*(D... standing still)*
- 2 A keep moving or I'll think you don't want to play
- 3 A D... you're moving about aren't you
- 4 A remember not to hang on the side cushions
- 5 A are you moving about

**3.9.5.**

- 1 A you're not touching blue are you  
*(children grumbling that they're touching the blue)*
- 2 A be careful not touching that blue

**3.9.6.**

- 1 A I'd keep moving D... or I'll think you're too tired

**3.9.7.**

- ` A D.... bench please .
- 2 C wh.....
- 3 A .you touched green
- 4 C didn't
- 5 A you're not arguing are you
- 6 C do not
- 7 A do you want to play the next game
- 8 C yes
- 9 A ok . please sit here with me

**3.9.8.**

- 1 A you've got 30 seconds  
*(until the end of the session)*
- 2 A right bench please  
*(two children failed to return to the bench)*
- 3 A I hope you're not going to use tomorrow's playtime as well ... might start  
 taking minutes off  
*(one child returned to the bench)*
- 4 A well done C... . well done D....
- 5 A L... you've got . you've had two more . minutes off tomorrow  
*(L....returned to the bench)*

**3.9.9.**

*(returning to the class room one child pushed in front attempted to shut the door on the other children)*

- 1 A come back  
*(helps children reform a queue at the door)*
- 2 C I here
- 3 A you need to be . remember there's people behind you

they might get hurt if you shut the door on them .  
 are you listening  
*(sends children individually back to the classroom)*  
*(D... continues to push)*

### 3.9.10.

1 A I'll come back for you  
 2 C nerrrr  
 3 A when you re not pushing  
 4 C I'll throw the door on you  
*(D... tugging at the door)*  
*(A walks away)*  
*(D..waiting quietly)*

## Activity 10: dressing after a playroom session and completing work tasks in the classroom.

### 3.10.1.

*(M.. sulking)*

1 A2 is it only two people Mrs M.....  
 2 A J.... been working . very very quietly and . I don't know about M...T...  
 3 A2 is he coming .  
 4 A I hope so . he likes the play room ...  
 5 A2 come on choose quickly  
 6 A2 come on Mrs W....'ll be there if you're not quick  
 7 A2 coming with us  
 8 A doesn't have to go Mrs B....  
 9 A2 doesn't have to . oh  
 10 A this is the play room . you don't have to go to the play room .. most people  
       would like to . but you don't have to  
*(M... walks away from the group to get his shorts)*  
 11 A2 we're going Mrs M.... you can send the others on  
*(A2 leaves with two children)*  
 12 C miss ready  
*(A indicates to follow A2)*

### 3.10.2.

*(C returns to the classroom)*

1 A oh he can get dressed Mrs F...  
*(stumps towards his clothes)*  
 2 A that's a shame M.....  
 3 C not getting dressed  
 4 A that's your choice  
*(C starts to dress)*

### 3.10.3.

1 C gona tell my mum you won't let me go to playroom  
 for ever  
 2 A *(continues writing with L..)*

3 C and you . I hate that  
 4 A *(walks towards M... talking to T... on the way gaze averted from M..)*  
 5 A are you not dressed yet  
 6 C I started it *(throwing down his shirt)*  
 7 A *(picks up the shirt)* do you want to shout  
*(turning the shirt the right way round then returns to table task)*

### 3.10.4.

1 A2 sorry M.....came back  
 2 A it was a shame . didn't get very long to play  
 3 A2 did he tell you why  
 4 A no he came in a bit of a cross mood we haven't talked about it yet  
 5 C *(walks across to talk to CM)*  
 6 C shall I do my puzzle now  
 7 A do you need to tell me anything about the play room ..I could talk to you  
 at play time instead .you need to talk to me now then  
 8 C *(shaking his head)* no  
 9 A ok do your puzzle  
*(M... moves away sulky)*  
 10 A I'm going to talk to M.... at play time Mrs B... about his play room . he  
 does want to talk to me now  
 11 A2 right  
 12 C Miss I do this *(shows her a jigsaw puzzle)*  
 13 A ok  
 14 C *(sits down and starts puzzle)*  
 15 C Miss done it  
 16 A oh good boy M... you re on to your pattern now  
 17 C six  
*(a question about the sort of pattern C was going to do)*  
 18 A it was five on ..when was it five  
 19 C Friday

### 3.10.5.

*(C taking a jigsaw puzzle apart)*  
 1 A you are taking that to pieces carefully C...  
 2 C *(with a jigsaw held in a pile in his hand)*  
 H ..I was sitting at back  
*(to a child sitting in a chair he had previously occupied)*  
 3 A that's alright you can do it on the floor  
 4 C no I want go ba..  
 5 A that's alright there's another end of my table if \*\*\*\*\*  
 6 C *(sits)*  
 7 A you can do it on the other table  
 6 C won't fit  
 A *(moving about the class room working with other children)*  
 C *(sitting with a pile of jigsaw pieces on his lap)*  
 A *(returning to the table to work with L....)*  
 7 A make sure the puzzle doesn't get broken on your lap \*\*\*  
 C *(takes puzzle to the other table)*  
 8 A hope there will be enough room for you there and T.... and H.. . might be

a bit squashed

- 9 A do you think you'll find enough room to fit in there C....  
10 A have you got room  
11 C yeah

**3.10.6.**

- 1 A oh C... you've left the box on the carpet area . I'm afraid some one might tread on it there  
2 C2 I'll get it  
3 A it's OK C... can get it ..he doesn't mind  
(C picks up the box)

**3.10.7.**

(T.... walking very slowly carrying a jig saw puzzle, looking miserable)

- 1 A has T... done it yet (*worked at the computer*)  
2 A2 no  
3 A T... pop your puzzle on the table then you can do the computer with Mrs F  
4 A2 make another happy face  
5 A spect so  
6 A2 T... would you like to do the computer ..help me (intonation as a question)

**3.10.8.**

- 1 C do you like the colour plan I'm doing (*slowly dressing*)  
2 A I haven't seen you yet D... (*you're not dressed*)

**3.10.9.**

- 1 C I don't want to get changed  
2 A just put your t shirt on you don't have to wear your jumper S.. if you re hot

**3.10.10.**

- 1 A2 D... . would you like to come to the computer with me  
2 C of course I would  
3 A isn't that nice . he said of course  
4 A2 yes very polite  
5 A he's having a much better day already you know  
6 A2 oh good  
7 A I think \*\*\*\* like it

**3.10.11.**

(children arguing about colour blocks)

- 1 C hey that's D... 's ... that's D.. 's two colours  
(A... attempts to use colours for her pattern)  
2 A is there a problem  
(A chooses different colours)



- 3 C *(T.. joins group begins using D... 's equipment )*  
 4 C2 that's D... 's  
 5 A do my pattern  
 your tray's still down there is it D.....  
*(D.. rejoins the group)*  
 6 C D..... he broke it  
*(4 children settle to share equipment)*

### 3.10.12.

- 1 A2 M.. it's your computer  
*(continues working at his pattern)*  
 1 A2 you don't want to miss it  
*(moves to computer)*

## Activity 11: children preparing to go to lunch.

### 3.11.1.

- (dinner bell goes, children stand up)*  
 1 A have I asked any body to get ready  
*(children sit down)*  
 2 A let me see the children are ready for dinner  
*(names children)*  
 C... be at the door  
 S.. be at the door

### 3.11.2.

- 1 A let's see this queue is it a good one today  
 2 A2 their hands are by their sides  
 3 A little gaps between every body  
 lead on . you coming D...  
*(arm round his shoulder)*

