Oracy…Deep or Shallow Pedagogy?

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Master of Philosophy October 2020

Abstract

This thesis presents an in-depth qualitative case study that explores oracy practices in a primary school setting in England. The research population includes several stakeholder members of the same primary school community. Models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which aim to deepen teachers' professional learning in relation to oracy practices are compared and discussed in some depth. The research interventions employed in the study include the introduction a number of oracy techniques implemented using the democratic and collaborative principles of Joint Practice Development (JPD), (Fielding et al., 2005).

As this research is a study of experience, the experiences of the researcher as well as the experiences of others in the research population, the ontological starting point of the thesis is constructivist. Here reality is regarded as being neither objective nor singular, but that multiple realities are constructed by individuals. The thesis therefore adopts and interpretivist epistemology which rejects positivist epistemic positions which regard direct knowledge of the world as possible, in favour of an interpretivist position where it is accounts and observations of the world that provide indirect indications of phenomena and thus knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation. In view of the above, the aim of the research is not to seek objectivity, but to pursue a sense of authenticity and trustworthiness in interpreting and reporting of the findings of this study.

Data sets collected in the research process are analysed and interrogated using thematic analysis. The thesis is underpinned by the work of Cambourne (1999), who links brain-based research, conditions for literacy learning, and the impact of the classroom environment upon pedagogy and practice. The research is therefore grounded in a theoretical framework, rooted in sociocultural approaches to educational practice, combined with a clear commitment to upholding moral dimensions of education. Two propositions are investigated in this thesis. The first is that oracy and pedagogy are inextricably linked, and that oracy is a democratic pedagogy. The second is that government policy initiatives must be carefully formulated and supported at implementation stage as their impact upon educational practice is not insignificant. Perceived tensions between policy and practice in the teaching of oracy are explored within the confines of this research. The study draws attention to how incoherent government policy regarding oracy is leading to confusion and mixed messages surrounding good practice in the teaching of oracy. Findings of the research reveal how government policy has had a great influence on the pedagogy of oracy in primary education. It is argued therefore, there is a need to ensure that such policies are clear, research-informed and coherent. In addition, the study finds that teachers require appropriate professional development opportunities in the contexts of their practice throughout their careers to, encourage their professional learning, ensure the policy is implemented well in practice and in order to enhance the development of deep professional learning and good pedagogical practice in relation to the teaching of oracy in primary education in England.

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Chapter 1: Research Problem, Focus and Context

Introduction

This thesis has a dual focus. The first centres upon an in-depth investigation of the teaching and learning of oracy in a primary school in England. The second focus of the research is upon the development of CPD interventions designed to deepen teacher understanding, support teachers in their implementation of research-informed pedagogical interventions that aim to improve professional practice and broaden teachers' professional outlook.

Throughout this chapter, personal experience and preliminary engagement with literature encountered as part of my own professional development are woven together to provide the reader with a sense of my starting points in the conduct of this research. Here I am trying to make my own thoughts and opening positions clear to the reader so that you and I can be aware of how my thinking has developed and how this research has influenced not only my own practice but also my own approaches to the research.

Regarding researcher voice, I move from the past to the present and back again to try to capture dynamics in the development of my thinking, including how a range of policy initiatives has influenced my research.

The research has four linked strands of inquiry. These are as follows:

1. To explore the contribution of the teaching and learning of oracy to the development of democratic pedagogy.
2. To develop a greater understanding of the factors influencing the teaching and learning of oracy as a component of literacy and other cognitive development in primary schools.
3. To collect and analyse qualitative data collected in the form of an in-depth case study that aims to present an authentic account of oracy practices in one primary school setting in the North of England.
4. To explore models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and discuss their impact on school development with explicit reference to a model of CPD described by Fielding et al (2005) as Joint Practice Development (JPD).

My professional commitment in working with, and developing, oracy practice has never waned during a career in education spanning more than thirty years. This MPhil research study has provided me with the opportunity to develop further my understanding of oracy practices. It also reinforces the place they have at the heart of my educational philosophy and professional practice.

In this chapter, I outline the origins and foundations of the research. I highlight what I believe are some of the significant historical aspects of education policy which have had an impact on oracy developments. Within the scope of this MPhil thesis, it is not possible to reflect upon all of the policy developments that have taken place. I cite

therefore those I believe to be of most significance in terms of oracy development and relevant for the dual focus of this thesis. In addition, I refer to some of the main challenges regarding oracy developments facing practitioners in 2019, and begin to explore some of the reasons behind the perceived lack of progress in the teaching and learning of oracy as an integral part of a literacy and other cognitive development strategy in some school settings.

The research process has given me the opportunity to reflect, more recently, on some key educators and theorists of education who have had an impact on my own pedagogical approach and thinking. I cite some of these thinkers and their thinking in this chapter because not only they are highly regarded by many in the field of education, but also because I recognise that they have had direct influence on my philosophical approach to teaching and learning. I also begin to raise some issues around my understanding of the pedagogy of oracy. I acknowledge from the outset that the whole notion of pedagogy is a hugely complex area and that it is far beyond the reach of this MPhil thesis to focus on pedagogy in its entirety. The ongoing debate about what should be taught in classrooms and how it should be taught has been the focus of many different policy initiatives and political interventions for decades and arguably even for centuries. From my own experience, I have found there to be some tensions and contradictions with regard to the principles underpinning the pedagogy of oracy in schools settings including how these principles are realised in pedagogical practice. I note how a stream of government policy has had a great influence on the pedagogy of oracy in primary education. I refer in detail to some key policy initiatives and their apparent impact on oracy development in practice. I also consider the notion that oracy is a democratic pedagogy and discuss what that entails within the context and confines of this research.

On an autobiographical note, I have been actively leading professional development for a large part of my career and it is one of my key responsibilities in my present post. I am very keen to use this research opportunity to offer some insights into aspects of CPD for teachers. I have frequently observed that professional development for teachers has derived from the short-term transmission model of CPD whereby a teacher may attend a day course and return to school with the simple assumption that they can and will be able to put into practice what they have learned at that particular CPD event. As part of this research, I have been able to explore different models of CPD and look at them in relation to some key education policy initiatives. My small-scale case study explores one particular method of CPD in greater depth; that of JPD, advocated by Fielding et al (2005). Fielding and his colleagues defined JPD as 'learning new ways of working through mutual engagement that opens up and shares practices with others' (Fielding et al 2005, p.1). I am keen to examine the practicalities of this model of JPD with some teachers in a primary setting as part of the research and later in contexts beyond the original study

Impetus for my research

A recent report, 'Oracy; The State of Speaking in Our Schools' (Millard and Menzies 2016) was commissioned by Voice 21, a movement of practitioners who share a passion for oracy, expertise, resources and techniques with schools. The research

was funded by ‘Big Change’, a charitable organisation who invest in big ideas that help young people thrive in life. I felt that this report was from a highly credible and ethical source and that was important to me as an early career researcher. The report was the first of its kind for many years and I firmly believed then as I believe now that it not only highlighted the current state of oracy in schools, but that it also re-ignited the whole debate surrounding the role of oracy in the development of literacy.

The report presented exclusive survey data from over 900 teachers across the UK. It discussed findings from 26 interviews and focus groups in 13 schools across the country. It shared details from 11 interviews with academics and teaching experts. One statement that the researchers highlighted from their findings was that,

> ‘Teachers believe oracy matters because it is the bedrock of pupils’ ability to use language and communicate. They also highlight its social and emotional benefits. Despite employers placing huge importance on oral communication, teachers are less likely to emphasise its cognitive, civic and economic potential, suggesting oracy has untapped potential to support pupils’ job prospects’ (Millard and Menzies 2016, p.5).

This statement not only aligned with my strong belief that oracy does matter. It also reinforced my interested in the view that teachers are less likely to emphasise its cognitive potential. This led me to analyse the report in its entirety.

The report painted quite an alarming, but realistic, representation of the state of oracy in 2016. Three statements that drew my attention were:

- ‘57% of teachers say they have not received training in oracy in the past three years.’
- ‘53% would not know where to look for more information if they needed it.’
- ‘32% of Math teachers and 17% of Science teachers in our sample did not believe their subject lends itself to oracy based activities.’ (Millard and Menzies 2016, p.6).

I began to reflect upon some hypothetical questions linked to these statements. I had an increasing awareness that these ideas were starting to shape my research focus.

This raised the following questions:

1. If teachers had not received any oracy training, where had their initial oracy understanding come from?
2. Did teachers need oracy development?
3. In this era of technology and accessibility of resources, why did teachers not know where to look for more information about oracy initiatives?
4. Do teachers believe that the teaching/use of oracy is subject specific?

The report also noted from its findings that, ‘many teachers say they frequently use a range of strategies to develop pupils’ oracy, but worry that support for oracy across different lessons, classrooms and schools is currently patchy’ (Millard and Menzies 2016, p.5).This powerful statement encouraged me to undertake my own small-scale research project in the form of this MPhil thesis. I was keen to explore any possible issues with whole school approaches to oracy and to investigate why some teachers were advocates for oracy development and some were not. I have always believed that there was a strong, well founded theoretical and empirical, practice-based body of evidence to illustrate the powerful impact that oracy can have. However, I was equally aware that some teachers appeared to be disregarding this evidence and the knowledge that supported it. For me, oracy is a democratic pedagogy: a concept that will be explored in greater depth later in this thesis. I was keen to investigate how practitioners could advocate a strong pedagogical approach without a sound grasp of the fundamental underpinnings of the teaching and learning of oracy.

The report served as a stimulus for my thinking and provided an impetus for me to conduct this research. I wanted to explore, in-depth, the oracy practices in one primary school setting with a declared commitment to oracy development. My purpose here is to illuminate current practice through insights derived from an analysis of an independent, in-depth (‘best case’) case study that aims to present an authentic account of current oracy practice in the site of the research.

I acknowledge and discuss the limitations of the scope of research of this nature in greater depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis. However, I do believe that a focused study such as this creates the opportunity to illuminate and explore in some detail important issues in the teaching of oracy in a (‘best case’) realistic setting in which all of the staff in the school ,including the head teacher, are trying to make oracy ‘good’ in practice.

Influential Educators and Theorists of Education

The work of Piaget (1954) and his theory of cognitive development featured highly in theoretical based studies during my initial teacher training. The work linked the importance of biological maturity and interaction with the environment and posited this as being key to cognitive development. This also aided my understanding of child development and, as a young student teacher; I recall being fascinated by this aspect of human development and the potential link to learning. It is through this MPhil research opportunity that I have been able to revisit some of Piaget’s work. I recognise that Piaget’s view ‘of the child as a lone scientist who develops cognitively by interacting with stimulating materials’ (Alexander 2006, p.11) is highly relevant but I firmly believe that the use of spoken language is also critically important in this process. My views are therefore more closely aligned to Vygotsky who claims that, ‘the child’s cognitive development also requires it to engage, through the medium of spoken language, with adults, other children and the wider culture’ (Alexander 2006, p.11). I provide a more detailed discussion of this in Chapter 2 of this thesis. It is worth acknowledging from the outset that there is no doubt in my mind that my philosophical worldview and my approach to language development has had an

impact on my research design, and the subsequent implementation of the ideas and research methods in this thesis. It is worth therefore making my assumptions explicit here as in some respects in this thesis, I am exploring Vygotsky's theory of learning in the arena of my own experiences of practice and in terms of the practices found in the case study school. I recognised early in my career that my entire educational philosophy was closely associated to the work of Vygotsky (1980) and that his work had influenced my pedagogical approach. I share the belief with Vygotsky that in order to co-construct knowledge, learning has its basis in interacting with other people. Vygotsky states 'the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social but from the social to the individual' (Vygotsky 1980, p.10). I believe that teaching and learning are concerned with social practices between the teacher and the pupils in the primary classroom. I firmly believe that when pupils learn in social situations they have the opportunity, with the guidance of the teacher, to progress to a metacognitive state. Metacognition is often referred to in simple terms as thinking about thinking. A more precise definition clarifies this further; 'metacognition is the monitoring and control of thought' (Martinez 2006, pp.696-699). The concept of metacognition is explored further in this and subsequent chapters.

I have worked in many primary classrooms over thirty years and evidence from this body of professional experience suggests that there is still a lot of teacher talk in classrooms. The work of Mercer (1995) highlights the dominance of teacher talk and the Initiation, Response, Feedback (IRF) exchanges that have led discourse in the classroom for many years. The main difficulty associated with this approach is that it is not a fully inclusive model. I have seen occasions when a large portion of a class have remained very quiet and not engaged with the IRF process at all. Galton (1970) carried out some in-depth work regarding the IRF model and he analysed pupils' behaviour during the process. He concluded that some pupils could become quite adept at avoiding any responses to teacher questioning and simply allow others to respond in class. I have seen this on many occasions. I do find this all quite concerning as I feel strongly that this type of approach, if overused as the dominant model in class, can inhibit and limit the potential for learning in primary classrooms. I do consider that the IRF model is relatively easy for the teacher to manage and I suspect that is why it is apparently widely used. I intended to use this research opportunity to explore if there was actually more pupil talk happening in classrooms than was immediately apparent.

The work of Tough was incredibly memorable for me as a young teacher. 'Listening to Children Talking' (Tough, 1976) and 'Talking and Learning' (Tough, 1983) were highly influential and practical texts. These were regarded as guides at the time to be used by individual teachers and they were also the basis for group discussion and workshop sessions. The materials were useful in informing teachers about the use of talk and more significantly about the power of learning and talk. Other influential texts such as 'Talk for Teaching and Learning' (Tough, 1979) and 'A Place for Talk' (Tough, 1981) are still referenced widely today. I remembered being highly inspired by Tough and undertaking an interesting study of discourse analysis when I was a young teacher. This involved looking at different features of talk types such as narration, description, exposition, argumentative and persuasive talk in a social context. I have used discourse analysis in my own teaching and whilst examining the range of different talk the most significant aspect to note was how critical the role of

the teacher was in setting up the talk situations. Whilst discourse analysis of pupils' talk is not a specific feature of this research, it has provided a stimulus and an interesting method for me to utilise with the subjects of this research. I believe there is great value in setting up situations where people can talk and then analysing the outcomes.

Further stimulus for the research

I have always been interested in the work of Freire and this has underpinned my research. An in-depth reading of a conversation between Freire and Macedo, cited in (Leach and Moon, 2007, pp.46-58), was a catalyst for me to forge some greater links with my own thinking and beliefs. Freire and Macedo discuss the significance of dialogue, stating 'dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing' (Leach and Moon 2007, p.48).I believe that a deeper understanding of the meaning of dialogue is more helpful to discuss in this research context. I consider that it holds the key to unlocking some of the misconceptions about the use of dialogue in primary schools.

The operational definition of dialogue for the purpose of this thesis:

Dialogue (noun): a conversation between two or more people.

Dialogue (verb): take part in a conversation or discussion to resolve a problem.

I believe that many teachers use dialogue as a tool and allow pupils to take part in a wide range of conversations. In doing so I wonder if they are accepting the simple definitions of dialogue as highlighted above. Freire and Macedo believe that dialogue goes much deeper than having a simple conversation. Freire's statement, 'my pedagogical posture always implies rigour, and never a laissez faire dialogue as conversation orchestrated by facilitators' (Leach and Moon 2007, p.52), is powerful and reinforcing here. This type of in-depth dialogue is very distinct from the dialogue that would take place, for example, when meeting someone in a social situation. They believe that, on those occasions, people are not searching for knowledge but they are using the dialogue to engage and be sociable and share some information. Whilst this simplistic approach to dialogue is very relatable and purposeful, I accept that it is also important as part of a child's development. I regard the learning associated with this to be quite shallow and superficial. I do believe that dialogue that contributes to deeper and profound learning where knowledge is increased is critically important for teachers to consider. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I expand the discussion around levels and states of learning based on the work of West-Burnham and Coates (2005). I believe that this non-hierarchical model is critical for teachers to reflect on and think about the learning that is taking place in their classrooms. I decided to use the model as part of a JPD session with teachers and give them the opportunity to reflect and comment upon its relevance. I share more of these findings in subsequent chapters.

To illustrate my thinking further, I believe that this dichotomy takes us into the realms of exploring the use of what I refer to as 'structured and unstructured talk' in classrooms. The balance of the two talk types is critical for learning. From my personal experience, I have frequently seen pupils talking in pairs without a specific

purpose. This can lead to digression and loss of focus. The pupils are clearly enjoying the experience but I would question what impact it is having on their overall learning experience .I have also seen occasions where children are talking in pairs, demonstrating structured talk with a real purpose and outcome. Freire believes what 'dialogical educators must do is to maintain, on the one hand, their epistemological curiosity and, on the other hand, always attempt to increase their critical reflection in the processes of creating pedagogical spaces where students become apprentices in the rigours of exploration' (Leach and Moon 2007, p.52). I believe that this statement reinforces the challenge for teachers. They not only have to make the distinction between the two types of dialogue but they are required to think carefully about planning effectively for this dialogue in their classrooms. 'Talk has always been one of the essential tools of teaching, and the best teachers use it with precision and flare' (Alexander 2006, p.9). I believe that a strong pedagogical approach to oracy is required for teachers to maximise the learning potential for all pupils.

As part of the research, I thought that it was important to gain some insights into what was going on in some primary classrooms with regard to dialogue and oracy practices. I was also very mindful from the outset to ensure that this would be of mutual benefit for both myself and the teachers participating in the study. I did not simply want to go into classrooms and merely observe practice. I was more motivated to explore the context of a school setting and to examine more closely through dialogue, how teachers were managing the talk in that setting. I was enthusiastic to work with a research school in a non-judgmental way, honouring the principles of mutual respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and relevance, an approach advocated by Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001). I believed strongly that even though I was the lead researcher with knowledge and understanding of oracy, I also wanted to respect fully the equally experienced and knowledgeable teachers with whom I would be working. This approach demonstrates my commitment to JPD (Fielding et al 2005), and it was one of the reasons why I was keen to adopt this approach as part of my research.

The work of Cambourne (1999) in relation to understandings of mindful learning was something that I was also keen to explore further with my research. The concept of mindful as opposed to mindless originally stemmed from the work of Langer (1994). She argued that mindless learning can result from automaticity and repetition of facts, and she strongly believes that this learning 'creates a mind-set that inhibits critical awareness' (cited in Cambourne 1999, p.126). Langer believes that mindful learning opens the door to much greater possibilities .This notion is supported fully by Cambourne who equates this form of mindful learning with metacognitive awareness. I believe that if teachers and learners were more mindful of oracy and oracy techniques then learning would be greatly enhanced. I was keen to explore, through the small-scale research study, the extent to which teachers and some members of a school community were being mindful about their practices of relating to supporting the development of oracy.

Cambourne (1999) also explores the notion of contextualised learning; this is learning that makes sense to the learner. In the context of oracy developments, and for the purpose of my research, if children understand why they are using oracy techniques, rather than just being instructed to talk, the learning will be greatly

enhanced. According to Cambourne, the learning ‘is likely to be less complicated and is more likely to result in robust, transferrable, useful, and mindful learning’ (Cambourne 1999, p.127). This research opportunity gave me the chance to investigate, with a small group of pupils, if they were aware of oracy techniques and, more significantly, why they believed they were using them as part of their learning in school.

A reflection on some historical policy drivers with links to oracy development

Through the lens, of a researcher I have been able to reflect on some influential policy and practice with regard to oracy, since the start of my teaching career and across subsequent years.

The Bullock Report (1975) with its account of oracy and its ideal of ‘language across the curriculum’ (cited in Alexander 2006, p.17) was regularly referred to at the time of my teacher training. The report was highly influential and covered many aspects of literacy across the curriculum. I recalled using it as a tool to think about planning highly structured literacy sessions for pupils. The work embedded in the Bullock Report was supported by Barnes and his colleagues, as part of the National Association of Teaching of English (NATE) at the time. Barnes’ (1969) work on teacher and pupil communication was very powerful with some strong warnings about the dangers of teachers, rather than children, doing most of the talking in classrooms. This key area of concern has already been highlighted in this chapter.

In 1988, The National Oracy Project (NOP) was introduced. This was a high-profile piece of work and it ‘brought together various grassroots initiatives with the aim of fostering and improving talk for learning ,and in this it eventually secured the involvement of over half of England’s Local Education Authorities’ (Alexander 2006, p.17). The NOP helped teachers to research and become more aware of planned and unplanned talk in schools (Norman 1992). I am in possession of the original NOP folders and documents to this day and the high-quality content of the materials in this extensive resource should be acknowledged. It remains quite an enigma that such high-quality materials were created and then disregarded by so many so quickly. I believe this to be an early indicator that politics were beginning to play a role in curriculum developments and this is an aspect that I will revisit in this thesis. Alexander (2012) highlights that the NOP rapidly disappeared without a trace because of policy imperatives surrounding the new National Strategies that were introduced around the same time.