## Activity 12: children preparing to go out to play.

### 3.12.1.

- 1 A I hope this is a quiet line

### 3.12.2.

- 1 A oh there you are  
*(as additional children join the queue to go out side)*  
 2 A2 E.... don't miss it will you

### 3.12.3.

- 1 A2 be walking

### Activity 13: children at indoor playtime.

#### 3.13.1.

- 1 A come and sit quiet and have a think about what happened  
(A continues tidying the activity area)
- 2 A how did T... get hurt
- 3 C I didn't kick . I .. s accidentally . yard
- 4 A sorry
- 5 C I accidentally
- 6 A tt . you accidentally kicked him
- 7 C yeah
- 8 A what could you say
- 9 C sorry
- 10 C2 I have to say sorry a some one as well
- 11 A what else happened
- 12 C2 I didn't mean a punch him right
- 13 A what were you doing your hands near him any way ... why were your hands near  
him
- 14 C didn't hurt
- 15 A N.... ..
- 16 C2 mm
- 17 A why were your hands near him
- 18 C2 he was . he was pushing
- 19 A so what do you need to do
- 20 C2 say sorry  
(A stops tidying up and concentrates on what C2 is saying)
- 21 A if someone is pushing you what could you do  
(C3, interrupting "ask the adult")
- 22 A you could tell the adult or . just ignore it and walk away
- 23 A now you re missing some of your play time

#### 3.13.2.

- 1 A Mrs C... sent D... and N... in cause . because T... got hurt in the  
playground
- 2 A2 oh dear
- 3 A she wasn't sure how it happened they told me now
- 4 A2 right
- 5 A so I'm going to keep them with paper and pencil
- 6 A2 yes ok
- 7 C paper and pencil
- 8 A alright then
- 9 A2 what was that you say put that in my book  
(goes to write some thing down)  
this was a problem before Mrs B.. between D... and N..... hopefully we  
don't have to say that one has to stay in and one has to be out
- 10 A T.... 's got hurt and it seems a shame
- 11 A2 Ok  
(C carries on pulling faces and making noises)

### 3.13.3.

*(A, A3 and C sitting round the table)*

- 1 A oh well you'll have to be more careful won't you  
2 A3 as I say . I can't . any one who has been fighting and throwing legs in the  
air out in the garden  
3 C well you should go away then should you  
4 A3 are you talking to me D...  
5 C no  
6 A3 you need to hear what the ladies are saying D.....  
*(\*\*\*\*\* A3 returns to the garden)*

### Activity 14: children working in the class room.

#### 3.14.1.

*(guessing game with A2)*

- 1 A2 you were shouting .. I can't ask you  
*(a little bit noisy)*  
2 A2 are you listening  
3 A could you say the names Mrs B.... of the children who are ready

## TRANSCRIPTION TAPE FOUR

### Activity 1: children working in the class room, others preparing to go to, or returning from, the playroom.

#### 4.1.1.

- 1 C Miss they're back  
2 C Miss the play rooms back  
3 A oh are you quiet at the door . oh good come on in

#### 4.1.2.

- 1 A well I've got H... ready, he'll just need to wash his hands quickly ...and  
I'm not sure about M.... T... today . T... Mrs F... is T.... at a convenient  
stage  
2 A2 yes  
3 A T... can go to the play room  
*(T.... goes to talk to A)*  
4 A3 have to be quick T... cause Mrs W.... be going in there soon  
5 A3 we're going Mrs M....  
6 A bye

#### 4.1.3.

- 1 C I'm sorry to being late Mrs M.... I was late back  
2 A I was getting worried about you  
3 C well I could come I was a bit too .. tired to come

4 A I'm glad you're not being loud now you can get dressed

4.1.4.

1 C Mrs M..... I'm ready

2 A you can walk to the play room T....

(C2 *pausing in dressing to swing his clothes round his head*)

3 A Mrs F are you looking for anybody else who hasn't got any toys in their mouth

4 A2 I will be

5 A I sepect they'll be quiet people too

6 A2 yes I'm only asking the quiet people

7 A people who aren't waving their t shirts about

8 A2 can't hear it if they're loud

9 A you wouldn't choose any one who was waving a t shirt around would you

10 A2 no it would be dangerous by the computer

11 A oh it would wouldn't it . yes . very dangerous

12 A I expect when you look round no one will be talking and no one will be waving any t shirts about

4.1.5.

1 A2 oh . if D..... isn't ready I won't be able to ask him to help me  
(as if to herself)

2 C I'm being quick I'm being quick

3 A2 J.... come and help me

4 C OOOh

(C *continues fussing over dressing*)

5 A I'm just listening to the quiet people in the book corner

6 A4 D... hasn't had a go here yet

7 A oh well if D... is quiet enough A... you could ask him to come and help you with the cakes

8 A4 I'll be listening then

4.1.6.

(C *watch A4 decorate a cake*)

1 A4 have you had a turn

2 C nner

3 A let's finish your work then

4 C ahhr

(*moves towards the work table*)

(*sits down*)

5 C no

6 A C... would you like me to help you with your writing  
(*shakes his head*)

7 A I've got space next to me if you want me to help you C...

8 C (*head down facing away from A*)

9 A you've got some play room

4.1.7.

1 C Miss T....'s sitting there

2 C T.....'s sitting there

3 A T....'s sitting where  
 4 C there  
 5 A T... 's finished  
 He's done his puzzle and he's doing his pattern  
*(C wanders round the room flicking his paper)*

#### 4.1.8.

1 A C... 's doing his writing (to A2)  
 2 A2 oh no  
 3 A2 do you want some help .C....  
 . oh we . tell you what I'll just pick these letters up . if you want my help  
 I'll help you  
 4 A I said there's a chair next to me as well if he wants me to help him  
 5 A I like helping the children with their writing  
*(C sitting on the floor at the far side of the room)*  
 6 A2 do you want any help ..do you need some help  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 7 A2 where's your pencil  
 8 A I think he left it on the table Mrs B.....  
 9 A2 oh we'll collect it on the way through  
 10 A2 do you need any more books now . for this  
*(looking at his paper)*  
 11 A2 can you carry this for me .. it's quite heavy  
*(passing him a box)*  
*(both stand up)*  
 12 A2 thanks very much come on then  
 can you manage.. or I do it as well .ok. that's great . thanks very much  
 13 C \*\*\*  
 14 A2 sorry  
 15 C \*\*  
*(leave room together to do writing)*

### Activity 2: children preparing for lunch.

#### 4.2.1.

*(A asked children to wash for lunch)*

1 C I washed my hands after the cake though  
 2 A I 'm glad you've got very clean hands

#### 4.2.2.

1 A4 are you ready .do you need to wash your hands D....  
 2 C can I wash them in the class  
 3 A4 yes wash them in the class then come . if you've finished on the computer  
*(C goes to wash)*  
 4 C yes I have  
 5 C I wash my hands  
 6 A4 with soap did you .. it was very quick  
 very quick  
*(returns to wash)*

**4.2.3.**

1 A S... you can get ready for dinner

**4.2.4.**

1 A D... you can wash your hands for dinner

2 C I already done them

3 A you can do them again because you been touching the bricks

**4.2.5.**

1 A A... when you've done the puzzle . you've only got a few more pieces left  
 . when you've done that you can get ready for dinner . it's not going to  
 take you long putting those last pieces in

**4.2.6.**

1 A M..... I expect you're sitting in the book corner waiting for me  
 (M... moves away from talking to child working at the table towards the  
 book corner)

2 C she's got six

3 A I'll come over when you're ready you need to be sitting down

**4.2.7.**

1 A we're getting ready for dinner Mrs B.....

2 A2 yes he's come in to do his hands  
*(C hands writing to A)*

3 A oh good you done . do you know when they go out there . they come back  
 ever so quickly

4 A2 right . you can do toilet and hands for me right . good boy

**4.2.8.**

1 A2 A could you put your word book away please

2 A2 D....could you put your word book away

**4.2.9.**

1 A4 I think you've finished now H...

2 C no I haven't I just can't find one

3 A4 one more one more then

**4.2.10.**

1 A we're going Mrs B....  
*(children still getting ready for dinner)*

**Activity 3: playtime in the activity area after lunch.****4.3.1.**

1 A Mrs W..... is it loud in here

2 A2 won't be able to choose any body if it s too loud

- 3 A look Mrs C.... went that way  
 4 A it's a bit loud around here at the moment . it's quiet over there . but here  
     it's loud  
 5 A2 oh dear . are you in the wrong place again  
 6 A2 oh no . bother  
 7 A3 oh . it's too noisy for me to go out side  
 8 A3 oh . we've already nearly lost some (*reference to playtime*)  
 9 A oh no . not already

#### Activity 4: children working in the classroom.

##### 4.4.1.

- 1 A last one L....  
 2 C miss five two  
 3 A am I busy M.....  
     (*M... waited until A had finished calculation with L....*)

##### 4.4.2.

- 1 C can he come over here  
 2 A you want to ask L.... to come and play  
 3 C yes  
 4 A you could say it S...  
 5 A excuse me I'm talking to S...  
 6 A S... 's just going to ask me .. can I go and ask L.... to come and play  
 7 C I ask L.... to play  
 8 A yes  
 9 C yes ask the teacher too  
 10 A2 Mrs M I got a one word message L... L..  
 11 A oh I'll talk to S... and he'll come back in a minute  
 12 A2 ok  
 13 A you want to say to Mrs W.... . can L.... come and play  
 14 C yeah  
 15 A say it to me  
 16 C can L....play  
 17 A can L.... come and play  
 18 C come and play yeah  
 19 A you need to say that to Mrs W....  
 20 C yeah  
 21 A go and try again

##### 4.4.3

- 1 A D... am I listening to you  
 2 C no  
 3 A am I listening to you D.....  
 4 C can you do her buttons up please  
 5 A was I talking to M.....  
 6 C yes  
 7 A why are you interrupting  
 8 C err

9 A can I be talking to you and M.... at the same time ...you should wait until I've finished

**4.4.4.**

1 C Miss after you've done the buttons can I have some one from Mrs W....  
and like to play with me in the house  
2 A I think we've got enough children at the moment maybe later  
3 C 3 miss 3 add six  
4 A that was close M....yes  
5 A D... I didn't say ok to you . I said ok to M....  
(*D leaving the room*)  
(nearly always agrees with them then modifies what they said)

**4.4.5.**

(*C asking to play in the house with D... and L...*)  
1 A you'll have to ask D..... and L...  
2 C2 (shakes her head)  
3 A L... likes to say yes doesn't she  
(*all go to play in the house*)

**4.4.6.**

1 C miss  
2 A L...s not in my cupboard  
(*L.... comes out of the cupboard closing the door*)  
(*L... goes towards the book corner*)  
3 A (glance up)

**4.4.7.**

1 A you could write to C... and give it to him when he comes back  
That's what E... always does . she writes to C... from E....  
(*sounding out words together*)

**Activity 5: welcoming children into school at the start of the day.**

**4.5.1.**

1 A hello T.... . how are you this morning T....  
2 C alright  
3 A good good good

**4.5.2.**

1 C (*running*)  
\*\*\* hide my coat in the cupboard  
2 A careful  
3 A2 no  
4 C (*turns round*)  
shall hide my coat in the coat room

**4.5.3.**

1 A good morning ...wow



hide this one  
(*re snack*)

**4.5.4.**

1 A morning  
hello T....

**Activity 6: children working in the classroom.**

**4.6.1.**

1 A L... do you need to \*\*\*\*  
2 C no  
3 A then don't

**4.6.2.**

1 A I thought Mrs F... is keeping an eye on you . cause I've got the computer  
ready to go again this morning (in the sense of, watching the children to  
help her choose someone to work at the computer)  
2 A2 right

**4.6.3.**

1 A D... are you listening  
(*to a child who was interrupting*)  
2 A are you called S... we talked about that yesterday  
3 A will you be quiet at that end of the table please  
4 C (laughing like Mutley)  
5 A L.. is it quiet here  
6 A oh . I can't hear you Mrs B... it's a bit loud down there  
(more Mutley laughter)  
7 A Mrs F.... can L... go and be quiet somewhere  
8 A2 mm

**4.6.4.**

1 A well done you coped very well with drawing on the paper

**4.6.5.**

1 A be thinking of something that begins with 'm' . I'll be asking you in a  
minute  
2 A keep it in your head  
(physical cue, hands across her mouth)  
3 A good boy

**4.6.6.**

1 C he's putting his hands there  
2 C2 no I not  
3 A don't worry about it J... . make sure you're in the right place  
(*continues with the lesson*)  
4 A D... are you paying attention  
5 C2 yes I am

6 A good  
 7 C2 I don't want to sit by the door  
 8 A course you don't

**4.6.7.**

1 A oh you're quiet . good girl  
 2 A oh dear . I don't think you re being sensible  
*(L.... touching pencil pot)*  
 3 A L... something that begins with a 'm'  
*(brings her attention back to group task)*  
 4 A got one

**4.6.8.**

1 A spect Mrs F... is keeping her eye on the computer  
 2 A S.. come and write 'n' . you can be thinking about something beginning  
 with 'n' while we write it  
 3 A you can come and write a 'n' for me S...  
 4 C Nnn  
*(flops head down)*  
 5 A no . oh you can do one later  
 6 A I expect L... wants to be looking at me Mrs F..... she doesn't want to  
 make the same mistake she made before with her train  
*(L... sits up)*

**4.6.9.**

1 A T... I'm pleased you're thinking now

**4.6.10.**

1 C no one puts their chair back  
 2 A it's ok they're going straight back to them A...

**4.6.11.**

1 A oh . Mrs F.... . look at the clock  
 2 A2 oh yes

**Activity 7: children changing for PE.**

**4.7.1.**

1 A another time I will get up set with you . you're answering everybody else's  
 questions . not giving them time to answer them themselves  
 2 C no no no no no  
 3 C2 it was A....  
 4 A I know who it was M ..... you getting changed look  
 5 A T... and J... be at the door please  
*(to hurry other children up)*  
 6 A oh good boy D... you going to stand at the door really nicely aren't you

## Activity 8: PE in the hall.

### 4.8.1.

- 1 A M... T... is nice and quiet  
(*choosing children to play cat and mouse*)  
(*H.. knocks S.. over*)
- 2 A h... be careful
- 3 A I'd like to see the quiet sitting still people again
- 4 A Mrs C.... did you see the quiet sitting still people
- 5 A they'd be sitting still now . so you can say their names
- 6 A oh I'm looking for the children on the bench  
(*several children who have lost tails in the game continue to run around*)
- 7 A I might be looking for a crafty one in a minute . I spotted J... earlier on