In 1987, the National Curriculum (NC) was implemented in all primary schools. The NC granted equal status to speaking and listening along with reading and writing. It had its own Programme of Study and Statements of Attainment. ‘Children in England were required by law to speak in class; teachers were required to give equal attention in their literacy teaching to talk and to foster its development.’ (Alexander 2006, p.17). I recalled that this all seemed to be an incredibly positive development at the time and it was giving out a very clear message about the value of talk-based educational practices.

Shortly after the introduction of the (NC), the Statutory Attainment Tests (SATs) in Maths, English and Science were rolled out in primary schools (1991-1995). The formal tests were based on the Programmes of Study within the NC. I believe that the introduction of the tests was an early indicator of a shift in policy direction

towards a greater importance of attainment and performance at primary school age. The formal test results were officially reported and judgements were made on schools based on these results. I do believe that this placed teachers in a very difficult position and potentially had an impact on their teaching and learning.

I have been able to recall my personal experience of being involved with the SATs testing at Year 6 and finding that it challenged some of my personal beliefs and values. I abided by the rules but I realised that the testing regime severely hampered my creative teaching. To my dismay, I remember informing pupils that after SATs we would return to exciting curriculum work. I can see, on wider reflection, how young teachers are heavily influenced by policy initiatives, some of which are legal requirements, and how this can cause real conflict. It is beyond the parameters of this MPhil thesis to explore the testing regime and the full impact on teaching and learning. However, it is important to note that phrases like 'teaching to the test', albeit a colloquial term, were now being used more widely in schools and educational establishments. The reality was that in some schools the curriculum was narrowed to accommodate the need to develop a limited set of skills and knowledge to succeed in the test. The testing regime continued for many years and I feel strongly that the conflict between this imposed policy, and the effect on practice, lies at the heart of perceived challenges for teachers around oracy education today.

There followed a very mixed picture of oracy policy developments and associated practice across the 1990s. The National Strategies introduced in the late 90s, created by a team of educational experts, were hailed by the government as representing a very ambitious change in educational developments. A regional field force supported the experts with trained consultants who delivered training and offered support to schools and different settings. As part of this development the subject-specific National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was also introduced in 1998.The NLS did not have any specific strands or guidance over the teaching of speaking and listening in primary schools. This must have been concerning for schools at the time with a lack of clear guidance about how to teach speaking and listening. It would be particularly challenging for teachers who prioritised it as part of their pedagogical practice. Strong advocates of oracy, such as Alexander (2006) and Mercer (2000), acknowledged that the NLS did include more emphasis on interactive whole class teaching and that did lend itself to some creativity with teaching approaches involving talk-based learning. However, studies by Hardman, Smith and Wall (2003) found that, with reference to the strategies, 'they may have transformed the content and organisation of literacy and numeracy lessons in many English primary schools, but they appear to have had much less impact on the deeper layers of classroom talk', (cited in Alexander 2006, p.16). The whole notion of talk being at a superficial level will be revisited throughout this thesis.

In 2003, The Primary National Strategy (PNS) was launched and the NLS (1998) was absorbed into this. The QCA/DfES (2003) 'Speaking, Listening, Learning' materials followed the PNS and these materials were developed to support the government's overall PNS. Alexander was a strong critic of the government at this time and he believed that the materials focused too heavily on 'formal language and spoken standard English' (Alexander 2006, p.18). He felt that this was an oversight, but, once again, I believe that it reinforced that teachers, at that time, were receiving very mixed messages about the role of talk in primary classrooms.

I feel that there is compelling evidence from the period (1990s to early 2000s) that the policy was driving the pedagogy. In my view, teachers were being bombarded with initiatives and not given valuable time to reflect, evaluate and refine their practice in relation to the implementation of one policy initiative before the next one came along. I remember noting at the time how teachers were losing a lot of autonomy and I also wondered if they would ever get this back. The Department for Education in 2010 published a high-profile summary report entitled 'The National Strategies 1997-2011'. It explored the impact and effectiveness of the National Strategies, and it is relevant to recognise it at this stage in my investigation. and is interesting to note at this point.

A key finding of the report can be summarised by Mourshed's earlier analysis 'once a teacher has adopted the right approach – the system's pedagogical values – and has learned to manifest these in effective teaching practice, they become an invaluable asset to the school system, which then often seeks to embed this expertise by promoting such teachers to new roles' (cited in Mourshed, et al 2010, p.3)**.** I personally found this concluding statement to be quite alarming**.** If we analyse it further and look at the wider implications of this statement, it is stating that teachers need to adopt the 'system's approach' to their pedagogical practice. This raises many questions for me about the importance of teacher judgment in context, autonomy, pedagogic coherence and rigour, as referred to earlier in this chapter.

The confusion about oracy practice prevailed and, in 2011, the Government Teachers' Standards emphasised the central place of 'elocution in talk', with teachers now being legislated to focus on articulacy and the correct use of Standard English. This downgraded speaking and listening and I believe this also contributed to the quandary facing schools and teachers at this time. I believe that teachers were assigned competing and conflicting priorities with lack of clear focus. There is no doubt in my mind that with inconsistent messages about oracy policy and practice, it is easy to understand why so much confusion existed and continued to exist for such a considerable time. When a pedagogical approach is imposed on a teacher either through policy or through the system then this can be the cause for great uncertainty and confusion about good educational practice. I share the views expressed by Coultas that, regardless of which government is in power, the important role of the teacher and teacher agency in planning for what goes on in the classroom is critical: 'Whatever the views of government, the teacher retains the power to use the social situation in the classroom to the best effect', (Coultas 2015, p.83). I began to wonder what autonomy teachers were having, if any, and a key part of my small-scale research was to have the opportunity to discuss this aspect with some primary school teachers.

Why are schools failing to implement oracy successfully?

As an early career researcher, I deliberated over why there was such compelling and overwhelming theoretically based evidence on the positive benefits of oracy on a child's cognitive development but questioned why some teachers were failing to implement oracy. I discuss this aspect in greater depth in Chapter 2 but it is useful to briefly mention here some of the researchers who have contributed to my thinking in this area. Their contributions have allowed me to refine my research focus and consider the realities of classroom life.

Douglas (1991) identifies some common problems of group work in classrooms such as domination; lack of trust; hidden agendas; disruptive behaviour, and scapegoating (cited in Light and Cox 2001 p.116). However, he believes that it takes a skilled practitioner to manage this process well. I wondered if this was part of the issue in schools that teachers were not skilled in managing group work. If teachers did not have this skill set then, hypothetically, the question was where would they get it from?

Coultas carried out some relevant work with teachers to find out what were the identified dilemmas about managing talk in classrooms (2015). Teachers cited practical problems; peer judgements; controlling the class; isolation of the teacher; fear of humiliating children; planning; policy, and culture as all having a great impact on oracy developments. The powerful research from Coultas (2015) begins to shed some realistic light on the potential reasons why teachers fail to adopt oracy approaches. I felt that the small-case study approach would give me the opportunity to discuss some of these findings and claims with teachers.

Alexander, a strong advocate of talk, believes that effective classroom dialogue involves teachers and students working together to make contributions and demonstrate their thinking. Whilst this aspect has already been highlighted earlier in this chapter, it is interesting to note here that 'achieving a dialogic classroom is no easy task as it is in effect a transformation of the culture of talk' (cited in Mercer and Hodgkinson 2008, p.110). I do believe firmly that the culture of a school will have a major impact on what happens in that school environment. If a head teacher, for example, does not encourage or advocate a culture of talk I wondered if this meant that either talk does not happen in classrooms or does it occur in pockets of isolation. I was keen to involve the head teacher in some aspect of my research, particularly because they have the unique position of having the overview of and influence upon the whole school.

The work of Rampton et al. (2008) compares different types of school settings. There is some acknowledgement in their work that teachers who work in urban schools with mixed ability classes, with high proportions of pupils from disadvantaged communities, face distinct problems. This is contrasted with teachers working with pupils in more socially advantaged school populations and the perceptions that the problems and issues will be less complex (cited in Littleton and Howe 2009). I have some mixed views about this research but I do acknowledge that the socio-economic setting of a school can have some bearing on its success. I was keen to use this small-scale research opportunity to explore the views of a whole-school community especially one regarded as being in a challenging socio-economic area. This was also one of the reasons I chose this particular school setting, and I share more information about that process in Chapter 3. I felt strongly that speaking to teachers and members of a school community was a critical aspect of my research focus and, despite the small-scale nature of this study, I was keen to hear the voice of a representative sample of teachers, pupils, parents and carers from one school community.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

My research has also allowed me to explore different models of CPD and I share more of this in Chapter 2. However, I have found that one prevailing model is widely used: that of teachers attending a day course and returning to school with ideas and plans for implementation. This model is deemed to have some short-term impact by teachers who are pro-active and share findings and discoveries with colleagues. However, I believe that this model can also have limited long-term impact if the work is not disseminated and thereby becomes part of the culture of the school. Hargreaves et al (2003) point out that knowledge transfer as a means of CPD will fail if the culture in which the practice is embedded is not taken into account. A link to this lies with recent publicity around the incredibly successful Education Endowment Fund (EEF) initiatives. The EEF is a charitable organisation with access to funding for a wide-range of ideas and plans for projects and professional development initiatives for teachers. The main premise of the EEF approach is that they attract interest for pilot research projects and then roll out the findings from the pilot studies to larger audiences. Whilst I fully acknowledge the perceived positive impact of these projects, I also view them with some scepticism.

I feel strongly that with many EEF initiatives there is a failure to acknowledge the individual starting points for teachers, individual challenges, and more significantly the context of the school. I discuss this notion and the impact of pre-packaged models of CPD in Chapter 2. One significant aspect of my own drive for authenticity in the focus of this research was the fact that it was based in one setting and the culture and ethos of that setting were regarded as critical in terms of understanding the aspirations around the teaching and learning of oracy.

Therefore, my decision to adopt a pilot approach to the model of JPD (Fielding et al 2005) for this research emerged from the conviction that it would give me the opportunity to trial it as part of real-world research and this was an exciting prospect.

Chapter Summary

As part of this research process, I have been able to reflect on some inspirational educational thinkers who have had an impact on my own strong pedagogical values and beliefs regarding oracy. I am concerned, from my experiences, that there seems to be little time in schools to discuss pedagogy and talk for learning in a meaningful way. I firmly believe that a strong pedagogical approach is fundamental for teachers to succeed with high quality learning experiences for all pupils. The oracy policy initiatives that I have briefly mentioned in this chapter indicate that government policy has been driving oracy pedagogy. If we take a simplistic view of this situation; if someone's pedagogy aligns with that of the government's policy, there would be very little conflict and we could assume that the teaching and learning would be more effective. However, the bigger challenge to consider is: what if someone's own pedagogical position does not align with the government's views? This would provide a genuine source of conflict for the teacher .Through my research I was keen to seek the views of teachers about their justifications for their own pedagogical approach.

I firmly accept that teachers should be accountable for what happens in their classrooms. I have been able to reflect purposefully on the testing regime in primary schools involving formal assessments. This in itself provides quite a potential

struggle for everyone in the profession. Personal and professional experience suggest that this has had a negative impact on delivery of oracy in the classroom. It leads to questions of autonomy for teachers in the classroom and the importance of leadership in establishing a school's culture that values oracy. These aspects are explored in greater depth as the thesis progresses.

The argument presented above, makes the educational case for oracy and talk for learning as remaining very strong. However, it is also evident, from my research, that talk is still undervalued and contested. The opportunity to explore the realities of classroom life in this small-scale research case study has allowed me to reflect upon some of the reasons for this challenge and to look at the whole concept of oracy in more detail.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: A purposeful two-strand review of literature linked to oracy, professional learning and continuing professional development in education.

Introduction

This chapter highlights, through the analysis of relevant literature, some of the work of philosophers and educational researchers who have influenced the epistemological and ontological approach underpinning this research. Consideration of competing epistemological and ontological positions has also contributed to the development of my identity as a researcher. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 3: Methodology. I hope that the literature review, which informs this study, will ultimately contribute to the academic discourse surrounding oracy education by presenting a balanced analysis of a particular case. It is also my intention that this addition to the scholarly debate will be of interest and assistance to contemporary professionals in advancing their thinking regarding the role of oracy in the development of literacy and other forms of cognition.

This literature review provides an analysis of relevant historical research linked to oracy as well as establishing some links to more recent developments. I believe this is a worthwhile approach from an educational stance; as Coffey and Delamont suggest, while 'the world of the teacher has changed... the everyday realities of the classroom have considerable similarities with the past' (Coffey and Delamont 2000, p.88).

This chapter begins with a review of some of key issues in policy and practice surrounding the teaching and learning of oracy. Taking a critical stance, it considers the perceived challenges surrounding oracy advances today. It then explores issues concerned with the apparent inconsistent implementation of oracy practice in primary schools and potential reasons for this. This chapter then looks at what measures schools have taken across the years to try to address these issues and remedy the situation.

This literature review focuses on two main interwoven strands:

- Strand 1: An exploration of the notion of oracy as a practice-based democratic pedagogy, with strong links to wider literacy learning. In doing so, the review discusses oracy in policy, conceptual and educational practice.
- Strand 2: A consideration of competing models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives for teachers and their perceived impact. The significance of political and policy drivers, and their influence on oracy-based educational practices are reviewed and considered.

Strand 1: Starting Points and Points of Departure

The work of researchers who have strongly influenced my own pedagogy and practice such as Freire (1972), Vygotsky (1980), Mercer (1995 and 2000), Alexander (2006 and 2008), Coultas (2015), Cambourne (1995) and West Burnham (2005) are taken as starting points for the review. However, the review is not limited to these authors but also extended to include reference to several other influential and

knowledgeable researchers in the field of education who have contributed to this discourse.

Definitions and Concept of Oracy

In order to explore the meaning of oracy more deeply it is necessary to think carefully about: what does oracy actually mean for those who practice it and /or promote it? This chapter focuses on the practice of teachers and professionals working with young children in educational settings. It also explores some of the writings of a wide range of educational professionals including, policy makers, researchers, school leaders, head teachers and teachers who are involved with the delivery of oracy.

Wilkinson, a British researcher and educator in a team based at Birmingham University School of Education, coined the term ‘oracy’ in 1965. At the time, it was considered unique that an educationalist would be permitted to introduce a new term, and this neologism was greeted with some suspicion. Wilkinson believed that it was necessary to have a term for the skills associated with speaking and listening parallel to those of reading and writing. Wilkinson believed that, at the time in 1965, ‘the spoken language in England had been shamefully neglected’, (Wilkinson et al 1990, p.1).The concept of oracy became the source of much debate as reading and writing dominated the curriculum. Wilkinson and his close colleagues powerfully argued that oracy should be given equal status to numeracy and literacy curricula in schools. The term subsequently became more widely used in the field of education.

Wilkinson noted some interesting characteristics of oracy in 1965 stating, ‘it was not a subject but a condition of learning in all subjects ; that it was not merely a skill but the essential instrument in the humanizing of the species; that it was a fit object of educational knowledge or awareness; that it arose as a natural response to circumstance rather than being taught; that it was essentially interrelated with literacy; and that it was susceptible of evaluation ’ (Wilkinson et al 1990 p.1). A reflection of these identified characteristics establishes that there was some acknowledged respect for oracy practices at this time, but there were also some areas for concern. I will explore some of these areas by considering them, in turn in this chapter, in relation to more recent definitions and contributions from the literature.

It could be argued that the word oracy hides a sophisticated concept that is not easy to define clearly for educational purposes. This study is deeply rooted in the term ‘oracy’, which is defined as the capacity to express oneself in and understand speech. This appears to align with Wilkinson’s thinking and interestingly makes explicit reference to the inclusion of the word understand. From my experience, many teachers inextricably link the word oracy with that of talk and this can be the source of great confusion. This study has an operational definition of talk as the ability to express one’s thoughts feelings or desires by means of words. The two words are quite similar and the distinction is subtle but incredibly powerful in terms of the interpretation placed upon it for classroom practice. I share Wilkinson’s belief that, ‘oracy is so much more than performance. It is concerned with the growth of thinking and feeling and its giving and taking through speaking and listening in a variety of circumstances’ (Wilkinson et al 1990 p.1). The deeper and more profound

philosophical meaning of oracy will continue to be explored throughout this literature review.

The National Oracy Project (NOP) championed the concept of oracy between 1987 and 1993. According to Alexander, 'that project brought together various grass roots initiatives with the aim of fostering and improving talk for learning' (Alexander 2006, p.17). It placed great emphasis upon using discussion to empower pupils as thinkers and active agents in their own learning. Unfortunately, it failed to be taken up more widely in Britain at the time. Elsewhere, the foundation of the Oracy Australia Association in 1969 hailed the NOP as a great contribution to the field of oracy developments. However, this too failed to be adopted at an international level at the time. This aspect will be revisited later in this thesis but the fact that government priorities became focused narrowly on reading, writing and mathematics was significant. Fifty years on from Wilkinson's definition, oracy still does not have equitable status with reading, writing and mathematics in the education of primary pupils.

While there have always been pockets of good oracy practice across a number of schools, it is encouraging to note that interest in oracy is appearing to regain ground in education policy and practice. Notably there has been a significant revival of the oracy debate in the last ten years. This can be illustrated with reference to School 21 based in London. The school is a strong proponent of oracy and, in 2014, it was deemed outstanding by Ofsted who noted in their final report about the school that they found 'A strong focus on oracy, the ability to talk fluently and accurately and express ideas, develops pupils' confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. It also strengthens the quality of teaching. This makes a significant contribution to the high standards that all pupils achieve' (Ofsted 2014 report). This was deemed to be not only an excellent formal acknowledgement for the school but it also signalled that oracy was a highly significant aspect of practice in the school. The term oracy now appears to be being used more widely nationally and internationally, reflecting a growing awareness of the educational and social importance of spoken language skills.

An example of this rising interest can be found in links to a conference in Lisbon in 2017 on 'Oracy in Global Classrooms' hosted by the English-Speaking Union. It was attended by representatives from twenty-two countries. The key themes and findings that emerged from the conference were noted as:

- 'The importance of oracy is widely recognised
- Some countries seem to give oracy a higher status than the UK does
- Many of the barriers to oracy skill development present in the UK are similar to those in other parts of the world
- National governments are slowly beginning to recognise the importance of oracy skills' (ESU, 2017).

As a result of the conference, The World Economic Forum recently highlighted oracy as a global educational priority. This is an example of what seems to be a growing international consensus around the importance of fostering effective speaking and listening skills in the world's youth.

Conceptual Frameworks

There are several conceptual frameworks linked to oracy in the literature and, of the many that I have reviewed, I cite two of these for comparison. Calcagani and Lago (2018) draw attention to the importance of conceptual frameworks with regard to the structure of oracy and they deemed it necessary to 'produce a conceptual framework for dialogic approaches to teaching and learning amidst an expanding field that still lacks a common vocabulary and means for integrating and comparing available approaches' (Calcagani and Lago 2018, p.1). I feel that my comparison effectively illustrates how the lack of clarity and preciseness around the structure of oracy can have a significant impact for teachers.

MacLure (1994) provides four rationales of oracy drawn from her research into the use of oracy and nursing practices. This starts to provide a logical, if not simplified, structure for oracy. It suggests that effective oracy development should include 'personal growth; cultural transformation; improvement of learning, and functional competence' (cited in Stierer and Maybin 1994, pp.139-151). It would be very easy to support MacLure's framework for oracy development as it covers all of the essential elements deemed to be recognisable features for effective oracy practice. A teacher or educator acknowledging this framework may well base their teaching and learning around this.

However, if we view the framework through the lens of potential learning there are some areas of unease. Whilst acknowledging that the whole notion of learning is a deeply complex process that lies far beyond the scope of this thesis, reference to the work of West Burnham and Coates (2005) investigating levels and states of learning is helpful in offering some further clarity here. West Burnham and Coates (2005) advocate that some learning can be perceived as quite shallow and superficial and that this manifests itself in experiences such as memorisation, replication and dependence. Whilst other learning, described as deeper learning, manifests itself in processing, understanding and interpretation. Finally, he refers explicitly to profound learning that manifests itself in intuition, wisdom and independence. Whilst all learning experiences are perceived to have some value, he argues that teachers need to think about the levels and states of learning when working in classrooms. If we connect the MacLure (1994) framework with the principles of West Burnham and Coates' model, I would argue that it appears to align more closely to the shallow level of learning with some potential for deeper learning for oracy development. However, the level of understanding that a teacher has of a framework can have a significant impact on their planning and delivery of that oracy framework.

When the MacLure (1994) framework is contrasted with Alexander's (2012) six functions of 'oracy dialogics', this raises some further interesting points for discussion. In Alexander's framework of oracy dialogics, the oracy is defined more broadly as thinking, learning, communicating, teaching and assessing and democratic engagement. Like MacLure's (1994) model, it also supports wider notions exemplified in the 1975 Bullock Report highlighting the importance of cross-curricular approaches to language. This was identified as one of the fundamental building blocks to learning. Alexander's framework appears to take oracy learning

into a much deeper and profound state when aligned with West Burnham and Coates' levels and states of learning highlighted above. Alexander believes that these functions of oracy dialogics are not discrete entities, but they co-exist and enmesh with each other. Alexander's framework offers a wider view that encourages teachers to broaden their teaching repertoire by making connections with the themes and not regarding each theme as a separate entity.

Whilst the analysis of three of the many frameworks is brief, on this occasion, it clearly illustrates that frameworks that are open to interpretation can be misleading when implemented in an unsupported way. The frameworks, whilst both professing to support the teaching of oracy, are clearly presenting different levels of working from the superficial to the more deep and profound. Reflecting back on Wilkinson's (1965) definition of oracy highlighted earlier in this review, frameworks need to be considered with their theoretical underpinning to ensure the meanings are fully understood by teachers, thereby allowing successful implementation to maximise oracy learning.

Caught or taught?

It could be assumed that children will develop the skills of language throughout their formative years, as a natural part of growing up. There is no doubt that opportunities for communication with parents and other significant figures throughout a child's formative years can allow language to develop. It is also helpful to acknowledge at this point that independent development such as learning though self-discovery is also recognised as an important concept supporting the process of language development .Wilkinson refers to this explicitly when he discusses 'the humanizing of the species', (Wilkinson et al. 1990, p.6). He believes that language development, which in this context refers to spoken language, is an essential part of being human. Without it, thought above the very primitive levels is impossible. He extends this thinking to advocate that it is only through education and experience that a child can develop new language in which to understand and communicate effectively.

The consideration of the notion that oracy needs to be 'taught' just as any other subject is of significance here. A discussion of the importance of the teaching of oracy is similar, in my view, in many respects to the 'caught or taught' debate about spelling (Peters, 1985). At this time, Peters highlighted that there was little evidence of actual instruction in spelling. She found that when instruction did occur it was very often left to individual teachers or even to children themselves to work out a strategy of learning, 'falling back on random procedures and on rote learning ' (Mackay, et al. 1978, p.131). The work of Peters advocates that taught was the strategy most likely to help children to learn spelling effectively.

If we apply this logic and thinking to oracy, and advocate that children need to be taught oracy so that they may learn effectively, this becomes quite an interesting idea to explore. Mercer (1995) believes that pupils need to be skilfully guided to construct the knowledge and understand the associated language and he refers to this as a 'joint achievement'. He seems to suggest that a learner needs the support and guidance of others to achieve learning and competence. He cites the work of Vygotsky in relation to this; 'the limits of a person's learning or problem-solving ability can be expanded if another person provides the right kind of cognitive support' (Mercer 1995, p.72). The direct inference from this statement is that the teacher may

be the person who can play a critical role in providing the appropriate cognitive support. This point is reinforced in the statement: 'the support of a teacher can enable learners to achieve levels of understanding that they never would alone' (Mercer 1995, p.72). If the argument is accepted that oracy needs to be taught to be effective, then it is also crucial to acknowledge at this stage that that this is quite a complex process to deliver and put into practice.

Language Learning is a social process

To explore wider definitions and debates in the field of oracy, and associated learning it is essential to reflect on a wider body of work. This includes some of the theoretical work of Vygotsky (1980), already referred to in Chapter 1. It is beyond the scope of this review to engage deeply with the entire body of Vygotsky's work, so for the purposes of this review some of the works related to thought, language and learning are briefly considered.

It is also worth sounding a cautionary note here that several scholars including Burmenska (1992), cited in Daniels (2016), challenge the interpretations of Vygotsky's work by claiming interest in the work is, 'marked by enthusiasm for Western pedagogical preoccupation and fails to understand the range and depth of arguments.' (Daniels 2016, p.22). Daniels (2016) goes on to add that much of Vygotsky's work has been marred by translation difficulties and severe truncation in its translation. However, considering that Vygotsky died in 1934, his work continues to stimulate, support and add to the ongoing debates around educational theory and the application to teaching and learning, thereby maintaining a contemporary relevance.

Mercer (1995) advocates a sociocultural approach and accepts the view that individually and collectively we can use language to transform experience into knowledge and understanding. His interpretations of Vygotsky's work highlight the critical role that talk plays in the process of knowledge construction and is further illustrated in his assertion that language has two main functions, 'as a communicative or cultural tool, we use it for sharing and jointly developing the knowledge' (Mercer 2000, p.10). Vygotsky considers that these two functions of language, the cultural and the psychological, are integrated. Mercer (1995) believes that every generation in society builds upon the cultural foundations of the previous one with the belief that it is only when the knowledge is communicated does it truly come into existence. In 'Mind in Society' (1980), Vygotsky draws attention to the notion that thought is expressed not only in words but comes into existence through them. This tenet is helpful and resonates with one of the key themes in this review about the potential of talk to have a much wider impact on deep and profound learning.

Accepting Vygotsky's (1980) notion that linguistic ability influences the development of thoughts, then, consequently, the greater a child's language skills, the greater the development of their thinking. The extent of children's ability to learn effectively from understanding through speech is clearly significant from a teaching and learning perspective. Vygotsky's learning theory explains that allowing children to be active learners through talking is necessary to clarify what they have learnt. However, in addition to this children need to have good role models from whom

they can learn. The term ‘cognitive scaffolding’ is useful here .This term was coined by Wood Burner and Ross in the 1970s in the context of mother and child interaction but according to Alexander (2006) it is more commonly applied to what does or does not happen in classrooms. Scaffolding is ‘the use of carefully structured interventions to bridge what Vygotsky called ‘the ‘zone of potential, (or in most translations, proximal), development ’(Alexander 2006, p. 11). This is viewed as the gap between what a child can achieve independently, and that which they can achieve with the aid of someone more experienced. When this is practiced consistently, Vygotsky (1980) argues learners will then go on to succeed academically without assistance. According to Vygotsky, this moves the learner into the realms of metacognition.

Mercer (1995) explores this notion with greater clarity and in further depth when he discusses how scaffolding is crucial for the role of the teacher in encouraging and creating opportunities for specific experiences of talk. He refers to exploratory talk in the classroom, noting that it is in fact exploratory talk that is an important factor in scaffolding children’s thinking and learning. This notion is further demonstrated by Alexander’s (2012) classification when he argues that talk can be characterised in two ways; that of ‘process talk’ and ‘presentational talk’. In presentational talk, the child gives a prepared reply or exposition which is often public and for an intended audience, usually the teacher. Nystrand views this classroom discourse as, ‘…overwhelmingly monologic. When teachers were not lecturing, students were either answering questions or completing seatwork. The teacher asked nearly all of the questions, few questions were authentic, and few teachers followed up student responses’ (Nystrand 1997, p.33). In Alexander’s process talk, likened here to Mercer’s exploratory talk, it is very different. It is exploratory and concerned with working things out. It is often tentative and uses speculation and hypotheses. The crucial point here is that process talk allows the development of shared understandings and deeper levels of learning. A working knowledge of these different types of talk is critical for teachers to understand and to be able to implement successfully. Mercer (1995) stresses the importance of teachers and learners in the classroom context establishing agreement about what talk in the classroom is for, and how it should be conducted. The whole idea of the quality of classroom talk is revisited later in this thesis.

Life Skills

It is now helpful to turn to an examination of some of the key messages that came out of the Sutton Trust’s 2017 research report ‘Life Lessons- Improving Essential Life Skills for Young People’. The report comments on the impact of traditional views of the purpose of education. It discusses the opinions of many that the fundamental role of schooling is perceived as developing children’s core academic knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy, and range of curriculum subjects. However, the report goes on to acknowledge other skills that are increasingly seen as important to

children's wider development. The Life Lessons report identifies 'essential life skills' such as confidence, social skills, self-control, motivation, and resilience as also being important. Such skills, the report states, are often referred to as 'social and emotional skills, soft skills, non-cognitive skills or character' (Cullinane and Montacute 2017, p.7). These are usually seen as being distinct from academic knowledge and skills; however, they are increasingly thought to play an important part in learning, as well as contributing to children's wider development, well-being and readiness for life beyond school. The report found that there is wide recognition of the importance of such life skills, with 88% of young people, 94% of employers and 97% of teachers saying that they are as or more important than academic qualifications. It was stated that more than half of teachers (53%) believe that life skills are more important than academic qualifications to young people's success and 72% believe their school should increase their focus on teaching life skills. From the above statistical data, there is growing evidence to support the claim that the powerful tool of oracy can contribute to the development of wider life skills (Cullinane and Montacute 2017, p.7). Children and young people need the direct teaching of oracy skills to prepare them for life as future citizens who can contribute positively to society beyond the life of the classroom.

Influential research by the English Speaking Union highlights that many children do not receive focused oracy and communications skills development in the home environment because of difficult circumstances and challenging economic situations. In the 2016 publication 'Speaking Frankly', a significant number of researchers and educators argue that schools should offer children that crucial second chance to acquire spoken language skills that they may not have acquired at home; skills which will help them to take up educational opportunities and which could transform their futures. For that to happen, oracy must be part of the school curriculum. 'The essays in *Speaking Frankly* provide a testament to the wide range of benefits that oracy teaching can bring. We know that having access to high-quality oracy education can make all the difference in the lives of young people, and that the role of oracy education in social mobility, thinking skills, employability, well-being and creativity is well documented in these pages' (Speaking Frankly 2016, p.33). The report makes a very strong case for the importance of teaching oracy skills and cites cases of schools that are creating their own programmes, resources and frameworks to improve young people's communication skills. Moreover, this is being done in such a way as to correct a commonly held misconception that tended to equate oracy with 'woolly, progressive' educational ideas ' (Speaking Frankly 2016, p.5). This is quite a powerful notion that is revisited later in this thesis.

Conditions for literacy learning

The work of Cambourne is particularly relevant here. Cambourne developed a theory of learning as it applied to literacy learning. He refers to 'Conditions for Literacy Learning', and identifies eight conditions for literacy learning (as cited in Rushton et al. 2003, p.14). Cambourne skilfully connects the conditions for learning, and relates them to relevant research around brain theory and then discusses the implications

for classroom learning. He believes that these conditions create an interactive and dynamic experience between the learner and the content.

It is significant to highlight three of the eight conditions as I feel that they are closely aligned to some of the earlier points made in this chapter.

1. *Engagement* –'Children need to be active participants in their own learning' (Rushton et al 2003, p.15).
2. *Employment* –'As children explore language they need to be provided with time and opportunity to do so both in an individual and social setting' (Rushton et al 2003, p.15).
3. *Approximation* –'A child is not expected to wait until he has mastered narrative language before talking….Educators should permit learners to take risks and make approximations in learning new skills ,concepts and knowledge' (Rushton et al 2003, p.15).

Cambourne concludes that: 'in a constructivist brain-based learning environment the role of the teacher would be to act as a facilitator or guide to create meaningful opportunities and situations so that children may actively explore, ponder and engage with their learning' (cited in Rushton et al. 2003, p.20). This statement underscores many of the themes that permeate this chapter.

Pedagogy

Modern pedagogy is increasingly aligned to the view that the child should be aware of their own thought processes, and it is critical for the teacher to assist them in becoming more metacognitive, and 'to be aware of how she goes about her learning and thinking, as she is about the subject matter she is studying', (Leach and Moon 2007 p.18). This argument extends further as Leach and Moon (2007) advocate that the acquisition of skills and knowledge is not enough and that the child should attain much more from the process of education. In 1981, Simon wrote a critique of educational practice in England under the title, 'Why no pedagogy in England?' (cited in Leach and Moon 2007, pp.34-45). His ontological stance contrasts the nature of pedagogy in England with that of the continent. Simon observed that on the continent pedagogy has an honoured place. He argued that, in England, pedagogy is not given high enough recognition and contends that thinking about teaching and learning would be confusing if there was no clear philosophical or conceptual underpinning for what was done in the classroom.

Contributions to the literature reviewed so far lend support to claims that 'oracy' could be viewed as a democratic pedagogy where engagement in inclusive and participative forms of oracy encourage the development of children's ability to develop language and to think for themselves. The belief that oracy is inextricably linked to pedagogy and democracy is further exemplified in the work of the Brazilian educationalist and philosopher Freire, alongside his co-worker Macedo. They declared that 'oracy is essential to pedagogy' (cited in Leach and Moon 2007, pp. 46-60) and provide a fascinating insight into the ongoing debates around contemporary educational issues and specifically the importance of oracy and

dialogue to the development of thinking and democracy. These themes are revisited later in the thesis.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in greater depth the complexities associated with the concepts of pedagogy, democracy and curriculum, but the work of Alexander provides a useful reference point here. He states that we cannot consider talk as part of the curriculum in isolation from talk as pedagogy. He believes that 'oral pedagogy' involves a particular kind of talk through which teaching and learning in all subjects, not just English, is mediated. He cites many influential educationalists who have for many years been concerned with the notion of oral pedagogy. One aspect that they all seem to agree upon is that 'talk is fundamental to all learning, in all subjects, and therefore needs to be everywhere rather than being confined to English' (Alexander 2012, p.10). This notion has been the source of much debate and the idea that oracy is not subject-specific is revisited later the thesis.

A comprehensive overview of pedagogy with underpinning research is highlighted in a National College of School Leadership report entitled 'What makes great pedagogy? Nine claims from research', (Husbands and Pearce, 2012). It emphasises the significance of strong pedagogical approaches to the development of oracy and reiterates the importance of scaffolding learning experiences. For the purpose of this review, it is important to highlight some distinct references to talk-based approaches emerging from claims made in the report

- Claim 6: 'Effective pedagogies involve a range of techniques, including whole-class and structured group work, guided learning and individual activity' (Husbands and Pearce 2012, p.8).
- Claim 7: 'Effective pedagogies focus on developing higher order thinking and metacognition, and make good use of dialogue and questioning in order to do so' (Husbands and Pearce 2012, p.9).

It is significant to note that these claims about what makes great pedagogy align very closely with some of the main themes in this review. Structuring talk, scaffolding learners and developing metacognition through higher order thinking and effective dialogic practices are all elements that are supported by a powerful pedagogical approach through oracy.

Coultas accepts the reality facing teachers that a strong pedagogical approach to oracy can be difficult to manage, and it should not be imposed. This view is also supported by Lyle who claims that the dialogic classroom 'holds the greatest cognitive potential for pupils, whilst at the same time demanding the most of teachers ' (Lyle 2008, p.222). The successful management of oracy in classrooms requires great skill and competence. Coultas goes on to suggest that practitioners should move towards a democratic pedagogy that explores two different models of talk. She advocates one model that corrects children's spoken language and another that encourages children to use talk to learn. By utilising the potential for oracy within this dichotomy, Coultas believes 'that at the same time as they are learning to talk more effectively, pupils should be talking to learn more effectively' (Coultas 2015, p.78). The idea that pupils can use structured talk experiences in many different ways is all part of a democratic pedagogy. This view is revisited later in the thesis.

Educational standards

The need for accountability in teaching standards is important to reflect upon briefly for the purpose of this review. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills and they inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Many schools face regular Ofsted inspections and receive formal judgements about the standards in their schools. The outcomes of school Ofsted inspections are reported directly to Parliament and a detailed report is produced for each school. A grading system from 'very good' which is the highest accolade to 'requires improvement', which is the lowest, can be very powerful in terms of a school's reputation and standing in the wider community.

Schools face many pressures during the inspection process and Ofsted refer to key performance indicators such as Standard Assessment Test Results (SATs) and quality of teaching and learning to guide the inspection process. There is no doubt that this places many teachers under pressure and can have an impact on their teaching and learning methods. I have already stated my concerns in Chapter 1 regarding the negative impact of the testing regime on my own teaching experiences many years ago. Coultas refers to this as 'the terror of performativity', which she believes has had a significant impact on teachers' real-world practice regardless of the strongly held nature of their individual pedagogical approaches (Coultas 2015, p.80). This view is also echoed by Lefstein and Snell who argue that teachers are 'shaped by the needs to meet the requirements of the accountability regime' (Lefstein and Snell 2011, pp. 505-514). These issues remain a concern.

The impact of government policy initiatives has already been mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis. It would appear that Ofsted pressures also contribute to this. Ofsted's new inspection framework (2019) is meant to take account of a broad and balanced curriculum. Beccy Earnshaw is the director of Voice 21, an oracy-based charity, and a current practitioner in the field; she has noted that her team have acknowledged the increased use of the word oracy in Ofsted reports 'it is being mentioned more frequently' (Staufenberg 2018, p.1). This could be regarded as a positive development.

Strand 2: A Consideration of Models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

My review of the relevant literature in the field of teachers' CPD identifies some of the key factors that underpin successful professional development for teachers, with some specific reference to oracy development. The term 'Continuing Professional Development' (CPD) is believed to have been coined by Richard Gardner, who held responsibility for professional development for the building professions, at York University in the mid-1970s. It is believed that it was chosen because it provided a broad term of reference as it did not differentiate between learning from courses, and learning 'on the job'. The term is now common to many professions and specifically in the field of education.

CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim for continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge, beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job. Until the mid-1990s, 'CPD was often taken up as a matter of voluntary commitment or just as something for those with career ambitions,' (Craft 2000, p.8). This is quite a critical point in relation to education and, whilst it signalled a personal

choice for individuals, it also implied that there was no formal requirement for teachers to undertake this professional development for their roles. The individual was therefore responsible for their lifelong career development, under the umbrella of the school, or schools that employ them. The present climate in education signals that this is perhaps no longer a personal choice.

Several influential educationalists have engaged with the CPD debate: 'a professional knowledge base for teachers is essential for advancing teaching to the status of other professions such as law or medicine' (Hargreaves 1996 and Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler 2002; cited in Joram 2007, pp.123-135). In the health profession for example, the General Medical Council (GMC) insist that practitioners maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills base in order to maintain fitness to practice. New ideas and advances are constantly emerging in the medical field linked to improving practice and understanding. There are many similarities with the teaching profession in this respect and we could argue that such advances are also occurring in education. I believe that this point is particularly relevant to areas of inclusive practice in primary classrooms. Teachers are required to manage a wide range of mixed ability needs in primary classrooms in 2019, and they require high quality professional development work to support them in their endeavours.

The ongoing discussions about the best way to manage professional development opportunities have continued over many years in the field of education. Joram explored the work of Hiebert et al. (2002) and Foray and Hargreaves (2003), and suggested that 'in order for such a knowledge base to develop, it is necessary for teachers' private craft knowledge to be codified, that is, transformed into a format that can be communicated and understood by others' (cited in Joram 2007, pp.123-135).This would imply that the high quality CPD needs to be delivered and/or supported by experts in the field or, in the case of education, by consultants who were deemed to be highly skilled. In education, this became known as In-Service Education and Training (INSET).

Soulsby and Swain (2003) carried out a study that examined an award-creating (INSET) scheme provided by the DfES Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This scheme offered teachers the opportunity to carry out their own research into specific subject areas. Soulsby and Swain (2003) argue that this type of subject-based training is vital to stimulate the intellectual interest of a highly-qualified graduate workforce. They also contend that such schemes are likely to have a positive effect on recruitment and retention within the teaching profession. However, recently this type of training has often been overshadowed by centralised training initiatives, aimed at whole school improvement, directly linked to Government policy. 'The evidence on decline in the take-up of award-bearing INSET suggests that the recent reduction in enrolments is not caused by any diminution in the popularity or relevance of award-bearing courses, but more probably by external factors such as teachers' workloads and the large volume of training provided for other central initiatives' (Soulsby and Swain 2013, p.3). The issues around the dynamics of policy and practice have already been explored in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

In England, for almost two decades, teachers have been legally required to participate in five in-service training days per year. The research evidence from

Brighouse and Moon (2013) demonstrates that these are rarely well organised, are perceived as unhelpful by participating teachers, and represent a wasted resource:

> ‘The frequently cited claim that the best-performing education systems all recruit their teachers from the top-third of graduates … is not supported by the evidence. Successful reform cannot wait for a new generation of teachers; it requires investment in the present teacher workforce, providing quality professional development, adequate career structures and diversification, and enlisting the commitment of teachers to reform’ (Brighouse and Moon, 2013).