### 4.8.2.

- 1 A looking where you re going

### 4.8.3.

- 1 A it's a bit loud over this end . what do you think
- 2 A2 it is a bit loud over this end
- 3 A3 (*cuing hands on your knees physically*)
- 4 A it isn't loud by J... though .. be a cat J...
- 5 A2 and L... 's waiting patiently
- 6 A2 and D... 's waiting properly now  
(*involving all adults and sharing control*)

### 4.8.4.

- 1 A S... your tail's gone . go and sit on the bench .. S.. on the bench ...  
(*S crawling*)
- 2 A oh you can walk S.. . you're a big boy
- 3 A I'm looking for the big boys for the next

### 4.8.5.

- 1 A I want to say someone with green shorts . but their legs need to be in the  
right place  
(*J.. only child with green shorts squirming along the bench*)  
(*feet down hands on his knees*)

### 4.8.6.

- 1 A oh D... you're quiet  
(*noise changes from a burble to torrent*)
- 2 A oh I hope the children are quiet today
- 3 A2 I hope the children are quiet
- 4 A oh . I might be looking for another crafty one .. a minute

### 4.8.7.

- (Tendency for second adult to echo leader's idea)
- 1 A oh I was just going to choose J... then . but I can't see his face
- 2 A4 what a shame
- 3 A I was going to say it ..

- 4 A I can't say it if you're outside  
*(J.. leaving the room)*  
*(A brings him back in...he immediately leaves by another door)*
- 5 A I can't say your name now\*\*\*\*\*

#### 4.8.8.

- (child trots to the door)*
- 1 A oh . have I chosen the wrong person for the front of the line

### Activity 9: preparing for breakfast in the classroom.

#### 4.9.1.

- 1 C I nearly ready
- 2 A we're looking for the ready with their hands on their knees  
*(J.. shrieking A.. holding him)*
- 3 A oh Mrs C... there's a ready girl already
- 4 A2 oh we'll see who's sitting..
- 5 A do you want to start with her
- 6 A2 yes
- 7 A2 sitting properly  
 ....there's a chair over there you could have
- 8 A oh dear \*\*\*\*wants to talk
- 9 A2 I'll be looking again now

#### 4.9.2.

- 1 A you need to look what you're doing  
*(to C.... who hadn't put his shirt under his jumper)*
- 2 A oh look here it is  
*(helping J... to tuck his shirt in to his trousers)*
- 3 A I do that one . you do the next
- 4 A do it up  
*(J..... finishes dressing)*

#### 4.9.3.

- 1 A2 some children are sitting beautifully with their hands on their knees
- 2 A2 no .. hands on their knees  
*(intervening to prevent S.... joining in silly behaviour of J...)*
- 3 A oh you've got your hands on your knees . you're a good boy
- 4 A S.. would you like to take my chair into assembly

### Activity 10: children working in the classroom.

#### 4.10.1.

- 1 C I don't want to do hard ones
- 2 A they're not all hard ones . look I'll show you
- 3 C I said I don't want to do hard ones

- 4 A you see which one of those you like to do . and I'll show you . have a good  
look at that for today . I'm sure you'll find one that you like
- 5 C I done it now
- 6 A I'll be saying the names for the playroom in a minute S..  
(S... *moving around the room*)
- 7 C I don't know what to do . I want . I don't know what to do . really
- 8 A have a look in the cupboard then S.. see what puzzles there are
- 9 C they're \*\*\*
- 10 A pardon

#### 4.10.2.

- 1 C I've got it . that's not yours
- 2 C2 hey miss . I want that book
- 3 A we're sharing our dictionaries aren't we M.....

#### 4.10.3.

- 1 C I don't know what to draw
- 2 A you thought of some good ones when we were doing the writing
- 3 C what like
- 4 A which one have you got . any of them there M.....
- 5 C I trying to think of different
- 6 A what different ones to the ones . to the ones we thought of this morning
- 7 C yeah
- 8 A well you could get a dictionary and look for some
- 9 C there's only two
- 10 A (*walking over to the book corner*)  
I know a good one the one with the letters in it
- 11 C I looked in there
- 12 A have you . they've got lots of good words in here that begin with the  
letters
- 13 A which letter do you want to start with M....
- 14 A look ... 'm h' . these words here start with a 'h' . and all of those and those  
and those .there's lots . you have a look
- 15 C I done that page
- 16 A there's that page
- 17 C and that page
- 18 A and that page let's have a look  
(M.. *starts work*)

## TRANSCRIPTION TAPE FIVE

### Activity 1: children playing in the activity area after lunch.

#### 5.1.1.

- 1 A is it loud there
- 2 C yeah
- 3 A it's a bit loud here too A... . it's probably why Mrs C... hasn't come down  
yet
- 4 A she probably thought . I'm not coming here . it's too loud

### 5.1.2.

- 1 A2 Mrs M.... I don't know what to do with L... . this is the second day she's  
come to my table with no shoes on  
2 A no shoes . no play time  
3 A2 oh . that would be a shame  
4 A Mrs B... L... has lost her play time . she can have her shoes and tights  
when I come back

### 5.1.3.

- 1 C scuse me that is broken  
2 A2 how did it get broken  
3 C I don't know I didn't do it  
4 A2 hope you're being careful with our things  
5 C I didn't broke it . I was careful for a long time \*\*\*  
6 A be very careful with it

### 5.1.4.

- (H..trying to cheat at snakes and ladders A2 prevented him)  
1 A2 now it s H...s turn come on H... your turn  
(she's making factual comments monitoring their behaviour)

### 5.1.5.

- 1 A2 oh S.. look . see the sand please  
(points to sand on the floor)  
2 C oh B....  
3 A2 well ..keep it to the edge . some of it drop off  
4 C why  
5 A2 pick some of it up now  
6 C it s too hard  
7 A2 I tell you what B.... help you  
8 C ohhh  
9 C what about I'll stick it in one pile yeah  
10 C I done it  
(put the sand in a heap on the floor. A2 made no comment)  
(C continues sweeping up)  
11 C it looks alright now  
12 A2 no there's still some sand on the floor . the children might slip on it  
13 C the sand's down under here  
14 A2 you could get the long handled brush it might be easier  
15 C how will I do this \*\*\*\*\*B.....  
16 A2 how you doing now S... nearly finished  
17 A2 you've finished now S... go in the classroom

### 5.1.6.

- (D.. grumbling about L...)  
1 C miss miss L.. took mr potatoe head  
2 A2 L... . L... you need to get a cloth ... clean the table please  
3 A2 make sure you get the marks off L.....

### 5.1.7.

*(children arguing in the queue by the class room door)*  
(A2 to A)

- 1 A2 we're going to practice tomorrow morning . again . cause its easier .  
problem lining up again  
2 A oh no . any particular area  
3 A2 all of them . no C... was alright . but he was at the front of the line . wasn't he

### 5.1.8.

- 1 A2 L... you need to be in the line now  
2 A has she been a good girl Mrs B...  
3 A2 L... needs to be in the line now Mrs M... please  
4 A oh yes . then she could have her tight and her shoes back  
Couldn't she  
5 A put the cloth back then

## Activity 2: children working in the classroom.

### 5.2.1.

- 1 C stop it ...Mrs M....  
2 A is there a problem J...  
3 C yes . he keeps on throwing me more cubes . but I don't want more cubes  
4 C2 I'm not  
5 A I hope T.... isn't throwing cubes at all  
6 C2 I'm not  
7 C he is

*(children continue arguing A leaves them to sort out dispute themselves)*

*(children settle to task)*

*(later)*

- 8 A that's complicated T.. did you think of it yourself  
9 C2 yeah  
10 A it's a good one isn't it J...  
*(J... looks across )*  
11 C yes  
*(boys continue working side by side, sharing equipment)*

### 5.2.2

- 1 A are you working together C... with H....  
2 C ..mmm  
3 A so you'll need to put the puzzle away properly when you finished  
*(ends 1:42)*

## Activity 3: group tea time.

### 5.3.1.

- 1 C hello Mrs M... I'm a good driver

2 A and sitting quietly as well  
 3 C Im gona get food today and I had a quiet voice  
 4 C I'm a good boy . I am . I'm a good boy

### 5.3.2.

1 A looking for quiet children hands on their knees  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 2 A2 eaten bananas yet  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 3 A D... is your hand in the right place  
*(D... takes hand off T... 's head)*  
 4 C2 some one's got that  
 5 A2 the banana

### 5.3.3.

1 A oh Miss R..... how about some singing  
 2 A2 I would ask them only it's a bit noisy  
 3 A is it noisy near A....  
 4 A oh . it's stopped  
 5 A2 what would you like

### 5.3.4.

1 A2 "lay them gently on your knee"  
*(J... sitting on A2 flailing with a broom)*  
 2 A2 oh where's your knee .. oh there they are  
*( removing the broom and placing J... s hands on his knees)*

### 5.3.5.

1 C what about us . I didn't have a go  
*(choosing an animal in old mc donald)*  
 2 A ask the quiet people Mrs C.... .. if they'd like a bit of banana  
 3 C I didn't have a go  
 4 A3 now let's see who is sitting with their hands on their knees  
 5 C I didn't have a go . I sittin \*\*\*  
 6 C but I didn't sing it . I did sing it but . she didn't choose me  
 7 A3 L.. you're sitting beautifully  
*(passes a slice of banana)*  
 8 A some times you don't get chosen . we don't make a fuss about it  
 9 C I want to

### 5.3.6.

1 A is it the wrong place to be  
 2 C I want say no  
 3 A well then  
 4 A3 A... you're sitting so quietly well done  
*(passes a slice of banana)*

### 5.3.7.

*(J...pushes biscuit tin off the table)*  
 1 A2 oh dear it's nearly time for food



2 A I expect you're looking for the people with their hands on their knees  
aren't you Mrs C....

3 A3 I am . yes . I can't see any one at the moment  
(*passing banana to T....*)

4 C neerrr

5 A4 you need both hands on your knees then she'll see you

6 A4 oh look there s a good place here  
(*offering chair to J..*)

7 A3 A.... you're sitting really nicely . would you like a piece

8 A banana smells really nice

9 A3 mmm

### 5.3.8.

1 A2 she's just coming (*encouraging J... to sit still*)

2 A3 has any one else got their hands on their knees though

3 A I can't tell\*\*\*\* J... sit down . I'll get you some \*\*\* in a minute  
(*J2 goes to get himself a drink*)

4 A are you sitting down J

5 A you sit down and I will say . do you want a drink  
(*J returns to his seat*)

6 C (J) want drink

7 A are your hands back on your knees

8 A J

9 A2 it's the ones with their hands on their knees ..she's looking . for a drink

10 A I looking for the people for the drinks

11 C3 I I do it

12 A I do it D.... it's fine

13 C3 ahh ok

14 A A... would you like a drink

15 C4 yes please

16 A what one would you like  
(*passing round drinks*)

### 5.3.9.

(*J... stands up grabbing at the biscuit tin*)

1 A3 lots left . lots more banana  
(*shows the plate then walks by*)

2 A3 oh S.. would you like one . you're sitting with your hands on your knees  
(*offers S.. banana*)

3 A3 (looks at J..)  
(*J.. puts hands on his knees* )  
(*A3 offers J.. banana*)

4 A is J... sitting on his chair

5 A2 oh he is

6 A which drink would you like  
(*J puts hands on his knees as A4 walks by*)

7 A2 be waiting . quickly . might another one

### 5.3.10.

1 A they're all my children's models Mrs C...

*(they're not his )*

- 2 A do I need to say it again to you H...  
3 C no  
4 A think it in your head . she wouldn't like me to do it . so I'm not going to do it

**5.3.11.**

- 1 A I could pass this to the older children  
2 A2 oh D... H....

**5.3.12.**

- 1 A2 have you finished  
2 C erk  
3 A2 have you finished  
4 C I've finished Miss R....

**5.3.13.**

- 1 A A... are you all over the place ...perhaps you need practicing sitting still  
2 C nnnn  
3 A no thank you  
4 A5 A.... you want to be sensible

**Activity 4: welcoming children into school at the start of the day.**

**5.4.1.**

- 1 A2 do you know where these came from Mrs F.. . just arrived  
2 A3 *(goes to look for owner of a snack bag)*  
3 A2 is this yours D...  
4 C yes  
5 A3 D you must tell Mrs C... when you come in the morning  
6 A2 perhaps I was doing something . perhaps if D... could wait then I'll know  
7 A3 yes D.... can you just wait

**5.4.2.**

- 1 A2 well actually . where I should be this afternoon . but \*\*\*\*where I should go now  
\*\*\*\*\*  
2 A2 mmm  
3 A4 I should think he would yes  
4 A4 never mind  
5 A2 he knows every thing now Mr \*\*  
6 A2 he likes people with kind hands

**5.4.3.**

- 1 A1 oh that is sad Mrs F...

## Activity 5: children working in the classroom.

### 5.5.1.

- 1 A you're colouring it very nicely  
2 C do want to do it  
3 A cause there's a lot of things on there  
4 C yes  
5 A well \*\*\* do the writing on the back and then I'll tell you what we're going to do . come on  
*(moves to sit side by side)*  
6 A you can leave your chair  
S... 's got a chair up there  
7 C2 I don't like it  
8 A I don't know why you don't like it  
They're perfectly alright  
*(child changes a grey chair for an orange one)*

### 5.5.2.

- 1 A C... are you sitting on your chair  
*(C moves from crouching on the chair to sitting)*  
2 C yeah

### 5.5.3.

- 1 A get changed for PE  
2 A take your shoes with you C....  
3 C why I don't want my shoes  
*(C picks up shoes)*  
4 A you need your shoes  
*(A appears engrossed in writing throughout the exchange)*  
5 C I have to leave them there for now  
6 A no take them with you C.....  
7 C errr

### 5.5.4.

- 1 A tuck your chair in please L.....  
2 A D... tuck you chair please  
3 C I need to do my colouring  
4 A S would you like to stay here and finish your colouring . Mrs F....says she would like to stay and help you this morning  
5 A2 I'll wait for S... shall I  
6 A please  
7 A2 right

### 5.5.5.

- 1 A oh there you are I wondered where you got to .  
*(opening the curtains that L.... had just closed)*  
*(L.... goes to get changed for PE)*  
2 A please don't do that  
*.(guides L.. away from the window seat)*  
3 A you can get changed on the carpet

4 C well that means I shall have to stand up then  
 5 A that's ok

#### 5.5.6.

1 A getting changed D...  
*(he was engrossed in watching child working at the computer)*  
*(D.... walks away from the computer)*

#### 5.5.7.

1 A2 you're good at it aren't you

### Activity 6: children going into PE.

#### 5.6.1.

1 A M... be at the door  
 2 C me next at the door  
 3 A I just said \*\*\*\*\*  
 4 A oh I can't choose boys while they are arguing  
 5 A J... be at the door  
 6 A remember your gaps  
 7 A is this a good queue  
*(children complaining about each other)*  
 8 A with the gaps and the arms by our legs  
 look at those straight backs you've all got  
*(C carries on jumping up and down all the others quietly standing in the queue)*  
 9 A and you're standing still that's good . lead on