Currently in England, trainee teachers in 2019/20 can qualify to teach through many different means and this can include undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degree courses and ‘Assessment Only’ routes to Qualified Teacher Status. It is acknowledged by many in the profession that teachers require an extensive set of skills and understanding in order to undertake their role successfully. It could also be assumed that early career teachers would complete their training and have some underpinnings of an educational philosophy and pedagogical approach to their teaching and learning. My own experience, discussed in Chapter 1, relates directly to this, in which I acknowledged that my pedagogical approach and its strong foundations developed over a number of years in the profession.

For the purpose of this research, we might start to question what specific training teachers have received in pedagogical approaches during their initial compulsory teacher training. We might ask what specific training, if any, teachers have received in terms of the pedagogy of oracy practices. Once again this seems to be a grey area and Mercer and Dawes state, ‘despite talk being the main tool of their trade, few teachers have been taught specific strategies for using it to best effect ’ (cited in Mercer and Hodgkinson 2008, p.363). If teachers have not received appropriate preparation during their teacher training experiences then it would follow that they require appropriate professional development opportunities to enhance this.

The DfE (2016) Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development represents a recent improvement initiative promoted by the government to establish some clear principles around CPD for teachers. It accepts that not all professional development is equally effective and declares, ‘as the most important profession for our nation’s future, teachers need considerable knowledge and skill, which need to be developed as their career progresses’ (DfE 2016, p.3).

It is interesting to note that across the five parts named in the standard there is one part which reads that, ‘professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.’(DfE 2016 p.8) .It states effective professional development:

- ‘develops theory and practice together;
- links pedagogical knowledge with subject /specialist knowledge;

- draws on the evidence base, including high quality academic research, and robustly evaluated approaches to teaching and teaching resources;
- is supported by those with expertise and knowledge to help participants improve their understanding of evidence; and,
- draws out and challenges teacher's beliefs and expectations about teaching and how children learn' (DfE 2016, p.8).

The characteristics emphasised above are supplemented with appropriate actions that education leaders, teachers and providers of professional development are expected to take. This standard appears to provide a firm structure for teachers' professional development as it emphasises the interface between theory and practice.

However, if we reflect on the reality in school, hypothetically I would question: how are teachers expected to undertake effectively this huge task when many are in complex and multi-faceted settings with an increasing number of pupils facing specific learning needs and challenging circumstances? The evidence seems to support the idea that high quality and practice-focused CPD, which focuses on school improvement and pedagogy, is necessary for teachers to grow and develop and ultimately have a positive impact on pupils' learning. This also leads us to question how effectively this can be carried out in view of the workload and financial pressures currently prevailing in schools.

A recent School Snapshot Survey (DfE Winter 2018) research report published some rather disquieting results and findings. The report presented the results from surveys, covering a range of educational topics and 758 interviews conducted with school leaders and 1,040 interviews with classroom teachers. Some interesting statistics from the report were specifically linked to CPD:

- '91% of teachers said that they had faced barriers to accessing CPD
- 70% of teacher said it was the cost of CPD
- 51% said they did not have the time' (DfE, Winter 2018, pp.1-43).

The statistics are actually quite alarming if we consider them in relation to the evidence presented earlier in this chapter about the necessity for high-quality CPD. It is also worth noting that that despite the Standard for Professional Development there still seems to be many issues to contend with linked to CPD. This aspect is revisited in Chapter 6.

This strand of the literature review briefly explores the work of Fielding et al (2005) in the field of Joint Practice Development (JPD). A practice-focused, research-informed, and systematic model of JPD formed the focus for the institutional case study reported in this research. A detailed analysis and review of this will feature more prominently in Chapter 4. Hargreaves describes JPD as ''a joint activity, in which two or more people interact and influence one another'- in contrast to the non-interactive, unilateral character of much conventional 'sharing good practice' (Hargreaves 2012, p.9). He notes that it is significant that it is an activity that focuses

on teachers' practice and what they do, as opposed to what they know. The critical distinction here is that the development of practice is not simply a transfer of knowledge from one person or place to another. On the contrary, it is notably fundamentally different in the ontological and epistemic position it adopts which is quite distinct from more traditional models of CPD. Hargreaves observes that JPD 'requires partnership competence, social capital (reciprocity and trust), collective moral purpose and evaluation and challenge' (Hargreaves 2012, p.9).

JPD does not involve attending courses and is not hierarchical. Instead, it assumes that two or more people, which could also include students, support each other's development through sharing and reflecting on practice, informed by evidence from research. Studies of collaborative professional development suggest that CPD based in the classrooms of the teachers involved led to better student and teacher outcomes. A report by Sebba et al (2012) outlines what makes good approaches to JPD across a Teaching School Alliance. They highlighted principles of reciprocity, democracy and moral purpose as being particularly important .These principles are discussed further in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Summary

This literature review has highlighted some significant features associated with the implementation of oracy-based practices. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion and further exploration around some key areas that will be considered in some depth further in the thesis.

The case for the critical importance of a clear and precise deeply meaningful definition of the term 'oracy' and its wider implications for oracy practices has been made. The difference in definitions of the words oracy and talk, two terms that are frequently interspersed in school settings, has been highlighted. Despite the subtle difference in meanings, the impact of oracy as a pedagogical approach is considerable. A comparison of oracy frameworks highlights how the interpretation of such frameworks needs to include a thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinning of the role of oracy in the development of literacy and other aspects of cognitive development. This chapter also raises issues about the importance of the interface between theory and practice.

Attention has also been drawn to the importance of democratic pedagogy for the successful teaching and learning of oracy. A brief exploration of the caught or taught debate for oracy teaching has strengthened the arguments that oracy needs to be taught in primary schools, as many pupils will not simply be able to catch it. It has also been argued that pupils from challenging socio-economic backgrounds may not be receiving support for the development of oracy skills in the home environment. It is therefore critical that schools ensure this life skill is developed.

An introductory discussion about conditions for literacy learning, and specifically the work of Cambourne (1999) raises some important issues about brain research and how the brain learns. Most significantly, the impact for the classroom environment was also considered. As Wolfe and Brandt (1998) aptly state, 'the brain is essentially curious, and it must be to survive' (cited in Rushton et al. 2003, p.21).

The substantial impact of policy initiatives from a successive range of different governments has arguably confused perceptions about the principles underpinning

teaching of oracy enormously. The challenges in the classroom and the pressure of the accountability regime currently faced by teachers has arguably affected the practice of oracy.

The purpose and value of CPD has been discussed with an overarching assertion that high quality practice-focused CPD is essential for teachers to maintain high quality teaching experiences for their pupils. It has been suggested that the model of CPD based upon the principles of JPD (Fielding et al 2005) may be able to address some of these ongoing challenges that beset traditional transmission-based approaches to CPD.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents a rationale for the methodology employed in the thesis. It also provides a justification of the methods used. In addition, it comments on the benefits and perceived limitations of some of the methodology and methods chosen. Ethical considerations are detailed and explored in relation to the conduct of this study in educational research with adherence to these. Reference is made to ethics in relation to the methods of data collection. Reflections are also offered on the stages of data analysis that informed the research. A subsequent and more detailed analysis of data sets is provided in the next chapter.

The focus for this study is firmly embedded in the field of educational research and it is based on concepts and practices of oracy in primary schools. One of the aims of the research is to contribute to my own professional development as an early career researcher. A second aim of the research is to help others involved in the teaching of oracy to improve their practice.

Educational research has been cited by several authors as being problematic to define (Phillips 2005, 2006, 2011; Morrison 2007; Lingard and Gale; 2010; Whitty, 2016). Problems and issues in defining educational research derive 'largely from its complexity' (Coe et al 2017 p.15). The following definition of educational research provided by Coe et al is helpful here, as it acknowledges some of this complexity. They define educational research as, 'the systematic and scholarly application of the principles of a science of behaviour to the problems of teaching and learning within education and the clarification of issues having a direct and indirect bearing on those concepts' (Cohen et al 2011, p.1). It is also worth noting that when Cohen et al refer to science in the above definition they are careful to point out that this includes both normative and interpretive perspectives. This inclusive definition and subsequent discussion of educational research by the above authors is helpful in providing clarity and offering some flexibility in terms of choice of both methodology and methods.

It is also important to acknowledge from the outset that all educational research is grounded in values and these have a direct impact on the approach employed in the thesis. Sikes observes that 'a crucial aspect of choosing an appropriate methodology for the research is 'researcher positionality' and the philosophical assumptions concerning beliefs, values, ontology, epistemology and relationally, since research is subjective' (cited in Coe et al 2017, p.17).

Achieving a participative, moral and empowering approach in the conduct of this thesis has been difficult, particularly in relation to separating personal values from the research process. Throughout the thesis, I have maintained a personal commitment to honesty, professionalism, morality and social justice. Griffiths (2003) describes social justice as 'emphasising that our personal and professional actions should reflect a commitment to social justice', (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.3). I recognise therefore that acceptance of my values and beliefs not only forms part of the theoretical framework supporting this research, but also influences the way in which I have approached the research process.

This research study set out to present an authentic account of a case study based in one primary school. Robson (2011) describes a case study as …'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary

phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence' (cited in Coe et al. 2017, p.114). A recognised strength of the case study approach for me was that it would create the opportunity to investigate the subject of oracy, in some depth and detail in one setting. As part of the actual research process, I visited the setting on multiple occasions and engaged with a wide range of research participants. Yin (2018) suggests that case studies have the potential to ask the why and how questions, rather than simply asking what is occurring. The design of the research process gave me the opportunity to explore why a specific school chose to adopt or disregard oracy practices and why they had made key decisions about the teaching and learning of oracy in one particular setting. I felt that this approach would strengthen the research and the associated findings. If I had simply observed practice in classrooms, for example, this would have led to a more descriptive type study leaving many questions unanswered. Focusing the research in the school setting allowed me to utilise a range of methods to gain clearer insights into oracy practices as they happened.

I was aware of the work of Yin (2009), who cites the dangers of lack of rigour in some case study approaches: 'too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions' (cited in Coe et al. 2017, p.112). Conscious of this danger, I was determined to avoid this pitfall as far as possible in the conduct of this research. I had clearly defined research questions with a specific period and secure ethical structures in place. I was also mindful of the work of Hammersley (2008) who points out that 'case studies like other qualitative approaches , can be vulnerable to the accusation that they attempt to generalise from the particular and they make assumptions about cause and effect which go beyond the evidence presented' (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.108). In Chapter 4, I endeavour to ensure that the evidence and findings presented in this study are interrogated appropriately and described with due care.

An important aspect of this small-scale research project was that it empowered and enabled me to look at something in context in a realistic setting. I was acutely aware that by selecting the focus of oracy and associated professional development practices in one school in 2017, the research would be quite limited in scale and scope. I also acknowledge from the outset that any findings from this research may not necessarily have transferability to other settings. However, I do believe that this study possesses the potential to make a contribution to the wider field by ensuring that any outcomes and findings are relatable for practitioners and those working with children and young people. It is hoped that this thesis and the journal articles that may emanate from it may go on to support someone else contemplating a small-scale study such as this using a similar methodological approach. Reading Gardner, Holmes and Leitch (2008) on soft indicators of research and policy impact, served as a useful reminder of the potential impact and value of small-scale studies. I have no doubt that my research alone will not directly enhance policy initiatives, but, along with many others, I hope that it incrementally contributes to the collective effort to raise the profile of oracy and associated practices in primary schools.

The strong theoretical framework for this study, rooted in sociocultural approaches combined with a clear commitment to moral responsibility in the conduct of this research is a strength of the approach adopted. The selected approach did allow me a degree of 'methodological eclecticism,' (Coe et al. 2017, p.16) which was firmly

based on educational values and the position I hold regarding knowledge and knowing and the nature of the social world. The research was designed and structured with the intention of using of a range of participatory methods to maximise the engagement of the research subjects with each other, and with myself as the researcher.

The initial study had three linked aspects for research and development:

- Explore and understand the factors influencing the use of oracy in primary schools through qualitative data gained through eliciting the views of a range of research subjects in one primary school setting.
- Compare the data obtained with current research on oracy practices.
- Consider models of CPD and their impact on school development, with the specific objective of exploring a method of CPD, namely that of Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding et al. 2005).

I was mindful of the fact that as an early career researcher, flexibility and an open mind was needed. I had clear plans with a time frame in place but I was also open to new ideas and exploring new areas that I may not have originally considered. Yin describes the case study process as 'linear but iterative' for the purpose of reflection and clarification (Yin 2009, p.1). This reflective process proved to be a very supportive for me. Whilst I had created a plan of action, it was important that that I felt empowered to reflect and plan the next appropriate steps as the lead researcher. Sikes and Goodson (2003) suggest the use of an interior reflexivity process when involved with educational research .They argue that it is a better, 'anchor for moral practice than any external guidelines' (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.248). I regarded this as a helpful process for me throughout the research development. I was fully aware that my values and beliefs affected the research design. I was also keen to ensure that I was mindful of this when I was involved in data collection and interpretation and with regard to my relationship with the research participants.

Morrison (1996) refers to reflection as a 'conceptual and methodological portmanteau' (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012 p.3). Reflection was an essential part of the whole research process for me. I employed a simple process of reflection involving retrospection and thinking about what had occurred during the early stages of the research process when embarking on early conversations with the head teacher and after the initial discussion forums had taken place. The subsequent analysis of the rich data gained through this process allowed for purposeful reflection and further planning and development. This approach, advocated by Van Manen (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.97) applies to the reflective process as thinking about events in the future in effect with reference to anticipation and planning. At each stage of the process, it was important that I took the time to consider available options and reflect on the next steps.

As my understanding of the research theory and practice advanced, the research became more refined and focused than it had been in the early stages. As an early career researcher, I felt that it was important for me to reflect constantly on the actual research process. I utilised my knowledge of Kolb's (1984) 'experiential learning cycle' (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.24) and applied it to the research process. The learning that came from the actual experience of collecting the data, for example, was critical for the research development. I was becoming a conscious researcher and I felt that the whole process would have greater methodological rigour if it involved careful introspection. I discuss this further in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

It is important to reiterate here, some of the theoretical approaches used in undertaking the study. I am not advocating strict adherence to the deep philosophical underpinning of these various research paradigms and their associated methods and approaches but I have considered them duly as part of my methodology and data collection.

Firstly, I was aware of the 'grounded theory' approach that involves 'going out into the field and collecting data' (Robson 2002, p.191) without any pre-conceived hypothesis. I accepted from the outset that grounded theory is not a specific theory in itself but it is a systematic and flexible way of researching. I specifically planned to visit the school on at least six occasions as part of the research .The main intention of that approach was that it would provide me with opportunities to analyse the data between the visits and this could inform the rest of the study. This approach is aligned with the hermeneutic tradition. According to Robson, 'hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation' (Robson 2002, p.198). Hermeneutic or interpretive approaches to educational research are one way of making sense of the world. In terms of making this research manageable, I wanted to keep the interpretive approach I adopted focused and real. Later in this thesis, I will also explore the concept of a phenomenological approach and how it supported the flexible design of the research. I was very keen to look at how the research participants viewed themselves and the world, the school, around them.

Following the interpretive tradition, I was also mindful of aspects of the 'narrative inquiry' methodology (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) which was crucial of Stage 2 of the research process, and was based on inquiry into teaching and teacher knowledge. The narrative approach used in this case study is an example of social constructionism, as the reality is co-constructed in the interview as the narrative emerges (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This specific approach is not adopted in its entirety for this particular case study, but it is significant to note that I utilised this approach in taking the opportunity to reflect meaningfully on the research interactions, at each stage, prior to formally reporting on them.

Further supplementary questions began to emerge as the research process advanced and this progressively informed the focus for the subsequent stages of research. These are as follows:

1. What are the issues concerned with the inconsistent implementation of oracy in primary schools?
2. Do teachers think and reflect on the learning experiences they provide in their classroom?
3. How might new CPD provision best deal with these factors? What has CPD provision been like in the past and what are the impacts of CPD (Long-term / short-term)?
4. Which CPD model could be deemed appropriate in terms of value for money, time constraints /teacher workload etc.?

The informed choice of methodology for this research.

Wilson (2009) suggests analysing methodologies used by experienced 'researchers will not only help you to see what is possible but will also give you a good insight into the strengths and limitations of the various methodologies and methods being used' (cited in Jackson 2013, p.50). I considered several options for my methodological approach and my strong philosophical position guided my methodological choice.

Coe states that the research process has three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Coe et al 2017). According to these authors, a research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that define the nature of enquiry along these three dimensions. There is no doubt that the debate about ontology and epistemology is a complex and philosophical one. I attempt to offer some clarity regarding my position by highlighting some simple meanings of the three dimensions, which are accepted here, for the purpose of this research.

- Ontology is based on 'what is the nature of form of the social world' (Coe et al 2017, p.18).

- Epistemology relates to knowledge and 'how can what is assumed to exist be known' (Coe et al 2017, p.17).

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- Methodology asks 'what procedures or logic should be followed?' based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions (Coe et al 2017, p.1).

Cohen and Manion remind the researcher that 'how one aligns oneself in this particular debate profoundly affects how one will go about uncovering knowledge of social behaviour' (Cohen and Manion 1996, p.6). They note that research design and conduct will be influenced by what the researcher believes about reality (their ontological assumptions).The researcher's ontology, in turn, informs their epistemological assumptions what they believe about knowledge (Greenbank 2003). According to Grieg and Taylor, if knowledge is understood as determined, objective and measurable, then the researcher will adopt research methods that enable truths to be presented. If however, the researcher believes that reality is open to interpretation and negotiated between individuals within the context of human interaction, not fixed but a 'product of the individual's consciousness ' (Grieg and Taylor 1999, p.6), then they will assume an interpretivist ontology.

Coe et al (2017) point out that the corresponding epistemological positions to realism and constructivism are positivism and interpretivism. In simple terms under realist ontology, positivism sees it as possible to achieve direct knowledge through direct observation or measurement of the phenomena being investigated. I decided from the outset that a positivist approach was not going to be helpful for my research. The approach is usually typified by an objective style and approach and it searches for facts. I was keen to explore beyond the immediate facts available to me in my research focus. There is an abundance of general information available about many schools in the public domain. I did not feel that such information would give me any greater insights

into the concept of oracy with regard to what was actually happening with the people who were making it happen, in the specific context of this study.

I purposefully designed a piece of educational research that would allow me to explore the concept of oracy with a focus on the interpretivist ontology .The approach would allow me to engage with a range of research subjects which offered flexibility. I was not looking for a defined answer in answer to the questions raised in the research. However, I believed strongly in the value of interpretation of the responses from the research participants and investigation of the data gained in providing authentic insights into the realities of teaching oracy in the context studied. The argument presented by Coe et al, that ontological interpretations can be seen in terms of a continuum from realism to constructivism, is helpful. This belief is that, in realism, there is a single objective reality that exists independent of an individual's perception of it. However, 'under constructivism reality is viewed as neither objective nor singular, but multiple realities are constructed by individuals' (Coe at al 2017, p.16). The same authors point out that under a constructivist ontology, interpretivism 'does not see direct knowledge as possible; it is the accounts and observation of the world that provide indirect indications of the phenomena, and thus knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation' (Coe at al 2017, p.16). I felt aligned to the views of Coe et al regarding constructivism and corresponding interpretivism. A key facet of my research was the interest in the realities constructed by individuals. I was very keen to ensure that my research approach would allow the potential of new discoveries linked to the phenomena of oracy in a particular context to be made.

My philosophical view, firmly embedded in the belief that teaching and learning is a social process, further reinforced my methodological approach. It is worth highlighting two contrasting epistemological stances regarding social aspects of teaching and learning to clarify further my position. Constructivism, which I referred to earlier, is also a learning theory that concludes that people construct knowledge through the experiences that they gain in real life and allow them to generate meaning. The main interpretation of this is that learning is an active process and the person functions as a constructor of knowledge. The knowledge that people possess is not merely acquired but constructed. Taking the constructivist theory a step further, the theory of social constructivism accepts the view that knowledge is constructed and socially mediated. By engaging with a wide range of activities with other learners, learners internalise the outcomes by working together. The work of Vygotsky (1980) highlights social constructivism with a belief that social interaction is the key to constructing knowledge. This methodological approach aligns to my views, and fully supported the research process throughout.