## TRANSCRIPTION TAPE SIX

### Activity 1: children working in the classroom.

#### 6.1.1.

1 A C what are you doing underneath the table ..that's silly .  
 . if the table's going to make you silly . I will say . no sticker  
 2 A A... can you not put the door mat right there . if someone is doing the  
 computer it will be in the way  
*(Frequently offers explanations)*

#### 6.1.2.

1 A I'll look after you . if you want to pick them I'll remind you . you don't  
 want to do it  
*(to L about picking her fingers)*

#### 6.1.3.

1 C mind if I take part of your colours  
 2 A they're our colours T.....

#### 6.1.4.

- 1 A L... brilliant  
(encouraging L... to take work to be shown at the next assembly)
- 2 A errm Mrs H..
- 3 A she might be singing actually L...
- 4 A if she s singing she \*\*\*\*\*can't talk to her
- 5 A what do you think we should do
- 6 C get on the chair for the singing
- 7 A how can you tell who's doing it
- 8 C \*\*\*\*
- 9 A you could look through the door and if she's busy you could ....
- 10 A come back  
(L leaves to see if Mrs H... is singing)
- 11 A she's going to look through the door and if they're busy she \*\*\*  
(to adult out of line of vision)  
(A stands to watch L..)  
(both return minus the work)

#### 6.1.5.

- 1 A2 hello
- 2 A hello Mrs C....
- 3 A are you going to toys r us this afternoon
- 4 A2 (cough ) excuse me I thought I would cause it's a lovely day
- 5 A it is a nice day
- 6 A2 and we don't get many lovely days this time of year . so I thought . it be nice
- 7 A so you want two children . who didn't go last time
- 8 A2 two children for toys are us . that didn't go last time .. has  
(children volunteering!)
- 9 A D... 's finished all his work Mrs C....
- 10 A2 D.. . D... 's finished all his work has he
- 11 A \*\*\*
- 12 A D... you want to go to toys r us
- 13 C no
- 14 A Mrs C.... \*\*\*\*\*
- 15 A2 well he wasn't with me cause he said at lunch ti . dinner time . when I said did he want to go to the toilet ..oh it was time to go to the toilet . he said he'd bin ... but we found out that perhaps he hadn't been . so perhaps . if he's saying no he hasn't been he must have been
- 16 A oh dear . you mean . you can't tell whether or not been
- 17 A2 I'm not sure whether he's been or not . I m not sure
- 18 A you're not sure . oh . don't take him
- 19 A2 I'd better not take him . if I m not sure

#### 6.1.6.

- 1 A S.... has not been to the toilet . he's very sure . he's very sure
- 2 A2 he's sure . ok then . S.. can go to the toilet . go to the toilet sweetheart
- 3 C2 yesss
- 4 A A... 's been to toys r us

5 A2 yes . and T...’s been to toys r us  
 6 A T....  
 7 A errr  
 8 A2 has M.... been shopping yet  
 9 A yes M.... T....  
 10 A2 he’s been a good boy today  
 11 A he’s had a good day today  
 12 A2 I saw him talking to Mr A.... just now  
 13 A he hasn’t had to sit by the door all day today  
 14 A2 that’s good I can take him then  
 15 A2 ok M.... got a coat today  
 16 A2 I could have taken you L.... but I will be going again another day . I shall  
 be taking someone else another day

#### 6.1.7.

1 A talk to him sort it out together

#### 6.1.8.

1 C can someone play with me  
 2 A why don’t you ask T.... see what he says  
 3 C would like to play the out side sand  
 4 C2 yeah in a minute done this  
*(J... was playing with T...)*  
 5 C3 ahhh I thought you my mate  
 6 C Miss can I play in the sand please  
 7 A T... is going in the out side sand with D.... now  
 may be later C....

#### 6.1.9.

1 A lovely . what have you forgot to do  
 2 C put name  
*(A sympathetic shrug)*

#### 6.1.10.

1 C H... H...  
 2 A H...’ s busy he’ll come back in a minute

#### 6.1.11.

1 C L...’ s put dolls in the cupboard  
 2 C why has L... put dolls in the cupboard  
 3 A why don t you ask her  
 4 C why are these dolls in the cupboard  
 5 C2 because I want them in the cupboard

#### 6.1.12.

1 C Mrs M.... come and see my big ..volcano  
 2 A I will in a minute when I’ve finished this  
 3 C2 I will can I come go and see it  
 4 A you’re playing in the house now A.....

5 C2 can I just go and see it  
 6 A in a minute  
 7 C3 I want see it in a minute well

#### 6.1.13.

1 A are you two playing or are you looking at the computer  
 2 C L....  
 3 A it s ok . so long as she s quiet and watching

#### 6.1.14.

1 A time for somebody else now  
 2 C no I'll do the game  
 3 A no thanks L....  
 4 C2 move  
 5 A you mean excuse me  
 6 C2 excuse me  
*(leaves the computer L... moves her chair closer so that C can t get out)*  
 7 A L... are you actually excusing him  
 8 C \*\*  
 9 A that means moving your feet so that he can get through  
 10 A would you go and ask D... to do his computer now C... please  
*(Donald has been making a lot of noise in the activity area for several minutes)*  
 11 C2 where is he  
 12 A he s in the sand out side  
 13 C3 \*\*  
 14 A oh . yes please D... are your hands clean  
 15 C3 can I come back  
*(to play in the sand)*  
 16 A we're doing this one at the moment

#### 6.1.15.

1 C are you playing with me  
 2 A you're playing with A.... at the moment  
 3 A Mrs H.... if there's too much sand on the floor you could find me  
 4 A2 there's rather a lot Mrs M....  
 5 A then I could write it up on the door . that certain children shouldn't play with the sand if they can't \*\*\*\*

#### 6.1.16.

1 A oh . I asked the children to tidy up . I hope that's what they're doing  
 2 C didn't hear you  
 3 A good job I said it again  
 4 A oh . A... you were playing in the house . do you think . put that table back in the corner and put the bench away please  
 5 A J ...C.... H... time to stop playing . S... S... your picture . what you going to do with it  
 6 A excuse me A.. what would be the best thing to say A... what would be the best thing to say

7 C (A (child) moving the bench S... was sitting on)  
excuse me

#### 6.1.17.

1 A2 where's A... oh she's at the door ready for snack  
2 A2 gone for snack  
3 A doesn't look like it  
(children tidying up /milling about)  
4 A2 can I help you L....  
5 A2 it's the door now is it .. lining up for snack  
6 A2 I think it's a very nice snack today  
7 A2 I remember asking C... I don't ....

### Activity 2: group snack time.

#### 6.2.1.

1 A you could come and be here now D...  
(D... arrives late for snack)

#### 6.2.2.

1 A2 A... has been standing quietly on the star

#### 6.2.3.

1 A J... sitting down  
(J... drinking from the tap)  
2 A he could have had a drink from the red one Mrs C.....

#### 6.2.4.

1 A I hope she's not saying no . she could be saying . mummy can I go when  
I've finished my apple  
that would be much better than a no A... and remember your face needs to  
be smiling

#### 6.2.5

1 C ( "Mutley" laughter)  
2 A L.... do you want to come and sit with us there s a chair behind  
3 C n  
4 A you'd rather be over there  
5 A alright

#### 6.2.6.

1 A who hasn't had a turn yet  
(choosing food from a plate)

#### 6.2.7.

1 A you could be thinking about it . when its your turn you'd know which to say

#### 6.2.8.

1 A maybe you should stay next to Miss R... in case there's any more coming



## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **EARLY YEARS PROSPECTUS**

**SCHOOL**  
**Address**  
**Phone**  
**e-mail**

# **Prospectus**

Head teacher:  
Chair of Governors:

## **The School**

The \*\*\*\*\* is a specialist provision maintained by the \*\*\*\*\*.