By contrast, sociocultural theory looks at the important contributions that society makes to individual development .There is a greater focus on the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live .Sociocultural theory also asserts that learning is a social process. It focuses its development of co-operative dialogues between a novice and an expert with the aim of helping the less knowledgeable person learn new ways of thinking. The important point to note here is that cultural beliefs and attitudes impact on how the learning is taking place. According to Vygotsky, children are born with basic biological constraints on their minds. Each culture, however, provides what he referred to as 'tools of intellectual adaptation' (cited in Shaffer and Kipp, 2010, p.282). These tools allow children to use

their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. For example, while one culture might emphasise memory strategies such as note-taking, other cultures might utilize tools like reminders or rote memorisation. My fundamental beliefs are therefore more inclined towards sociocultural theory of practice and this strong philosophical underpinning was crucial for both shaping the research and design and explaining the approaches taken to support the credibility of the research.

It is my claim that:

1. **An interpretative epistemological approach was required to analyse description and determine perception.**

The methodology was based strongly on the interpretivist paradigm. Sparkes (1992) refers to interpretivism as ‘a whole family of approaches which are in direct contrast to a positivist sense of social reality’ (cited in Coe et al 2017, p.18). Researchers adopting an interpretive paradigm see themselves "within the circle", interpreting the world around them. They have an epistemological position of that of someone co-creating and sharing knowledge, as well as creating relationships furthering their understanding of different points of view. I have accepted that this research had some subjectivity based on my positionality and my own professional experience of oracy. However, I hope that new findings and shared meanings are created as the study proceeds. I am mindful of the work of Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p.32) in noting that the interpretivist paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. They use meaning- (versus measurement-) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and others participating in the research. ‘Interpretive research does not pre-define dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges’ (Kaplan and Maxwell 1994 cited in Kendall 1999, p.184). For the purpose of this thesis and the case study it presents, oracy discussion forums, workshops, interviews and co-delivery of practice are all used as part of the research process. It is also interesting to note that during the early stages of the research process, these tools were used to support the design and further refinement of the study.

Aspects of a phenomenographic approach developed by Marton (1984) as a qualitative research theoretical framework were also employed in this study. A phenomenographic approach was chosen as one that can describe an aspect of the world as it appears to the individual (Marton 1984). Phenomenography is related to a field of knowledge, which is defined by having experience as the subject of the study. It takes a non-dualistic ontological perspective; meaning that object and subject are not separate and independent of each other. From this standpoint, the researcher tries to be neutral to the ideas of the participants in the study. According to Orgill, ‘As phenomenography is empirical research, the researcher or interviewer is not studying his or her own awareness and reflection, but the awareness and reflection of the subjects or participants’ (2002 cited in Ornek 2008). For the purpose of this

study, I was looking at the concept of oracy and aspects of CPD that relate to it. I was keen to include the reflections of the 'voice' of the research participants in relation to both of these things. I consider this as part of the 'democratic process' of research and I value its importance tremendously.

It is also my claim that:

2. **A qualitative approach was needed to encourage research participants to describe experience.**

Since the focus for the research is upon the development of oracy practices, I was important for me to explore the research subject's views and opinions about oracy developments in their setting. I felt strongly that a qualitative methodology was needed in order to explore the way in which the research subjects perceived oracy.

> 'Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p.3).

For the purpose of my research, I have acknowledged from the outset that I had a great deal of knowledge and understanding of oracy and vast experience of oracy based practices in primary school settings. However, the uniqueness of this research opportunity was linked to the fact that I had no prior knowledge of how this particular school managed oracy developments or how they managed the professional development of their teaching staff with regard to oracy. The research in the school setting allowed me the opportunity to gain a greater understanding, from a wide range of research subjects, about the perceptions/views of oracy practices. The range of methods used all took place in the school community, and so I was allowed to study this 'in a natural setting', as Denzin and Lincoln advise (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p.3). The voice of the research participants would not only enhance my overall thinking but also contribute to the deepening and widening of knowledge about the practices taking place in this one particular setting.

In highlighting the qualitative research approach as the preferred methodology there are some acknowledged disadvantages to this overall approach and it is worth declaring these here. Lincoln and Guba caution that qualitative research, which is an approach that acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity, requires that the 'biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer' are identified and made explicit throughout the study, (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.290). I was aware of these as the researcher and I endeavoured to minimise the effects during the course of the research process. I was confident that the research design was robust and strong enough to maximise the 'validity' of the findings'. (Mouton and Marais 1988, p.59). I took moral responsibility to ensure that the process was as systematic, credible and as rigorous as possible and adhered to all of the requirements set out by the University of Sunderland for this MPhil level study.

The selection of the research setting (the school).

I used information acquired from the public domain as part of the process of identifying the location of the anonymised primary school. I accessed the Department for Education official listing for the school and this included such information as the number on roll, free school meals figures, Ofsted ratings and local authority involvement. I also felt that it was morally important for me not to have had previous contact with the school or the personnel in my professional career. I believed that this would serve to minimise any supposed or potential bias.

I accepted from the outset of this research that any group that is studied is altered to some degree by the very presence of the researcher: 'The presentation of self in the field can never be done without some consideration of impact' (Roberts and McGinty 2005, p.115). Therefore, in terms of the overall validity of the case study, I accept that qualitative research requires that the 'biases, motivations, interests or perspectives' of the inherently subjective 'inquirer' to be identified and made explicit throughout the study (Seale 1999, p.44). I mitigate some of these potential biases by reinforcing at pertinent stages, with all of the research participants, the purpose of the study and the importance of their 'authentic voice' within it. I explained that the study would be carried out in a moral and ethical manner. The fact that all of the findings would remain anonymous to the school setting was also reiterated. I openly recognised that I was in a very privileged position to have the opportunity to carry out this research and the school had placed their professional trust in me that I deemed to be a great responsibility.

From the published data about the chosen school, I concluded that that it was based in a very socially deprived area of the country, according to the Government's National Statistics 'English Indices of Social Deprivation 2015', with high unemployment and challenging circumstances (DfHCandLG, 2015). In order to maintain the anonymity of the school, no further details or data are necessary to include at this stage. One of the initial aims of the early stages of my research, and as part of my moral purpose, was to engage with as many members of the school community as possible. Accepting that there would be a diverse socio-economic mix within that school community, I felt strongly that I needed to create an accessible way for all of the research participants to engage with the research in ways in which they felt comfortable and confident. My belief that oracy is an accessible tool, which supports widening participation, was of course instrumental in the choice of methods used.

Within the time constraints of the research study and other important factors such as the need to have organised and ethical access to the research subjects, I needed to think creatively about the use of research methods. I believe strongly that asking the participants to respond via a formal questionnaire or to complete an opinionated piece of writing would not allow me to gain the deeper insights into the thoughts of this wide range of people about the subject matter oracy. From my knowledge of working in primary schools facing challenging circumstances and the demographic associated with this, I made the reasoned assumption that the take-up for response to a formal written activity might not be high. Accepting that all research is subjective in some manner, there is a degree of acknowledged subjectivity in this opinion.

However, it is also based on many years of working in primary schools facing challenging circumstances therefore I believe that it is firmly rooted in an realistic appreciation of the forces at work in the site of the research..

A unique feature of this particular research was the fact that I used oracy techniques as a key method throughout the research. In the early stages of the research, specifically the discussion groups with the research participants I aimed to encourage purposeful dialogue with those participating in the research. I also adopted further oracy approaches and techniques throughout the whole research process. I tried to maintain an inclusive, non-hierarchical approach regardless of what age, gender and role the research subjects were. This approach resonated highly with my personal values and beliefs about social justice, referred to earlier in this chapter.

Wellington (2000) argues that research in the social sciences is often criticised by those who adopt a more quantitative or scientific approach for being too subjective or too much based on feelings and responses. Wellington feels that we should not accept this criticism, as he believes that even the most scientific, positivist; objective, quantitative researcher will make a subjective choice. Wellington goes on to advocate 'Surely educational research would do better to aspire to being systematic, credible and verifiable, useful, valuable and trustworthy' (cited in Coe et al. 2017, p.20) .Therefore, in conducting this research, I believe that I have successfully combined my personal interest and experience in oracy with methodological rigour.

Focus and scope of the case study-methods used to collect data

The research was carried out in nine important stages.

Stage 1 involved the early research conversation with the head-teacher in order to set up an ethically sound research project with informed consent from all of the participants.

Stage 2 of the research process involved all of the research participants in distinct research groups being requested to engage with an informal 'semi-structured discussion forum' led by myself.

I phrased this process as 'semi-structured discussion forums' for the purpose of this research and importantly because of my belief in the value of talk as inclusionary practice. For the purpose of association and resemblance, this took form of a 'semi-structured informal interview' with each research group. This method is often used to collect data because it is flexible enough to gather a wide range of information including factual data, views, opinions, personal narratives and histories (Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.86). I initially led the discussion forums, and I appointed an independent, neutral scribe to remain on the periphery and take notes, however that person was not involved in the discussion group. The main purpose of this was to mitigate against any recording failure. I led the discussion groups with some key questions, and I was keen to encourage relaxed dialogue, so not all of the pre-prepared questions were used.

Powney and Watts (1987) make an important distinction between two kinds of interviews. Firstly, the 'respondent interview' which they believe is one where the interviewer keeps a tight focus for the interview, with a set of pre-prepared questions

which are followed, and to which the interviewer responds. Contrasted with this is the 'informant interview', which allows the participants to contribute to the agenda, respond to some questions, but also have the potential to explore other relevant areas which emerge from the discussion as it progresses (cited in Wallace 2013, p.70). This informant type of interview allows the participants to inform the research by gaining insights into their perceptions and thereby having an authentic voice. The data gained from the discussion group forums included audio recordings and accompanying field notes, and formed the first part of the data analysis. I feel that in utilising the approach of informant interview that this further contributed to the authenticity of the case study.

The opportunity for dialogue in the discussion forums also allowed me to check and clarify what was being said. I am aware of the significance of power relationships when conducting the research in this manner. This is why I chose a comfortable, familiar setting with all of the participants, including myself, seated in a circle. This was to signal that this was to be an open conversation and they were all able to see and hear each other clearly. A small discrete audio recording device was placed in the room and a scribe sat on the perimeter of the room to take any additional notes. The whole process was fully explained from the outset to all of research subjects, prior to the discussion forum taking place. This also reinforces my commitment to ensuring that the process was honest, open and transparent for those participating.

Stage 3 of the research process involved an informal meeting with two identified teachers, who had been involved in the first stage discussion forums. I started with a general question about their understanding of current oracy practice in their school. This soon became an informal discussion where the teachers clearly felt comfortable, and confidential opinions and views were respected and shared.

Stage 4 of the research process involved myself and the two teachers planning a Joint Practice Development (JPD) workshop session. The work of Fielding et al (2005) and JPD are discussed further in the data analysis chapter. All participants mutually agreed the focus for the workshop. I shared ideas about learning and oracy practices, and the teachers shared knowledge about talk initiatives in school, and a restorative justice programme that had been introduced.

Stage 5 –Involved the Joint Practice Development (JPD) workshop session. This included both teachers sharing practice with myself, and me sharing an area of knowledge in a relaxed and focused manner.

Stage 6 –Involved an informal discussion about the JPD workshop.

Stage 7- The subsequent planning of two sessions for co-delivery (by the two teachers and myself) in in their own classrooms. The teachers were given the freedom to select the curriculum area and identify the stage that they were at in the curriculum delivery. The content and delivery methods were discussed, as was the mutually agreed allocation of key roles for the delivery by the teacher and myself.

Stage 8 –Formal review and reflections of the co-taught sessions and identification of the next steps for potential 'in house' development

Stage 9 –An informal semi-structured interview with the class teachers and head-teacher offering different perspectives as part of the whole research process.

The purpose of the final interviews was to gain two different perspectives about the research process. One from a research participant (the teacher) who had been part of the process. The other was with the head-teacher; the gatekeeper of the research but someone who had not actively participated in the research process itself. Siedman (2012) states, 'At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience' (cited in Coe et al. 2017, p.184). All of the interviews were carefully planned, prepared and informed by the considerations set out above.

Ethical considerations

I firmly believed that an ethical approach should permeate the whole research process from start to finish. Wellington (2000) argues that, 'all educational research should be ETHICAL', (cited in Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.30). He specifically capitalised the word ethical to emphasise the importance. Whilst I fully acknowledge the importance of adherence to ethics, I feel that I have not simply taken a mechanistic approach to these principles, according to the statutory University requirements. However, I hope that I have dealt with it in a 'situated and reflexive manner' (Atkins and Wallace 2012, p.31).This means that if any unanticipated ethical issues arose I would be able to respond to them in a moral and reflective way in the best interests of all concerned.

For transparency, I can also confirm that the research plan was created in accordance with the University of Sunderland's University Research Ethics Principles, Professional Codes of Practice and the law. The University of Sunderland's Research Ethics Group (UREG) committee gave full approval for the research. The BERA 2018 Ethical Guidelines, where appropriate, were strictly adhered to throughout the whole research process.

From the beginning of the research process, I worked informally with the head teacher to clearly establish the purpose of the research and identify the expectations of the roles and responsibilities of all concerned .The head teacher was aware that full ethical approval had been given by the University of Sunderland for this research process. The head teacher, acting as the gatekeeper for the research, also had to follow the school's internal systems and processes for appropriate approval. The head teacher presented all of the information available about the research project to the school official governing body and sought appropriate approval to ensure that this could go ahead within the specified time frame. The approval was obtained promptly and the governing body were satisfied that appropriate ethical processes were in place to safeguard all of the research subjects including the small group of young children.

The role of the head teacher was to act as a gatekeeper and first point of contact to all research participants on site, in the event of any issues or difficulties throughout the research process. The head teacher agreed to contact me directly if any matters of concern arose. I worked with the head teacher to ensure that there was no duress or coercion in engaging the participants. Full anonymity of the research subjects was guaranteed by me alongside the right of participants to withdraw for any, or no reason in age-appropriate ways and at any time (BERA 2018, Paragraphs 10, 12, 14, 15, and 21).

Identification of research subjects

My conversations with the head teacher during the early stages of the research were critical in terms of exploring the composition of the research subject groups .The membership of the groups was initially guided by me and I suggested that a range of research subjects, involved in different aspects of the school community, would be preferred. I felt strongly that this would provide an interesting, diverse mix of people, which would enhance the research validity. The head teacher would then provide the anonymous selection of research participants with the aim of representing all of the main groups of stakeholders in the school setting. The head teacher appointed two teachers to be involved in the research, as they were the Key Stage 1 and 2 subject leads. She felt that they would be very keen to be part of the research process and they both had a good overview of school developments. The only vulnerable group within the research subjects, because of age, was the small group of pupils under the age of 18. Therefore, parental (in loco parentis) and school consent was obtained as appropriate. I believed that the inclusion of these pupils within the research was important as they could provide a unique insight into the practice of oracy in their school setting.

The research subjects included the following (Table 1).

Table 1: Composition of research subject groups:

Composition	Number of individuals
Teachers	4-6
Teaching Assistants	4-6
Parents	4-6
Governors	4-6
Pupils aged 5-7 years old and pupils aged 7-11 years old	4-6

Voluntary informed consent was a condition of engagement in the research. It was agreed that the head-teacher would approach the potential research subjects. She had been requested to share the information that I had provided in the form of an introductory letter. The letter briefly outlined the professional background of the researcher and shared details of what the research project would entail (Appendices 2, 3, 4). All of the adult research participants were then requested to contact the head teacher verbally if they were interested in taking part. If they confirmed verbally that they were interested, they were then given consent letters to read and sign and return to the head teacher (Appendices 5, 6, 7, 8). The parents of the selected pupil group were provided with an appropriate information letter (Appendix 7) and they were requested to sign and return the consent form, after discussing it with their child, as appropriate. The research participants' understanding of the conditions of engagement in the research, including their right to withdraw and how data will be collected, used, and reported, was checked by the researcher in age appropriate ways at every opportunity. For example, at the beginning of the discussion forums I checked verbally that all of the research subjects were happy to engage and be part of the process. Whilst working with the teachers on several occasions in the school setting I reaffirmed the issues around confidentiality at every opportunity.

Data Confidentiality and Data Storage

The only personal data that was collated were the names on consent forms. All of the forms were stored by the head teacher in the school safe, after verification from myself. They were then disposed of at the end of the research process. There were audio recordings of the discussion forums and the head teacher/teacher interviews. Within 48 hours of the various events taking place, the recordings were transferred by me from the audio devices onto a password protected USB then onto an encrypted computer which was only accessible by me. I remained the only person with access to the original data for analysis. The field notes and any detailed data analysis was completely anonymised, and I fully respected that under the terms of confidentiality. Any publications forthcoming from the research in written or internet form will not be presented in any way that might breach the confidentiality or anonymity of any participant or any participating organisation (BERA 2018 Paragraphs 25-28). At the completion of the study, I will destroy all of the data.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I define and justify the methodology and methods used for the purpose of this small-scale study. I believe that I have provided a clear and transparent rationale for the qualitative, interpretivist methodology, and the choice of methods used. I have acknowledged from the outset the important impact of personal of beliefs and values when conducting educational research. I outlined that I had adopted a case study approach that involves investigating a phenomenon in its real-life context. The strength of this approach being that it allows the researcher to capture the real world and explore it with real human beings. I have detailed how I carried out the research according to BERA 2018 ethical guidelines with moral purpose.

The reality of this approach was that I also had to respond to some unexpected events. I had planned the research in distinct stages and Stage 8, referenced earlier in the chapter, did not go according to plan. I met with two teachers to plan the co delivery of a teaching session with a mutually agreed focus area. Unfortunately, after the planning stage, and before the delivery stage, one of the teachers had to embark on a period of long-term sick leave from school because of serious illness. The direct impact of this meant that in reality the actual teaching and co-delivery session only took place with one teacher. I was satisfied that within the time constraints of the research this was acceptable. I was also prepared to wait and see if the teacher would return to school. However, a recognition that the teacher had not returned after 6 months meant that I had to abandon one of the co-teaching events. As events unfolded, the teacher remained on long-term sick leave. Consequently, only one jointly planned co-teaching event took place. It seemed sensible in the circumstances, as the teaching had been planned with a particular group of pupils and at a specific time in their curriculum development. I therefore continued with the research and progressed to Stage 8 according to my plan with one teacher. Whilst this has affected the overall scale of the case study, I did not feel that it affected negatively on the overall study as I had already collated a range of rich data up to that point. I also felt strongly that my approach retained its rigour.

Throughout this chapter, I have also had the opportunity to analyse my own research position, and I feel that it has contributed to my growing expertise as an early career researcher. On reflection, I feel that I have been able to design, plan, and implement a rigorous and thought-provoking research study. I acknowledged earlier in this chapter that my personal values had an impact on the research design and methodology. Whilst I regarded this as a positive aspect, I was mindful throughout the research to maintain an objective stance when interacting with the research participants and during data collection and subsequent analysis. I believe that in these ways, I have been able to maintain the integrity of the research with my professional approach.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Emerging themes

In this chapter, I outline the context and sources of the data collection. I provide a narrative around this in terms of an overview of the research process. I share some initial findings from the first stages of the data analysis to identify some of the emerging themes. A more detailed and focused discussion of some of the themes and findings follows in Chapter 5.

The context

As part of the initial preparation for the case study, after obtaining ethical approval from the University of Sunderland, I entered into a professional research relationship with the head-teacher of the anonymised research school. In this instance, I believed that the early research conversations with the head-teacher provided a solid foundation for the research. It is important to highlight the critical role of the head teacher at this point, not only as gatekeeper, but also as being instrumental in terms of the logistical arrangements to facilitate the whole process. This involved the release of key personnel from their work duties to take part in discussions, planning sessions and workshops. I deemed this a significant and key contributory factor in the success of the research in this school. I made it explicitly clear to the head teacher, from the outset, through informal discussions that the purpose of the planned research was not be used for judgemental purposes, as in an Ofsted reporting framework, but rather it would be the basis for a real-world enquiry. During the conversations, I stated that one of the key aims of the research that was to gain a further insight and understanding into the oracy practices in this particular school. I shared the stimulus for the research with the head teacher and referenced 'Oracy: the State of Speaking in Our Schools', (Millard and Menzies, 2016). The head teacher appeared supportive of the involvement of the school in the research that had been outlined.

From the beginning, I anticipated that the data collection and analysis would lead to some thought-provoking findings and discoveries; in accordance with Schultze and Avital's claim that by using 'soft' data the researcher intends to obtain 'rich' data (Schultze and Avital 2010, pp.1-16). I felt that because I included a wide range of research participants, as part of the whole school community, that I had been able to gain some unique insights into oracy practices. I anticipated that the rich data would come from greater analysis of the different stages, in the one school setting.

The case study methodology and methods, outlined in Chapter 3, provided a systematic way to collect qualitative data. The data collection opportunities included semi-structured discussion groups with a range of research subjects; a meeting with teachers, a workshop approach with two teachers; a planned co delivery teaching opportunity and a semi-structured interview with a teacher and the head teacher in the setting. I recorded the data, outlined in Chapter 3, in the format of comprehensive, but informal, field notes, with some verbatim quotes and some of my

own reflective comments. This method allowed me to complete an initial reflection of the field notes that in turn supported each stage of the research process and then begin the process of deeper analysis. The main intention of this aspect of the research design was to provide detailed, 'thick descriptions' of the phenomena under study (as defined by Geertz, 1973). These thick descriptions would give me access to and insights into the subtleties of changing and multiple interpretations.

The Staged Research Process

The early research conversations were Stage 1 of the process, with the head teacher of the school were invaluable in terms of setting up the research process appropriately. Whilst the conversations were not formally recorded, they ensured that all of roles and responsibilities were clearly established, and that ethical guidelines had been understood. It was also important for me as the researcher to be reassured that the head teacher had sought appropriate approval from the governing body of the school to allow the research to take place in her school.

Stage 2 of the research process involved the Discussion Forums with a wide range of research subjects. I believe that I adopted a very creative approach to this stage of the research with the design of semi-structured Discussion Forums, detailed further in Chapter 3. The approach enabled me to use talk as a method of data collection, and I felt that this gave the research participants an authentic voice. My fundamental belief that talk is a useful tool for inclusionary practice was significant in my mind at this point. I acknowledged that the engagement of the research subjects in their specific, discrete groups, such as pupils, parents, teachers, teaching assistants and governors would require some skilful management by myself and I was keen to ensure that the approach put them at ease that would enable them to talk freely and comfortably in the setting. The use of open-ended guiding questions to begin the process and start the discussion seemed to work very effectively as the dialogue flowed. The overall direction of the discussion forum was not fully determined but the skilful use of informal introductory followed by probing questions was sufficient to start and sustain the discussions. I reassured the research subjects that I was not looking for a 'right or wrong' response but that all contributions and opinions would be valued. I took care to ensure that this process was well managed to maintain the flow of the discussion and gain as much 'rich data' as possible (Schultze and Avital, 2010, pp.1-16).

I accepted from the beginning that there would be difficulty in maintaining a consistent approach across all of the discussion forums. Similar initial lead questions were used in all of the adult Discussion Forums and the range of questioning was varied to suit the particular context. It is important to note, that in the case of the pupil Discussion Forum a slightly different and age-appropriate technique was used. Rather than formally questioning the children, images illustrating young people engaged in talk strategies were used to prompt gently the children into discussion. I am aware that the lack of standardisation here does raise some concerns about overall reliability of the data gained in this manner. I also accept that some biases are often very difficult to eliminate especially when I was leading the discussions on each occasion. On reflection, each discussion forum took its own individual format and the discussion flowed based on the contributions and responses of the individual members of the discussion group. I believed that it was possible to harvest authentic

data, information and ideas from these informal discussions.

The use of an independent scribe throughout the Discussion Forums was used to mitigate the risk of audio recording failure. The scribe did not participate in the discussion forums, and sat on the periphery of the forum and provided verbatim notes for me to support the recordings. At the end of the discussion forums, I was able to utilise the independent scribe's notes and annotations to cross-reference with the sound recordings to ensure a high degree of accuracy. It was not my intention to transcribe every single spoken word, as it was felt that this would be an incredibly lengthy and complex process due to the nature of the discussions and the numbers of people involved. Instead, I listened to it to identify and check the critical incidents raised and phrases used. This process allowed me to produce the first set of data as a comprehensive set of field notes with annotations. This whole process also supported data triangulation (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation is used to compare data to decide if it corroborates (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 1999), and thus, to strengthen the warrant or validate research findings. It is one of the ways to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research. It can uncover biases when there is only one researcher investigating a phenomenon. Ultimately, I found that there was great uniformity in the notes and recordings, and this process allowed for some direct verbatim quotes to be cited in context that I believed supported the validity of the data.

The data analysis approach

I was keen to explore emerging themes and ideas that were evident in the field notes and some anecdotal comments that I had gathered across a range of different contexts. In case study research, Yin discusses the need for searching the data for 'patterns' which may explain or identify causal links in the data (Yin 2018, p.33). In the process, the researcher concentrates on the whole data first, then attempts to take it apart and re-constructs it again more meaningfully. A key question for me in this instance was to define what could be learnt from the field notes in the form of the text that had been generated. Some qualitative researchers adopt a hermeneutic perspective on texts, which is the approach that views text as an interpretation that can never be judged true or false. The researcher is constructing a reality with the interpretation, therefore the qualitative data analysis is perceived as inductive in that there is the possibility of new theories or ideas emerging from the data. This qualitative approach resonated with my own research, as I was placed in the unique position of having the comprehensive and overarching reality view with access to the whole data set for reflection and analysis.

With reference to all of the data sets, or field notes, I started a process that is referred to as 'open coding' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.12). During this process, I identified and tentatively named the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed would be grouped: 'a coding paradigm sensitizes the researcher to particular ways in which categories may be linked with one another. It helps us to arrange our categories in a meaningful and hierarchical way, with some categories constituting the 'core' and others the 'periphery' (Willig 2013, p.73). I applied this process to my comprehensive analysis.

I began to identify initial themes as they emerged naturally. I adopted largely descriptive labels 'in vivo', thereby aligning with the practice of assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using a word or short phrase taken from that section of data (Glaser and Strauss, 2006, p.40). It was also important to note at this stage that the data was reviewed and reflected upon as an ongoing process, thus adopting the 'narrative inquiry' approach, (Clandinen and Connelly, 2000). I was very aware that in the early stages of data analysis some of the themes emerged as 'core' and some others emerged as 'peripheral'. All of these were considered significant at this stage because of the ethnographic approach of the research. Unlike other kinds of research strategy, this ensured that the researcher was not expecting a definitive answer but rather was open to all possibilities. This perspective permitted me to 'capture, interpret and explain' the data (Robson 2002, p.89). The data collection and analysis can therefore go hand-in-hand in an iterative manner, in that the results of the analysis will help guide the subsequent collection of data.

Core Emergent Themes from Stage 1 (in no particular order)

1. Respect and Trust
2 Workplace Democracy
3 Building up of a Community of Practice
4 Consistency across School
5 Impact of Continuing Professional Development (CPD, historical and current)

The data attained and recorded contributes to the notion of trustworthiness of the qualitative research findings. Trustworthiness is the corresponding term used to measure the integrity of the research. It is the extent to which both the data and data analysis are credible. According to Guba and Lincoln, the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be ascertained using the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Guba and Lincoln 1985, pp.294-301). In order to achieve these qualities, the onus is on the researcher to emphasise clearly to the reader the research methodology underpinning the study.

The technique of 'progressive focusing' (Sinkovics and Alfoldi 2012, pp.817-845) was also utilised when analysing the first data sets. In this case, it involved me looking at some identifiable key 'critical incidents' upon which to focus. Critical Incident Analysis is often used in case study research and allows the researcher to examine deeply the findings, as it is context rich. Whilst analysing the data I believed there were some key features highlighted by the subjects that were relevant in terms of the overall research focus and aligned to the aims set out at the beginning of the research process.

Peripheral themes and critical incidents from Stage 1 (in no particular order)

Analysis of the data allowed me to look more closely at some critical incidents. In doing so, I was keen to ensure that the words spoken in context by the research subjects received closer inspection, as this was viewed as having a potentially powerful impact on the early stages of the research. These initial narratives were 'full, rich and real' (Robson 2002, p.455).

1. **Pupil Discussion Forum:** 'If you cannot talk in classrooms you feel like a loner' ... 'I don't like talk' ... 'but you are a very good listener' (referring to a friend).
2. **Teaching Assistant Discussion Forum:** 'Children come into this school with less talk than ever before' ... 'they struggle to communicate' ... 'they are confident talkers when they leave our school' ... 'we all model good conversations'.
3. **Parent/Governor Forum:** 'we always have our dinner together and talk about the day' (parent talking about home life) ... 'the school app [which permits parents to access information about the child's recent work] is useful'.
4. **Teacher Discussion Forum:** 'a big barrier is evidence for OFSTED' ... 'we take a lot of evidence in different ways (photos/videos)' ... 'we have a very creative approach to evidence our learning now'.
5. **Within all the Teacher/TA/Parent/Governor Discussion Forums:** I noted that there was no mention of the high incidence of ASD/SEN in school, even though this was highlighted in early conversations with the head teacher.

In revisiting some of the themes gained from the first stage data analysis, I was able to make some important links and use the planned next stage of the research as a chance to explore the reality of the 'context' further. The next stage involved a focused discussion with two teachers who had volunteered to be part of the research going forward; as these teachers were the designated Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators for the school, I was satisfied, as stated in Chapter 3, that they were appropriate research subjects.

During Stage 3 of the research process, I undertook some initial and informal discussions with the two teachers about their perception of the research focus, and how they felt about it. I recorded some informal notes from the discussion and I was keen to establish, at this stage, that they were aware of their role and responsibility in the research process. I also felt that it was important to build up some rapport with the teachers, especially as we were going to be meeting on a regular basis. A key outcome of the informal discussion was to set up a shared workshop between the teachers and myself.

On reflection, the informal conversations with the two key teachers turned out to be very illuminating .The teachers shared their eagerness and excitement at being part of this process. One of them commented on the enjoyment of being involved in the earlier Discussion Forums and that they indicated that they had reflected on this experience considerably since the event. They indicated informally that it had really made them think more about oracy practice in school. The initial analysis of this brief and informal discussion revealed some new knowledge to me as the researcher. The teachers were already freely sharing information with me, albeit informally, about some of the oracy practices that were going on in school. It was interesting to note that this kind of information could not be gained from school data in the public domain, so I was already feeling very positive about the potential for the research. The informal discussion highlighted to me that the dialogue was focused and contributed to the knowledge of the participants, and I was delighted that it had fulfilled this purpose .The informal discussions culminated in the teachers and myself identifying a time and location for an informal workshop.

The workshop took the form of a Joint Practice Development Approach (JPD). Fielding et al defined (JPD) as 'to learn new ways of working... [through] mutual engagement that lies at the heart of the complex task of opening up and sharing practices with others' (Fielding et al 2005, p.72). The teachers indicated that they had heard of this approach but that they did not know a great deal about it. I firstly shared a brief overview highlighting some of the features. I reinforced that the unique feature of this approach is that it is a truly collaborative process and not a one-way process noting that it involved interaction and mutual development, related to practice. The teachers were very keen to support this approach of reciprocity. They acknowledged from the outset that this was different from someone visiting school and providing CPD. The JPD workshop took place in the school setting at a mutually agreed and convenient time.

Initial reflections and analysis of the JDP Workshop

The opportunity for the workshop was received well by the identified key teachers and this was evident in their commitment to plan, attend and deliver their agreed topic. There was collective agreement about the roles, responsibilities and content for the workshop. The two key teachers agreed to share the implementation of 'Restorative Practice' culture techniques in school and share some detailed information about a citywide talk initiative that had an impact on the school. I planned to explore the teacher's awareness of oracy techniques and provide an opportunity to reflect on the talk strategies they were currently using in school. Alongside that, I planned to introduce a model of learning. I also planned to include reference to Boyatzis' theory of self-directed learning: the 'real and ideal self' (Boyatzis and Akrivou 2006, pp.624-642).

The workshop was led initially by me simply to set the scene and establish the context of the JPD approach. The teachers remarked that this was refreshing and provided quite a different experience for them and I noted that they were very enthusiastic in their approach. At the start of the workshop, the teachers were requested to undertake a self-audit activity linked to their understanding and use of oracy strategies. They were presented with a document (Appendix 1) and asked to think about which strategies they recognised and used for talk, and which strategies they did not use or recognise for talk.

The teachers were very willing to engage with this activity and share their honest views. The activity was completed individually at first then it moved to a paired activity and opened up for discussion. The teachers were able to identify the key speaking and listening strategies with which they felt they very familiar, and they identified the strategies that they had not focused on for some time. This prompted some interesting informal discussion about oracy practices in school. It culminated in the teachers highlighting some of the potential barriers to speaking and listening development in school. The teachers cited that they often required more time to plan creative lessons that they believed involved some of the higher order talk strategies, such as group work, compared to some of the other more simplified talk strategies, such as paired talk.

I believed that this activity had served a useful purpose in giving the teachers the

opportunity for purposeful reflection about the oracy practices in school and it provided me, as the researcher, with some valuable insights. There appeared to be a lack of consistency in school and, without any prompting from me, the teachers were already starting to think about how to address some of these issues.

A powerful and potentially critical incident, which I identified from this process, was evident when I verbally introduced the Boyatzis model of 'Real and Ideal' self (Boyatzis and Akrivou 2006, pp.624-642). A very interesting discussion followed with the teachers and there was evidence that they were beginning to reflect on their own practice in terms of real and ideal. They shared their thoughts and feelings about this, informally indicating that they had not really thought about this before. I observed that the conversation then became much more candid with the teachers. Phrases were noted such as: 'I know what I want to do.... but sometimes I just don't do it ....I run out of time with planning ....this is really making me think ....and it is really interesting ....I think we had forgotten about some of the speaking and listening activities ....just too busy really.' This provided some interesting points to reflect on about the reality of the situation in school.

The teachers maintained that a lot of speaking and listening activity is currently practiced in school. However, and quite significantly I believe, the opportunity for some honest reflection on oracy practices was provided through the workshop. The teachers stated that some of the strategies are not used effectively across the whole school even though they believed that they should be .They stated that some particular speaking and listening strategies are used a lot but some other strategies are not used at all. I considered this a powerful and honest reflection by the teachers and this was helping to inform my overall picture of oracy in the school. Perhaps more significantly it was also supporting the teachers with their approach to practice.

I also noted that following the independent line of questioning from myself, the teachers began to work with each other and strategise as to how they could achieve greater consistency in school. Comments included, 'we used to have all of the strategies displayed in all classrooms but ... some do /others don't'. A natural discussion prompted the teachers to declare they felt the need to reinforce rules for talk and think about what they were doing in classrooms more.

One teacher said informally, 'seating and space flexibility is an issue in some rooms, which may prevent teachers from experimenting'. This was a reflection of the reality in school and could represent a potential barrier for talk development; therefore, it is helpful to acknowledge this. I asked informally if teachers worked alongside each other and did they have the opportunity to visit or work in each other's classrooms. The teachers said that they did not really do this and they declared that they often go into classrooms to observe sessions, but not to actively participate, but they indicated that they might consider doing it now.

A further interesting point to note was the teacher reaction when presented with the framework created by West Burnham and Coates (2005, p.35) on the various levels and states of learning. The initial response was that this looked like 'deep theory' with utterances of 'aaah!', followed by informal remarks, indicating that they had not looked at anything like this since teacher training when they were writing assignments. I asked the teachers to reflect on the contents of the document

individually at first. This talk strategy is often used to give people the opportunity to have some individual thoughts prior to sharing them. The teachers were then requested to adopt a paired working approach focusing on the framework. The teachers were tasked with identifying which speaking and listening strategies they believed were aligned to the levels and states of learning and then to discuss with each other how they may categorise the speaking and listening strategies linked to this. I noted the enthusiasm with which the teachers engaged with the activity and their focus on the school context at this point. They indicated, informally, that it was good to start looking at this now. They also indicated that they had thought about learning 'but not in this way', and they said that it had really made them think now. This was recognised as being quite powerful and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

I felt that the teachers utilised the workshop opportunity and worked well together in the spirit of openness and honesty. There appeared to be a consensus that the teachers thought that some specific speaking and listening strategies (Appendix 1) such as Individual Thinking Time; Paired Work; Bullet Point Thinking; and Yes/No questions, would fall into the superficial area of learning. When I asked the teachers to elaborate on this, they commented: 'because they are easy' and 'we do them all the time'. They then went on to make a clear distinction between these strategies, and those they perceived to be higher order group work activities (such as Rainbow Groups; Envoying; Snowballing, and Jigsaw groups), which they assessed as probably falling into the profound/deep area of learning. A particularly illuminating discussion stemmed from this; one teacher stated that paired talk can be powerful if used daily, but she felt that the deeper profound learning could only be linked to the higher order group work strategies. The whole area of the teachers' understanding of learning through talk, in the classroom, already mentioned earlier in this thesis in Chapters 1 and 2, is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

I believed that the two teachers had fully engaged with the workshop at this stage, and there was evidence that they were going to use some of the ideas from the workshop approach in school. I believed that the workshop served as a motivator and it provided a stimulus. The teachers moved very quickly into independent conversations, almost as if I was not there, about what they felt empowered to do in their respective roles. Another powerful and simple notion was that this workshop opportunity had given the teachers some focused space, away from the classroom, and they indicated it had made them think. The whole idea of giving teachers time to think, to enhance their pedagogical approaches, is something that I revisit in Chapter 5.

The teachers led the next stage of the workshop. They shared their understanding and knowledge about 'Restorative Practice' in their school setting. This was an interesting process for me to reflect on, as I became the learner in this setting. The teachers delivered their overview very confidently and whilst doing this they were more mindful, in my opinion, of reinforcing the links with speaking and listening strategies. I gained new knowledge from the process and I recognised that there was synergy between the ranges of speaking and listening strategies that were used in school and the methods of the Restorative Practice approach. This was signalled as a whole school approach. I found it very illuminating and it increased my knowledge. The teachers described that if a child has been involved in a naughty incident with

another child, they are often taken to a quiet place as opposed to being simply questioned as to why they had done something. Rather, they were asked to tell the teacher what had happened in their own words .The teachers then went on to say that a short discussion often followed, allowing the child to think about how the other person felt. This seemed to be a powerful approach involving the child's voice.

The teachers shared their belief that this whole school approach to Restorative Practice was part of the culture of their school and they also restated that they firmly believed in this approach. I discuss the importance of whole school approach and the culture of school in Chapter 5, but the pertinent point here is that the school's approach to Restorative Practice indicated that this aligned very closely with the culture of talk.

The teachers used the workshop opportunity to share, in a very informative and detailed manner, the information, background and context to a citywide talk initiative. The critical incident for me in analysing this delivery was that the teachers were well prepared and confident in delivering this session. It served a dual purpose because not only were they recalling the process but they had also been provided with an opportunity for purposeful reflection. This is something that I have already referred to in this thesis, and I return to it in Chapter 5. The teachers stated that they had actually forgotten about some of the key benefits linked to the initiative and some of the strategies that were used to deliver it. They recalled deploying activities and games which were a key part of the intervention and which they had seen in practice but had simply forgotten about. They indicated that some of these things could now be re-visited. I gleaned from the teachers that this initiative had been very powerful at the time but several of the key ideas and activities had apparently gotten lost along the way. I believe that this incident, on reflection, opens up some interesting avenues for the discussion that will take place in the next chapter about models of CPD and their impact on long-term sustainability in a school setting.

Stage 7 of the research involved the two teachers and myself undertaking some joint planning of an individual teaching session for co-delivery in each of the two classrooms. Both teachers requested that they would like to focus on some of the 'higher order' speaking and listening strategies. It was interesting to note, even at this early stage, that the notion of the joint planning opportunity was embraced. The teachers said that they often plan in isolation so this was viewed as a potentially positive experience. As the timeframe progressed, unfortunately one of the teachers needed to take long-term sickness leave. I made the decision to move forward with one teacher as my research was following a tight timeframe and I decided to review respectfully the situation when the other teacher returned.

Throughout the co-teaching session with the remaining teacher, I was able to carry out some incidental and informal observations of the classroom practice as the teaching developed. I have indicated from the outset that in undertaking this research I would not make subjective judgements about the school. I remained committed to that, but the co-teaching opportunity provided me with some very interesting insights into the oracy practices that I had not planned for or anticipated. I acknowledge from the outset that my anecdotal evidence on this occasion could be regarded as partial; however, I feel that this, combined with the analysis of the descriptive field notes of the session, provides some further unique data and is

particularly valuable.

Early analysis of the field notes indicated that there were some clearly established routines in the classroom and that all of the pupils were aware of these. The pupils arrived into the classroom ready for learning, and this is an important aspect in terms of acknowledging that the teacher was creating the environment for learning. I noticed during this early stage that the pupils were relaxed and comfortable when speaking. However, I also recognised that some of them were not actively listening. The teacher used a 'hands up' question and answer approach at the beginning of the session and I observed that some children simply chose not to engage. The teacher did not challenge the pupils who did not engage, and there was evidence that some pupils did not engage at all. This prompted me to identify that the teacher was using the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) approach, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 3 of this thesis. I revisit the aspect of teacher talk again in the next chapter.