The \*\*\*\*\* has places for 27 children aged between five and eight years who are experiencing SEBD.

The school address is:

Telephone:

The head teacher can be contacted at:

The chair of Governors can be contacted at:

If you would like this document in any other format please do ask.

## **Introduction and welcome**

Welcome to \*\*\*\*\* which has been set up to meet the needs of young children who are experiencing Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in their mainstream schools.

The \*\*\*\*\* school has been set up as a primary school for children with SEBD. The Early Years Department provides a very special place for these exceptional children to be educated.

The benefits, for children, of all the adults in their lives working closely together, are well documented. This brochure is the first step in our collaborative partnership and sets out the current philosophy and working practices of the \*\*\*\*\*. We anticipate it will be the beginning of a successful partnership between staff, parents/carers and the children.

## **Ethos and values**

At the \*\*\*\*\* we believe in the importance of creating a safe, supportive learning environment and ensuring the high quality of education that enables all of our children to make progress and experience success.

We believe that the security that comes from routine, structure and adults with shared expectations and responsibilities are fundamental to our children's well being.

We believe that all actions have consequences for adults and children; and these provide powerful learning tools. We focus on celebrating and extending our children's successes and take positive steps to minimise their difficulties.

Like our mainstream partners, we set out to provide an enriched curriculum which includes as broad and balanced interpretation of the National Curriculum as is appropriate for our children. In addition we provide enhanced focus on language, communication and social skills.

We expect that the curriculum we offer will help children to develop; confidence, independence, collaboration skills, and a growing awareness of the needs of other people, as well as the academic skills they will need in their future lives.

We believe that challenging, structured play and active learning provide appropriate routes for young children's development.

We take advantage of all aspects of our small-scale community to foster key skills including sharing and valuing each other.

The \*\*\*\*\* staff and governors want to work closely with parents to promote a child friendly environment which is safe, respectful and relevant to each child's learning needs.

We expect school to be a happy and positive experience for all our children. Thus, enabling them to reach their potential and take a full part in their community.

## **The building**

The Early Years Department is in one wing of \*\*\*\*\* school which has been equipped to enable us to specifically meet the needs of young children with SEBD. In addition to a purpose designed classroom we have; an activity area where we can provide practical activities, e.g. art and work with sand and water; a soft play room, which we use to reinforce appropriate behaviour as well as working with key social and communication skills; a quiet, reflective space where we can share books and provide specific individual work; a kitchen and dining area; there are administrative and store areas; we have a safe outdoor play space; and provision is made for us to share some of \*\*\*\*\* school's facilities, e.g. the large playground.

## **Admissions**

Placements are decided on by the local education authority at a multi-agency advisory group meeting (MAAG). It is expected that children will be in the age group catered for by the \*\*\*\*\*, and have a statement of special educational need or be currently undertaking a multi-disciplinary assessment. The local education authority sends details of the child to the school.

Prior to entry to the \*\*\*\*\* there will be opportunity for parents/carers to visit and discuss admission.

## **Home school agreement**

In accordance with government legislation this document will be issued to all parents on their child's entry to the unit. Copies of this agreement will be kept in the child's file.

## **Transport**

Transport is not the responsibility of the school. Each local authority placing children in the \*\*\*\*\* makes its own transport arrangements. When a child is admitted the local authority considers transport arrangements. The local authority applies criteria based on the distance that the child lives from the school.

## **Staff**

The \*\*\*\*\* staff are all qualified and experienced in working with young children with SEBD.

Teacher:

Teacher:

Teacher:

Teaching assistant:

Teaching assistant:

Teaching assistant:

Teaching assistant:

Nursery nurse:

Lunch time assistant:

This beneficial adult child ratio enables us to provide careful analysis of each child's individual difficulties and intervention to support their specific needs. In line with national policies for Special Education Needs we provide individual educational plans, positive behaviour support plans and detailed risk assessments, all of which enable us to make a good match between the child's needs and our targeted teaching and learning.

The staff operate team teaching strategies in order to provide consistency for the children. This means that planning, assessment, and recording are all undertaken as collaborative processes.

\*\*\*\*\* staff also work as part of multi-disciplinary team supporting the individual needs of the children. This team may include paediatricians, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physio-therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, play therapists, social workers and professionals from other agencies as necessary.

All staff engage in continuing professional development.

## **Partnership with parents**

All adults working in the \*\*\*\*\* believe that partnership between school staff and parents or carers is essential. We aim to make every effort to discuss progress or problems as they arise. When difficulties occur they should be discussed with the child's teacher as soon as possible. In the case of unresolved difficulties then the head teacher and governors of \*\*\*\*\* School will act in line with the school's established procedures. We welcome opportunities to informally share information with parents and carers and anticipate that one member of our staff will be available to talk to parents/carers most days. However, there may be times when staffing issues or immediate work with the children prevent this. In these cases the teacher will be happy to arrange appointments outside school hours.

When discussing sensitive issues we recognise the importance of doing so in private and out of sight of the children. We, therefore, ask adults to avoid discussing inappropriate behaviour in front of the children. Once the children have settled into school routines and CRB checks are completed we welcome parents to join us in our work.

## **Parental consultations**

In line with \*\*\*\*\* practice, there will be three formal parental consultations each year. These meetings will take place in conjunction with discussion of changes to the child's individual educational plans. In addition, parents will also be invited to join a meeting to review their child's statement of SEN. This meeting will be arranged by the head teacher of \*\*\*\*\* School.

Parents will be invited to the annual parents and governors meeting at \*\*\*\*\* School.

## **Curriculum**

The \*\*\*\*\* provides access to the National Curriculum as well as an enriched curriculum which focuses on language, communication and social skills. As far as possible we expect to cover those aspects of learning explored by children of a similar age in mainstream schools. However, the methods we use to do this are individually targeted.

Structure and routine are helpful in developing appropriate classroom behaviour and sustained attention; so we provide predictable routines within each section of the day.

The mixed age range of children educated in the \*\*\*\*\* means that our concept of the National Curriculum uses a combination of programmes of study, based on the Qualification and Curriculum Authority guidelines, over a two year rotation. Details of each term's work is circulated to parents at the beginning of term.

We place particular emphasis on appropriate and effective communication, which is the basis of all learning experience. As a result much of the curriculum is embedded in focused practical or play activities which require collaborative work between children. We also make use of the local environment to supplement work we do in the classroom.

Learning experiences are created to match the individual needs of our children so that they are meaningful to each child. We use opportunities to develop cross curricular links in day to day activities and take advantage of all aspects of our small scale community to foster key skills, including sharing and valuing each other.

## **End of key stage assessment**

End of key stage assessment is carried out in line with national policy. Results will be shared with parents towards the end of the summer term.

The small number of children at \*\*\*\*\* means that it is not possible to publicly report on national end of key stage one assessment without breaching confidentiality. There are, therefore, no National Curriculum results reported here.

## **Religious education**

Children participate in religious education based on the locally agreed syllabus. We support children to begin to develop understanding and awareness of spirituality; introduce them to Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. We are required to provide simple collective acts of worship, within the \*\*\*\*\*, and always include grace before meals. Some of our children are able to join assembly with the older children in \*\*\*\*\* School, this is a useful opportunity for children to experience being part of a large group. We understand that some families may wish to withdraw their child from RE or assembly, if this is the case please put your request in writing to the head teacher.

## **Sex and relationship education**

Sex education is part of the wider curriculum in Science and Personal, Health, Social and Citizenship Education. There is no formal teaching of the subject but children do learn about plants, animals and growth. All children learn about themselves as individuals and their roles in the family and society.

## **Behaviour**

We believe in creating a behaviour supportive learning environment where children feel good about themselves and begin to develop self-control through working and playing together. Staff work together to manage behaviour in a consistent way.

We believe in fostering a positive approach to behaviour. Developing trusting relationships between children and staff is central to this. Clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour combined with respect and empathy for each child, enable us to provide genuine praise for their individual achievements.

Our approach to working with children who may present challenging behaviour involves modification of the environment, structured routines and careful attention to communication; combined with a range of gradually, graded strategies to defuse or de-escalate situations. Most unacceptable behaviour can be moderated using behaviour supportive learning strategies. Consequences of inappropriate behaviour are



usually immediate and meaningful to the child, but never punitive. In a very few instances physical intervention strategies may be necessary to keep everyone safe. All physical intervention is recorded.

Bullying: acts of verbal or physical aggression are not tolerated and will always be investigated and appropriate follow up responses made.

## **SEN and inclusion**

All children attending the \*\*\*\*\* have Statements of Special Educational Needs, or are currently undertaking a multi-disciplinary assessment at the beginning of their placement. Our children are all experiencing the recognised special educational need of Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties; many also experience other related difficulties.

We support inclusive education. Sharing a site with a community first school provides exciting opportunities for inclusion including; planning with colleagues and sharing equipment and expertise.

The \*\*\*\*\* has a specially adapted access and toilet facilities in line with recent legislation.

## **Equal opportunities**

We are committed to anti discriminatory practice and take firm steps to eliminate potentially discriminatory behaviour.

## **Policy documents**

Policy documents are available for you to read on request, from the \*\*\*\*\* School.

## **Snacks and Lunchtime**

We are able to offer hot meals at lunch time. These meals cost £2.20 per day, (£11.00 per week). Cheques should be made payable to \*\*\*\*\* School. Meals must be ordered and paid for by the Thursday of the week before they are required. In the event of absence due to sickness refunds can be made if you contact us **before** 9 am. If you prefer, children may bring packed lunches from home. If your child qualifies for a free lunch this can be arranged by \*\*\*\*\* school office staff on \*\*\*\*\*.

Lunch is eaten in our own dining area. Staff eat with the children as a family group. We encourage the children to eat their lunch and expect the sort of behaviour we know you wish the children to display when they are eating at home.

In line with the government healthy eating policy we encourage children to enjoy a mixed diet in school. In addition to the portion of fruit that the children receive as part of the government scheme we are happy for them to bring small quantities of snack food into school which we share among the group. Preparing and sharing a range of snacks and celebration foods is an important part of our approach to working with the children.

Some of our children travel into the \*\*\*\*\* by taxi and so to avoid spillages and problems on the transport we do not allow any children to bring their own drinks into school. We have drinking water freely available and on special occasions may offer the children juice or milky drinks.

## **Health and safety**

The health and safety of our children is paramount at all times.

Regular risk assessments are carried out and adaptations to the building or our practice are made in response to changing circumstances.

## **Safeguarding our children**

We believe that everyone who works in the \*\*\*\*\* has a responsibility in protecting our children from abuse. If concerns arise over the well being of any child they will be dealt with by the designated teacher in a sensitive and appropriate way.

The designated teachers are: \*\*\*\*\*

## **Medical arrangements**

Medication is only administered if prescribed by a doctor. Staff must have a letter giving consent for medication to be administered by our first aider and confirming the correct dosage and time of day the medication is required. All medication must be handed in to the unit staff who will store it safely.

To avoid allergic reactions \*\*\*\*\* is a nut free zone. The \*\*\*\*\* staff need to be aware of any allergies that you know your child has so that we can plan for their full engagement in all activities.

In the event of accident or illness at school we will make every effort to contact you, but if this is not possible we will act on the advice of the medical officer consulted.

## **School clothing**

Whilst uniform is not compulsory it does help children feel part of the school community. To reinforce this idea of community identity children attending the \*\*\*\*\* are encouraged to wear school uniform.

### **EVERYDAY UNIFORM**

Red sweatshirt

White polo/long sleeved shirt or blouse

Grey trousers, skirt or pinafore

Grey/white socks or tights

Red and white checked summer dress

Sunhat

School shoes

### **PE KIT**

Shoe bag

Black shorts

White t-shirt

Plimsolls

School sweatshirts are available from the \*\*\*\*\*.

For safety reasons children do not wear loose jewellery and only stud earrings.

To avoid loss it is essential that all clothing is named.

## **Uniform grants**

In extenuating circumstances the \*\*\*\*\* can occasionally offer financial assistance towards school uniform. Successful applicants secure a grant for two years. Application forms are available from \*\*\*\*\*. Applications are considered in the strictest confidence. Please contact \*\*\*\*\* school office if you have any queries.

## **Personal property**

Whilst we realise that young children may want to bring their own possessions into school this often causes a great many problems, when items are lost, broken, or damaged. The \*\*\*\*\* cannot take responsibility for these items and so we would ask you to make every effort to discourage children from bringing personal possessions into school.

## Attendance

### Session times

School starts at 8:55 we welcome children into the \*\*\*\*\* at 8:45

The morning session ends at 12:15

Afternoon session begins at 1:15

The afternoon session ends at 3:05

Attendance at school is a legal requirement and all parents are obliged to ensure their child's regular attendance. Although we try to support parents in securing children's attendance in school we have a duty to report poor attendance to the borough education welfare service at regular intervals.

Under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act parents may be fined up to £2,500 per parent per child for failure to ensure regular school attendance. In September 2004 the Government requested that LAs adopt a fast track process where parents will receive a court hearing within a twelve week period from referral to the educational welfare service. \*\*\*\*\* School is operating such a system in January 2005. It is, therefore, important that parents and carers contact the \*\*\*\*\* as soon as they realise that their child will be unable to attend school.

Penalty notices were introduced under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, in February 2004. Penalty notices are now in use in the \*. They are issued by the educational welfare service and may involve fines of up to £100. Penalty notices may be incurred in the following circumstances:

- Regular overt truancy
- Parentally condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school

Further information can be obtained from \*\*\*\*\*

## **TERM DATES**

### **AUTUMN TERM 2007**

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September: Term begins for pupils

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December: Term ends

Half-term holiday: Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October

Staff Training Day: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September

Staff Training Day: Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September

Staff Training Day: Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September

### **SPRING TERM 2008**

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January: Term begins for pupils

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March: Term ends

Half-term holiday: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February

### **SUMMER TERM 2008**

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April: Term begins for pupils

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July: Term ends

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May: School closed for public holiday

Half-term holiday: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May – Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May

N.B. THE DATES OF THE FINAL TWO TRAINING DAYS ARE YET TO BE FINALISED.

### **OFSTED inspection**

The \*\*\*\*\* will be inspected with \*\*\*\*\* School, which was last inspected in January 2004. Copies of the OFSTED report are available from \*\*\*\*\* school office.

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