A targeted area for development for the co-teaching session, as requested by the teacher, was group work. I agreed to introduce this to the pupils as part of the session and I gave them the opportunity to move from paired work to work in small groups of four. It became apparent to me that the pupils had not experienced this before and I recognised that they naturally would require more experiences to become familiar with this approach. One interesting development, linked to the group activity, was illustrated when the pupils were requested to recall some facts about the images that they were looking at in their groups. The images were related to the lesson theme of "habitats". The pupils responded with various comments such as 'I know that a robin can fly, and I know that a pig lives on a farm'. However, the following comments, which were overheard by me, revealed a lack of knowledge on behalf of the pupils. One child declared when looking at a picture of a robin, 'the robin bird was bleeding'. Another child said, 'there are no birds like that here', referring to a blackbird. Another child went on to say, 'the crocodiles live in ponds round here'. At the time, I felt a moral imperative to intervene at this point.

This incident led me to think about how powerful the teacher/adult interventions need to be to support the learning for pupils. There were some obvious confusions from pupils, within the group. As I was leading the teaching during this part of the session, I took the opportunity to work with the small group and revisit some of the comments that had been made and clarify any misconceptions. I did this by engaging directly with the group and asking what others pupils in the group thought about what had been said. I believe, on reflection, that this event demonstrated 'praxis, informed action, which is often attributed to the work of Freire (as cited in Smith 2002). I revisit the importance of this in the next chapter. The critical role of the teacher in scaffolding and supporting learning was also apparent from this small incident. I believe that my intervention, as the teacher, enhanced the pupil's knowledge and clarified the understanding. I used purposeful questioning to access the knowledge of the group and further discussion with the pupils offered clarity.

I was aware that a Teaching Assistant (TA) was in the classroom throughout the co-teaching session. She had been involved in the information sharing about the session but not in the overall planning. Her role was to support an identified SEN group of pupils throughout the session. I observed again incidentally through the session that one child in particular in the SEN designated group appeared very

knowledgeable about the subject of habitats. His utterances indicated a wide range of knowledge. Unfortunately, he was not given the opportunity to share his knowledge with other pupils, as he remained in the SEN group and sat beside the TA. This event raised several issues for me, not only regarding the importance of flexible groupings with regard to oracy development, but also much wider views about inclusionary practice with regard to SEN in primary school settings. I feel that this is worthy of further exploration in the next Chapter.

Stage 9 of the research process involved semi-structured interviews with the teacher and with the head teacher separately. I believed that this would be an effective way to conclude the research process. It gave the teacher and head teacher an opportunity to share their views separately as they both had experienced the research from slightly different perspectives. I used asset of pre-planned questions for the interviews but the responses from the teacher and head-teacher highlighted that this needed to be a flexible approach depending upon the responses received and to avoid duplication of information.

The teacher had been part of the whole research process and she indicated that the entire experience had been completely positive and she did not cite any negatives. I identified in black text (below) some key themes that arose from an initial analysis of the semi-structured interview. The themes also highlighted in red are common to both sets of interviews.

- The whole process was regarded as a positive experience
- Commitment to the belief that talk is integral to everything and the importance of school culture
- The importance of reflection about initiatives in school
- The importance of revisiting theory
- The opportunity to plan a co teaching session and to observe their own class was a unique experience
- The whole process was a valuable opportunity to reflect on learning and the status of talk in school at that time
- Acknowledgement of JPD approach as being useful
- Reality of the school context and the impact impacts upon oracy
- Commitment to improve talk for life skills of all children

The head teacher had quite a distinct role in the whole process. She acted as a gatekeeper and was part of the valuable initial early conversations. I have identified in black text below some of the key themes that arose from an initial analysis of the semi-structured interview. The themes highlighted in red are common to both sets of interviews.

- Acknowledgement that the school's staff are passionate about talk and it is part of the culture in school. It is high on the agenda
- Acknowledgement of the importance of education research
- The whole process was regarded as a positive experience
- Acceptance that a lot of things go on in school across a short timeframe but that this research process had brought it back into focus
- The involvement of two staff was viewed as of great benefit for school

- Belief in whole school approach to CPD including teachers and TAs, and this included inspirational external partners to support professional developments in school which they could discuss and return to: the head teacher specifically stated, 'I do that rather than send people out and getting someone to cascade things down'
- The JPD approach had been utilised by school in the past but maybe we need to do it again as it was perceived to be valuable
- Reference to talk being for the development of life skills in the community and not just for Ofsted or exams
- The use of questioning was discussed and referred to as a skill that some less experienced staff may not fully understand so they required appropriate training
- Talk for language development was explicitly referred to
- A reminder of how important it is for teachers to articulate what they are doing in class- a noted external consultant adopts this approach

Some of these themes are referred to in the next chapter, specifically the areas that correlate with other significant elements of the data analysis.

I was delighted to acknowledge that; overall, the initial analysis of each stage of the research process and the opportunity to engage with the various research groups had provided some very rich data. The whole investigation had been illuminating and I recognised, on further reflection upon my field notes that I had been able to gain data on some additional areas that I had not necessarily thought that I would. All of the research participants indicated informally that they had enjoyed the process. My initial feelings at this point were that this had been a successful endeavour

Chapter Summary

The process of initial data analysis has enabled me to identify some key themes and issues, which are highly relevant to the research process. I intend to interrogate some of these more fully in the next chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Themes and Findings

The rich data gained through the whole research process provided a wealth of information that far exceeded my expectations. In this chapter, I develop some of the core and peripheral themes that emerged from the initial data analysis, as presented in Chapter 4. I have interrogated the data thoroughly and I have attempted to follow the approach, as advocated by Fetterman to 'process the information in a meaningful and useful manner' (1998, cited in Robson 2017, p.462). In carrying out this process of interrogation, I was also conscious of the fact that 'there is an inescapable emphasis upon interpretation', (Robson 2017, p.462). Whilst I have taken sole responsibility for interpreting the data, I feel that through the effective and systematic processes that I have used, I have endeavoured to minimise any biases. To substantiate this process I cite, where appropriate, references to field-notes and some verbatim comments.

Overall, I found a great deal of recurring evidence to support my initial inquiry into the 'state of oracy practices' in one primary school setting. Deeper analysis of the 'rich data', attained from examining the various stages of the research process, has enabled me to categorise several interrelated findings for further discussion in this chapter.

I feel that I have appropriate evidence, from the authentic case study approach, to justify the following:

1. A whole school culture of talk was evident in this setting
2. Classroom practice was insightful and enlightening
3. Pupil comments were very powerful
4. A creative approach was used to satisfy Ofsted evidence requirements
5. The school used a particular model of CPD
6. A pilot of the JPD approach seemed useful
7. Reflection time for teachers about theory and practice was deemed valuable

School culture

The Discussion Forums proved to be a strength of the research approach, and the information that they provided from a range of research subjects was particularly insightful about the culture of school. Throughout the Discussion Forums I was in the unique position of taking on a 'dual role', 'always the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being part of the experience itself' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000 p.81). I led and managed all of the Discussion Forums and, whilst this approach can lend itself to tensions and dilemmas, I feel that I maintained objectivity throughout the process. Purposeful reflection on all of the different Discussion

Forums allowed me to gain a sense of the reality of oracy in the school. This process has also allowed me to identify a recognisable strand of uniformity of response from all of the discrete forum groups regarding the value that they placed on talk in their school setting.

There was an overwhelming response from the Teacher Discussion Forum to the initial lead question, 'Do you value talk in classrooms?' The teachers stated powerfully that they believe 'talk is going on all the time'. They continued to say that they have talk for writing and that they use talk in every subject. My fundamental impression was that they believed there is lots of talk going on in their school. The Teaching Assistant (TA) group echoed these sentiments by stating that there is a big range of talk strategies being used across the school going so far as to say that you will see them everywhere. The Parent /Governor forum also resonated with these views: 'I know they are doing a lot of discussion ….sharing ideas and evaluating their thoughts and work together'. I considered this as powerful evidence that from all of Discussion Forums that there is a prevalence of talk in school and most significantly the research participants were all aware of that fact.

It was interesting to note that a participant in the TA Discussion Forum made a rather perceptive comment when asked about the value of talk: 'It is incredibly important as it aids their thought processes'. This comment interested me in two ways. Firstly, I was very impressed with the knowledge of the TA group. Secondly, this comment relates indirectly to the work of Vygotsky (1980) already referred to in this thesis about the importance of linguistic ability to influence the development of thoughts.

According to statistics obtained by the Department for Education, TAs are 'around a quarter (28%) of the overall state-funded school workforce' (Skipp and Hopwood 2019, p.5). Research has suggested that when TAs are deployed appropriately as a 'supplement' to teachers as opposed to being a 'replacement', they can 'have a positive impact on academic achievement, however, effects vary' (Blatchford et al. 2009 cited in Skipp and Hopwood 2019, p.5). The evidence from the TA Discussion forum indicated that they recognised the value of talk practices and they appeared to be having a positive impact on the engagement of pupils. I believe that the TAs understood their roles and responsibilities in this school, and they were trusted by the teacher and head teacher to support the pupils appropriately.

The discussion in the Teacher Forum highlighted that talk is used in many different settings in school and they recognised its positive effect on pupil behaviour. This was evident in the quote, 'it improves behaviour', which is quite a powerful statement. The teachers went on to acknowledge that being a Restorative Practice school is all part of that process is to build and extend talk. During the workshop session with the teachers and myself, they outlined clearly how the restorative practice approaches, involving talk strategies such as listening, thinking, responding and articulating thoughts and feelings, were consistently being used throughout school. It is useful to reflect back on the work of Coultas (2015) who notes that many teachers cite concerns about behaviour as a potential barrier to talk development. In this setting, the teachers are declaring that it actually improves behaviour in their school and this

is quite a powerful view especially when considered in the light of the challenging socio-economic background of the school.

Coultas (2015) mentions that a further barrier to talk development in some schools is linked to the perceived disruption and the associated noise it can create. This view is also strengthened by the range of perceptions from colleagues about the negative impact of noisy classrooms. In this case, it would appear that the teachers acknowledge the noise but they also accept that if the children are learning then that is far more important than their discomfort. This is illustrated in the quote from one teacher who states: 'It can be really noisy and I don't like noise. I find that hard but if the children are learning then that is my problem'. There appears to be an acceptance on the part of the teachers that the successful process of learning through talk will be noisy but they imply that the noise is productive and controlled. Many practitioners and teachers with a good understanding of talk strategies accept the view that talk is noisy. A group that name themselves The Noisy Classroom, who have been supporting speaking and listening for over eight years, detail in their manifesto: 'A noisy classroom can be both inspirational and rigorous; we love all of the vibrant, active work going on inside it and campaign against the idea that only a silent classroom is an effective one', (The Noisy Classroom 2019). This is something that I wholeheartedly endorse, and it would appear that the school also endorses this positively. It also signals that some kind of culture shift is required in some school settings to allow noisy classrooms to be respected and operate effectively.

A further significant aspect to draw out of the findings and directly linked to the culture of the school was that the teachers claimed, 'teacher talk has reduced now as we put more emphasis on the pupil talk'. In Chapter 2, I discuss some of the work and concerns highlighted by Mercer and Dawes (2010) and Galton (2002) in relation to their research about the overuse of a particular model of talk referred to as the Initiation, Response, and Feedback (IRF). It would appear that the culture in this school promotes a balance of pupil talk as well as teacher talk and this also seems to impact positively on other aspects of classroom practice. When the teachers stated, 'Now the writing comes last', this suggests that the culture of talk allows the pupils to explore talk prior to engaging with writing tasks and this represents quite an important feature of practice. Britton advocates that 'writing floats on a sea of talk' (cited in Philipps and Larson 2015, p.187) with the main suggestion being that the best writing experiences need talk to enhance them. I fundamentally believe that this is true and the teachers seem to acknowledge this as powerful in this setting.

The parents and governors in their Discussion Forum also endorsed the value of talk as a cultural tool stating very powerfully, 'with speaking and listening it is vital as children would be isolated from friends if they do not talk' and 'this is so important in school and important outside the school'. This group appear to recognise talk as an important social act, which is also regarded highly as a life skill inside and outside of school. This view was echoed in the Pupil Discussion Forum, which is illustrated by the comment from one child that 'if you cannot talk in classrooms you will feel like a loner'. I believe that this child's statement indicates some recognition of why they are using talk strategies to support their working with others in school rather than working in isolation. Not only are there strong parallels with this comment and the

Parent /Governor Discussion Forum previously cited, but there is a recognition from both groups that the social aspect is valued as a means for interaction in the classroom, and powerfully so for the pupils. This echoes strongly with the findings of the Sutton Trust (2017) report, already referred to in Chapter 2, which outlines the importance of talk in classrooms to enhance the pupil's holistic development inside and outside of school preparing them for life

My views about talk as a powerful tool for language learning are discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. I believe that I have been able to reflect on a wide range of evidence from the field notes and discussions to conclude that members of the school community are highly aware of talk for learning. The TAs mention 'we are building learning across the school'. This is a particularly perceptive remark and when this is cross referenced with further comments, 'there is a real definite improvement as children progress through the school' followed by 'they are very confident talkers when they leave the school', it is significant. The notion that learning builds across school is important to acknowledge in this context and it indicates a commitment to whole school practice. Quite often in my experience, I have noticed pockets of good practice in some classrooms but not across the whole school. Some pupils will inevitably struggle if they move from one class to another across the primary phases if there is not a consistent approach in school. The impression I get is that talk is regarded as a developmental process in this particular school, and this is a process in which they all feel that they play a part. I refer to this briefly in Chapter 4 and I believe that this is a further indicator of workplace democracy that is greatly enhanced with whole school approach.

From my interpretation of the comments, the culture of talk was also evident when examining the head-teacher interview comments .The head teacher acknowledges the important place that talk has in school. When questioned about the 'state of the nation' with oracy in school, she commented: 'it is certainly high on the agenda and will always be'. The issues that we face is that we have children who come with very, very poor language skills, speaking skills and children just do not talk enough at home as they are not having those interactions at home'. The head teacher seems to regard it as critical that talk is a priority in this school. She mentions the poor language skills that the pupils have on entry into the school, and the available public data confirms that pupils have a very low level of literacy skills on entry to school. There is a recognised correlation to this approach with specific reference to the 2017 Sutton Trust report and the English-Speaking Union's 2016 Speaking Frankly report. My understanding, from the comments, is that that the head teacher feels strongly that school has to compensate for this deficit, as she is concerned that the pupils may not be getting this talk experience in the home setting.

The head teacher interview provided many noteworthy comments for reference but perhaps of greatest significance are the comments linked to thinking skills as well as talk skills. The head teacher stated, 'if we don't put that in in the first instance then those children are going to fail with those language skills and thinking skills because let's face it, it is not just language, thinking skills goes along with it also'. The head teacher appears to acknowledge the wider place that talk and oracy can have in

supporting pupils thinking skills, also referred to previously in Chapter 2 with reference to Mercer (1995) and Freire (cited in Leach and Moon 2007).

Alexander reminds us that ‘education is a cultural process, not a biological one’ (Alexander 2012, p.6). The evidence from all of the Discussion Forums, apart from the pupil forum, and the head-teacher interview indicated that the pupils came from quite a challenging community. The information gained indicated that they identified that some pupils struggle to communicate on entry into school, and that school had to give children experiences that they were not getting back at home. It was easy to understand why the head teacher had prioritised this approach in school. An example how far this approach was also extending beyond the culture of the school was interpreted in a comment from one parent in the Parent Discussion Forum who explained how he sits down at home with his child to share their work from school and they discuss and talk about it. He said, ‘we always have our dinner together and talk about the day …we didn’t do that before!’ It would appear that the school’s culture of talk is also reaching out into the community and this is very powerful indeed.

I believe that the head teacher has a critical role in establishing the culture in a school. It is acknowledged that the priorities established by a head teacher may differ from one school setting to another. There is strong evidence here, that the head-teacher has prioritised talk in this school. The interesting aspect to note here is that I also believe that there is evidence that the head teacher has also shared this vision, to make it a reality, by including wider members of the school community. Throughout my research in this school setting, I only encountered people who strongly advocated this approach. There is noteworthy evidence across all of the Discussion Forums of a consensus from the school community about the whole school approach to talk with a great deal of consistency. All of the members of the school community, who participated in this research activity share the belief that talk is valued and therefore appears to be a highly respected part of the culture of school.

The influence of specific models of CPD

There was strong evidence from the data that this school valued professional development that involved the whole school, and they mention in particular one model that had been very influential. They refer to a model that involves outside consultants or practitioners visiting the school setting, modelling practice, working with teachers and TAs in classrooms, setting targets and arranging return visits to the school setting. The interesting aspect of this is that the preferred model seems to adhere to many of the parts identified in the Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development (DfE 2016) already referred to in Chapter 2.

There is a range of specific comments from the Discussion Forums to confirm the preferred CPD model in response to the leading question, ‘So how has professional development helped the school?’ The teachers themselves believed that it was important to have the talk strategies modelled and they claimed that they could see the impact on the children’s learning. The staff went on to say that they had been

inspired to work on ideas it re-awakened in them. The TAs stated, ‘It has been great to have talk strategies modelled when CPD support has been in and the other thing that we found really useful is having people coming in’. There are two interesting inferences from these comments. Firstly, the CPD model, of utilising external support and modelling practice in the classroom, was viewed as being powerful. Secondly, the teachers and the TAs could see the impact in their context. This resonates strongly with Cambourne’s notion of contextualised learning already explored in Chapter 2 (Cambourne 1999, p.127). It would also appear that these comments indicate an inclusive model of CPD in school. This model extends to all staff rather than exclusively for teachers, and it appears to be very powerfully lead by the head teacher. This is significant and it is also a further indicator of workplace democracy and culture in school.

Further analysis of the data from the head teacher interview indicated that she expressed concern about a common issue for schools. This was linked to staff turnover and the appointment of new staff. She stated, ‘when new staff come into school they may not have the experience, so they do require some training’. The head teacher’s perception of this aspect is of interest to me. Despite the fact that all teachers should have attained a national professional teaching qualification to teach, we may infer that this particular head teacher believes that the less experienced members of staff require additional training to be fully equipped to work in her particular school setting. This aligns with discussions earlier in this thesis, and specifically in Chapters 1 and 2, about the need for high quality professional development for teachers beyond their initial teacher training experiences.

The head teacher raises some interesting points about teacher’s use of questioning in the classroom and she implied that sometimes the member of staff does not really understand what they are doing with the questioning. She went on to state that, ’Some need a bit more guidance in terms of making sure what they are questioning is really deepening and scaffolding appropriately, not just filling in the gaps’. This is quite an intriguing comment, because not only does the head teacher refer to using effective questioning to scaffold the learning, but it also indicates that the head teacher is aware of learning theory. I have acknowledged earlier in the thesis that scaffolding is critically important for learning. I have also mentioned the significance of the use of effective questioning skills by teachers and the negative connotations associated with the overuse of Initiation, Response Feedback (IRF) model frequently used in classrooms. Alexander reminds us of the importance of authentic questions which he defines as ‘those for which the teacher has not pre-specified or implied a particular answer’, (Alexander 2006 p.15). Of further relevance here, is the work of Nystrand (1997) and his colleagues, who define authentic questions as dialogic because they ‘signal to students the teacher’s interest in what they think and not just whether they can report what someone else thinks or has said’ (cited in Alexander 2006, p.15). At one point the head teacher implies that a number of staff, ‘struggle ‘with some deep questioning techniques. This point of good practice with regard to questioning skills is critical in terms of pupil inclusion and engagement. My interpretation of the head teacher’s comments is that she recognises that teachers require professional development to ensure that they are managing aspects of

classroom talk and practices effectively. I have assumed from the evidence that the head teacher feels that this can be addressed appropriately with their preferred model of professional development.

A model of CPD that was piloted as part of this research was the JPD model, as advocated by Fielding et al 2005, and referred to earlier in Chapters 1 and 2. I utilised the approach for a session between the teachers and myself. The JPD model is often used across groups of schools and Teaching School Alliances. It enables practitioners to get together and explore common areas for development. On this occasion, I successfully brought two teachers and myself together for what proved to be a mutually beneficial experience.

On reflection, the whole process of the JPD session was regarded by the two teachers as an extremely positive experience. Closer examination of the comments from the teachers revealed that the workshop approach had provided a valuable opportunity for them to think about the use of talk strategies and potentially their pedagogical approach. When the teachers responded to an activity during the workshop linked to the audit of talk strategies, the teachers reflected honestly and shared various responses. They indicate that some talk experiences take more organising than others, with the added complexity that you have to plan for them and think about them. They were very honest and stated ‘sometimes we don’t have the time’. This relates directly to the work of Coultas (2010) regarding one of the potential barriers to talk development, which is time. The important development from this activity was that with wider reflection on their practice the teachers went on to discuss that maybe they could be doing more, especially with regard to the higher order group work strategies. I regarded this as a positive development as it allowed the teachers to highlight an area for development within their own practice. My own belief is that, if pupils are taught talk strategies effectively, and the more familiar with them that they become, then they become much easier to plan for.

The workshop gave the teachers the opportunity for further purposeful reflection about their talk practice in school, with a chance to look at the reality of what was going on in their own classrooms. Through the prism of Boyatzis’ theory of self-directed learning, the ‘real and ideal self’ (Boyatzis and Akrivou 2006, pp.624-642), the teachers moved into a discussion with each other .They stated, ‘this is really making me think and it is really interesting. I think we had forgotten about some of the speaking and listening activities’. The acceptance of the real versus ideal self-allowed the teachers, independently of myself, to enter into a brief discussion about things that they could do differently in school highlighting specifically what they feel needs to be addressed for talk to improve further in school.

The teachers seemed to be very focused in the workshop on the specifics of the talk strategies and they reflected on their overview of the use of them in school. The comments which followed serve to reinforce this approach and demonstrated aspects of mindfulness (Cambourne 1995), already referred to in Chapter 2. Some comments noted verbatim were as follows:

- ‘We used to have the strategies displayed ...some do and others don’t’.
- ‘We maybe need to reinforce rules for talk’.

- ‘Seating flexibility is an issue in some rooms and may stop people’.
- ‘It is good to see people doing talk things in classrooms. We haven’t done that for a long time’.

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The workshop not only provided the teachers with some valuable focused time away from the classroom, but it allowed them to think purposefully about practice and consistency across school. Both teachers play a key role in school as subject co-ordinators and the workshop provided a chance for them to share ideas and thinking around potential future developments. I viewed this approach with enthusiasm and positivity.

As part of the workshop, I also trialled an activity requiring the teachers to reflect on the West Burnham and Coates’ (2005) model of learning, already referred to in Chapter 2, in relation to talk strategies. Whilst I regarded this to be quite experimental, and I fully acknowledge that this was just a short activity, it provided some thought-provoking insights. The teachers indicated that they had not thought about learning theory for quite some time. They highlighted, as part of an activity, some of the talk strategies that they regularly used in class. These included Paired Talk (PT), Role Play, Hot-Seating, Information Gap and Listening Triangles. They also indicated that they believed these were representative of shallow and superficial learning.

The teachers then progressed in their discussions to decide almost unanimously that they felt the deeper and more profound learning was linked to the higher order group talk strategies. These included such as Jigsawing, Envoying, Group Work and Mini Presentations. The teachers continued their discussion of the 2005 West Burnham and Coates’ model of the levels and states of learning, and asked if they could keep a copy of it for future use. I felt that the teachers responded incredibly professionally and thoughtfully throughout the workshop and this was admirable. My wider reflection on this aspect of the workshop prompted me to ponder some hypothetical questions: if the teachers had more time, would the conversation and thinking around learning and practice have become deeper? In addition, if the teachers regularly explored theory and linked it to practice would it be beneficial? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to pursue these aspects in great depth but I return to them briefly in the final chapter.

When the teachers delivered their part of the JPD workshop, they confidently reflected on two talk initiatives (Appendix 9) that had been carried out in school, and for my research purposes, this provided interesting areas for discussion. The opportunity for reflection about these talk initiatives meant that the teachers had to recall the training and associated activities that had taken place with them. This served as a useful reminder for them, and interestingly, when they were delivering the workshop, they also shared honest phrases like, ‘Oh yes I remember that’ and ‘oh I had forgotten about that’. As part of the talk initiatives, the teachers shared that they had been trained to deliver specific activities but some of them had not become sustained practice in school. The statement ‘the resources are still there somewhere’ was quite telling. It gave me the distinct impression that despite the fact the initiative was regarded positively at the time, they acknowledged that during the busy lives of

schools, some of the activities and associated practices were easily forgotten. This example illustrates the reality for schools as quite often, in my opinion, initiatives and associated practice take time to be embedded into school culture and this requires revisiting and reflection otherwise the powerful learning opportunities are lost.

When the head teacher reflected on the JPD approach she commented that, 'the two teachers enjoyed this with you'. I had not shared any specifics about the workshop with the head teacher directly, so deduced that some communication with her staff had gone on about this outside of the research focus .The head teacher declared that they had tried the model of JPD previously in school. She stated 'for us it did not work as well as it could. I think it is a positive way to go forward and you have reminded me that it is something which we could do again'. It was interesting to hear that the JPD model had previously been experimented with in school but, more significantly, the head teacher had now been prompted to think about this approach again. I got the distinct impression that the head teacher believed that the JPD approach suited the culture of the school as it was based on trust and mutual engagement and shared benefits. I regarded this keenness on behalf of the head teacher and teachers to revisit the model, as a very positive outcome of the pilot approach.

There are financial implications for all schools when contemplating effective models of CPD. The head teacher in this setting appears to believe that professional development is worth the investment. The model of CPD favoured by the school utilising external consultant expertise seems to be valued here. However, I also believe that the JPD model has tremendous potential for giving teachers the opportunity to work together on common goals for the benefit of the pupils and the teachers. Schools are incredibly busy places with limited funding for CPD and a model that utilises and enhances existing staff expertise should be given due consideration. I will discuss this further in the final chapter of this thesis.

A creative approach to satisfy Ofsted evidence requirements.

When teachers were asked during the Discussion Forum about any barriers to talk development, they immediately stated, 'A big barrier is evidence for Ofsted'. They went on to share their approach of getting evidence of talk and learning which included taking photographs, videos, and examples of drafts of pupils' work to show the processes which they had gone through. They informed me that they use pupil discussions when reflecting on work, and take photographs and videos of this process. This included how pupils responded to teacher feedback. This was an innovative approach for the school to develop. I believe that this evidence provides an example of how the teachers have worked creatively to meet the challenges presented by Ofsted. Information freely available in the public domain had indicated that the school had gone through several Ofsted inspections and it was still undergoing some scrutiny by Ofsted. Hence the reason that this was probably raised in the Discussion Forum. Quite often, when schools are inspected by Ofsted, they

are requested to provide a scrutiny of evidence to determine levels of learning in a particular context. This factor has been a cause of great concern for many teachers who are conflicted between providing formal evidence in books and the belief that significant amounts of learning takes place through talk. However, this can be difficult to quantify as evidence of learning. It would seem here that this school has adopted a whole school creative approach to that aspect and provided a working solution. This approach appears to be fully endorsed by the head teacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in school. This is indicative of a whole school approach and it is further illustrated by the teachers in their comments, 'we all know the head and SLT understand and support our approach to learning through talk. We have a very creative approach to evidence of learning now and anyone who comes in needs to see the evidence we have and they understand.' This statement indicates that the teachers feel supported in their endeavours and I also believe that this is further evidence of workplace democracy.

Classroom Practice was insightful

The opportunity to include co-teaching session as part of the research process proved to be enlightening. Not only did it place me, the researcher, back in the role of teacher, but it also provided some additional and fascinating insights, as I was also a participant observer in the lesson. In addition, I was aware that the process also allowed the teacher to have quite a unique experience observing her class at some key points during the session. Robson advocates, 'direct observation in the field permits a lack of artificiality which is all too rare with other techniques', (Robson 2017 p.320). The co-teaching experience appeared to be of mutual benefit for both of us.

During the planning stages for the co-teaching session, I noticed that the teachers were being very focused and mindful in their approach to designing specific talk activities for the session. They were both keen to incorporate some of the group talk strategies in the co-teaching session. However, one notable fact was that the teachers wanted me, as part of the co-teaching experience, to model the practice for them. I have already mentioned earlier in this chapter the importance the school places on the CPD model which involves modelling practice .On further reflection I assumed that the teachers wanted to see me modelling something which they did not feel particularly confident about, and which perhaps was viewed as new practice to them.

Whilst working with the pupils during the co-teaching session there were some notable points of interest (Appendix 10). The pupils appeared very confident in working with talk partners and I regarded this as evidence that the pupils had been taught about the rules of talk, and how to work with a talk partner effectively. Across the session, I observed the teacher managing the Paired Talk (PT) well. This was interesting to see and correlated strongly with some of the Pupil Discussion Forum responses, which indicated that they all had partners to talk to. They were able to articulate what a talk partners was, and they also stated that the talk partners change every week in some classes but in others they stay the same. This was evidence

that the pupils recognised this approach and they were familiar with it as part of classroom practice.

The co-teaching experience, which included some opportunities for observation by the teacher and myself, was significant. After reflecting on this aspect, the teacher commented, ‘I could see that they could use the strategies that I had taught them and see them embedded in the classroom and thought yeah that’s good I have done that’. The opportunity for the teacher to observe her class was quite a unique and useful experience. Quite often teachers do not have the time to reflect on their pupils learning or behaviour as they are usually in charge of the teaching. This teacher seemed to be proud of the fact that she could see her pupils using some of the talk strategies well.

There was some evidence during the session of the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) model (Mercer and Dawes 2010), referred to earlier in Chapter 4. I observed the teacher using this practice at the start of some specific input into the session whilst trying to access pupils’ prior knowledge. In the privileged position of observer, I noticed that several pupils did not engage with this practice, remaining very quiet. I also noticed that out of the pupils who did respond the same pupils were putting up their hands. A further point of interest during this phase was that the pupils who were assigned to work with the TA did not take part in this aspect of the session at all. They appeared to listen to what was going on but they did not engage in any further dialogue. I felt that there was a fair amount of teacher talk during this part of the session through the basic question and answer session delivered by the teacher.

I did notice when reflecting back on some of the earlier Pupils Discussion Forum comments that one child had said ’some people get worried to put their hands up and get embarrassed when the teacher asks questions’. This provided an interesting pupil perspective on the teacher’s use of questioning from the pupil’s viewpoint. I could align this with the IRF approach, and specifically the work of Mercer and Dawes (2010) about pupils’ reluctance to engage in this type of classroom activity. It signalled to me that the area of effective authentic questioning and response perhaps needed some further work with pupils. I believe that the simple strategy of Paired Talk (PT) can effectively be used to support teacher and pupil questioning and it takes away the pressure for a child to put their hands up and engage on their own. It is fascinating to note that the notion of effective teacher questioning techniques has already been raised by the head teacher, and discussed in a slightly different context earlier in this chapter.

The modelling of practice and in the case of this co-teaching session involved talk strategies and it specifically had a focus on group work. The teacher had indicated that group work was something of which she had not done a great deal. I was able to utilise the opportunity on this occasion and model an introduction to the group work. It was evident to me that the pupils needed more experience of this particular strategy. I have already highlighted in Chapter 1 the importance of taught with regard to the talk strategies as opposed to caught to maximise the learning from them.

Chapter Summary

The methods and methodological approach that I used for this case study have generated a wide range of fascinating data. As Marsh and Elliott point out ‘data are produced not given’ (2008, cited in Robson 2007 p.422).The mixed methods which I used for the data collection not only yielded a wealth of information but they also provided me with some unique insights into the state of oracy practices in one primary school setting. This fulfilled one of my main aims for the research. The fact that I used a range of talk strategies to attain the data, such as Paired Talk, Group work, Individual Conversations, Workshop Approaches and Classroom Experiences all added to the richness. The process of analysing the data appropriately has proved to be enthralling. Miles describes qualitative data as an ‘attractive nuisance’ (1979, cited in Robson 2007, p.459). Whilst I found the data attractive, I did not consider it a nuisance. The words and narrative accounts provided me with the rich and full data, which I had anticipated at the beginning of the process. I believe that the reference to nuisance, highlighted above, refers to the fact that a large amount of qualitative data, often in the form of words, which can be obtained during this process, has the danger of becoming unmanageable. I believe that I have mitigated this danger by dealing with the process in a systematic manner. I had the opportunity to analyse the data at each phase of the research process, and this served to inform the various stages of development thereafter. I believe that I have interpreted the data collected fairly and accurately and I have provided comments and some verbatim quotes from the original field notes to support this.

One interesting feature to note from my overall analysis was that there was evidence of a distinct correlation with some of my findings in the different research phases. For example, my finding that the school does value oracy practices was validated across the Discussion Forums, the JPD workshop, the individual work with teachers and the final teacher and head teacher interviews. I believed this to be a powerful and robust approach in terms of the overall validity of the research.

Taking all of the above into consideration, I am still very aware and fully acknowledge that I have taken sole responsibility for carrying out the interpretation of the data. My findings and conclusions could be perceived to have limitations. I have been able to analyse the data in great depth and explore the links with my wider literature review and this has also supported the process of substantiating some of these views. The illustration of the evidence presented in this chapter has given me the opportunity to justify my findings in the key areas as cited at the beginning of this Chapter. I discuss my various conclusions and overall recommendations in further detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

My research into oracy practices, through a focused in-depth study in one primary school, has been very rewarding. Perhaps the most noteworthy outcome of the whole process was that it totally reaffirmed the central place that oracy has at the heart of my philosophy and pedagogical approach. In this Chapter, I reflect on some of my conclusions from this case study approach. I also offer what I believe to be some well-founded recommendations.

By engaging in a process of self-reflection, I have been able to review the qualitative interpretivist methodology, and the associated methods, which I used for the research. In this Chapter, I refer to key lessons learnt from this research process and identify aspects of the research that could have been developed differently.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the catalyst for my research was the report 'Oracy; The State of Speaking in Our Schools' (Millard and Menzies 2016), inspired me tremendously. The report cited several important key messages about oracy and I have now been able to explore, through my own realistic case study, the state of oracy in one school setting. The school setting which I selected for my research provided an authentic context and I believe that this was a strength of the approach. I have acknowledged throughout the research the potential limitations of this small-scale study in terms of the overall validity of findings and recommendations. However, I am confident that because the study was carried out with rigour and professionalism, the findings are therefore credible and that they may be of interest to other teachers and researchers.

The school

From the research evidence, I discovered that the school that I had selected for my case study had embraced oracy, and it was at the heart of everything that they did. In the current educational climate, I regard this not only as reassuring, but as a source of optimism. The school is based in a socially deprived area of the country, with many inherent challenges. Despite this, the culture of oracy was extremely prevalent in the school community. I believed that the excellent leadership of the school, provided by the head teacher, was certainly one of the factors contributing to this culture and ethos. The head teacher had made talk for learning a priority in the school and she had based this not only on the needs of the pupils, but also on the perceived needs of the wider community. Fundamentally, it appeared that the head teacher believed that oracy was a valuable life skill that permeated every aspect of school life. All of the members of the school community, who participated in the research, appeared to play an active part through their respective roles to ensure

that talk was developed at every opportunity. I feel that the evidence that I have collated, and subsequently analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, strongly indicated the existence of a culture of oracy. I believe that this also provided a highly effective example of workplace democracy, and I feel very fortunate that I was able to base my objective research in this context.

One of the key principles upon which I based my research was that I would not make any formal judgements about the practice of oracy in this school. However, I feel that in this final Chapter I can justifiably comment on some of my own thinking and perceptions as result of being in the unusual dual position of being the lead researcher and simultaneously participating in the research. Not only did I lead all of the Discussion Forums, and engage with the nominated teachers for the planning and delivery of the workshop session, I also had the unique experience of co-teaching a session in one classroom in school. These insightful and direct experiences provided me with a very helpful overview of the whole process and I have been able to reflect purposefully and check and validate my conclusions.

Millard and Menzies (2016) report the concern about the untapped potential of oracy as one of the findings of their study. From my case study, I conclude that there are still some unfilled opportunities with regard to oracy development in the research school. The evidence for this manifested itself chiefly in the co-teaching classroom session and during the workshop session with the teachers. I believe one critical aspect linked to unlocking the potential of oracy relies on teachers having a secure knowledge base and a firm understanding of a wide range of oracy strategies in order to positively influence their teaching of oracy in the classroom.

Whilst there was considerable evidence that a whole school culture of talk pervaded the school, I felt that greater consideration could now be given to the actual quality of learning through the talk. I believe that the teachers would benefit tremendously from greater mindfulness including of an awareness of the levels and states of learning proposed by West Burnham and Coates (2005). It was clear that a range of talk strategies was being used effectively during the work with the teachers and I considered this admirable in the setting. The detailed analysis of my evidence revealed that the teachers were using familiar talk strategies such as Paired Talk, Hot-Seating and Role Play with confidence. However, they were not exploring the more advanced talk strategies such as Group Work, Snowballing and Jig-Sawing.

I accept that group work can be challenging and I believe that if pupils are taught group work strategies then this can be managed effectively. I wholeheartedly agree with Coultas (2010) that the success of group work is linked to the appropriateness of the task. There is a danger that pupils will just informally chat in groups if they are not provided with a structured opportunity. The activities for group work need to be fit for purpose with appropriate expectations and outcome. I also believe that the management of group work for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) requires very careful consideration. My research revealed that in the school setting this was not operating as a fully inclusive model and this was concerning. I felt that, overall, the teachers were not exploiting the full potential for talk for learning. They

needed to think about the development of higher order talk skills, in an inclusive manner, to enhance the learning for all pupils.

The whole notion of teacher's professional knowledge and understanding of the concept of oracy and associated pedagogical practice has been a theme running throughout this thesis. I accept that early career teachers enter the profession with appropriate qualifications and acknowledged skills and attributes to enable them to work in classrooms with confidence and teach effectively. On wider reflection of this, and based on my own educational experience, I believe that the starting point for many teachers actually amounts to a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of pedagogy. I feel strongly that pedagogy needs to be developed as the teaching career progresses. Appropriate professional development opportunities are profoundly important for teacher success with high quality teaching and learning in the classroom. The teachers involved in this study surprised me to some extent when they mentioned that they had not really looked at any educational theory since leaving their teacher training establishment. They recalled some aspects of theory and development and mentioned the names of some educationalists such as Piaget, but they also said that they were no longer relating this to their classroom practice as they had simply forgotten. Whilst I believe that this scenario represents a reality for many busy practitioners, it is also a concern.

Teachers have a profoundly important role in our society. They play an essential part in making pupils into future citizens of our nation. Freire (1972) refers to teachers as cultural workers, and I fundamentally believe that is true. Teachers are primarily concerned with providing highly effective teaching and learning opportunities for all pupils to develop holistically. I believe that teaching is a craft, and that it is something which has to be developed and across a number of years. My research highlighted that there were some very skilful and knowledgeable practitioners in the setting that I chose. However, I believe that there was evidence that the teachers in this setting benefited from important reflection time around learning. Through the research experience, they were given time to consider the most appropriate talk strategies to utilise in the classroom to maximise the learning. They reported that this was quite a unique experience for them.

One significant point to note from my findings is the practical application of the levels and states of learning model developed by West Burnham and Coates (2005). I regarded this activity as quite a unique approach in the setting .The teachers were given an opportunity to look specifically at the model of learning with a focus on oracy and talk activities. I have acknowledged that learning theory is incredibly complex and that learning is not necessarily a linear process. I do believe that the understanding of learning theory is an essential aspect of a teacher's repertoire. The move from superficial learning to more profound learning is challenging for teachers. Not only do teachers have to understand the different levels of learning, but also the associated characteristics of that state of learning. They need time to practice and experiment with their delivery of classroom activities, and to hone their craft. The move to deeper and profound learning, which is considered to involve characteristics such as intuition, challenge, and wisdom, leading to overall independence in the

learner, is critically important with regard to the wider philosophical meaning of oracy development.

I believe the elevation to deep and profound learning in oracy supports the transition into metacognition, which is a higher level of knowledge and thinking. Ultimately, teachers need pupils to become independent and think about their own thinking, and know when and how to use particular strategies to help their learning. If all classroom activity is perceived to be at a shallow, superficial and mindless level this inhibits development and needs to be considered carefully by all teachers.

My research has shown that when teachers are more mindful (Cambourne 1999) of the levels and states of learning, their aspirations for talk are improved. After looking at the West Burnham and Coates' (2005) framework, the teachers asked me to integrate it into the co-teaching session, and they asked for assistance with some modelling of higher order group working skills. Neither of them had tackled this before and I wondered if they lacked the confidence and the understanding of how to manage this in the classroom setting. I felt strongly that the opportunity provided to the teachers, to start to reflect on types of learning, was very powerful. I also feel that teachers should be given chances to revisit and explore the interface between theory and practice as part of becoming masters of their craft to maximise the learning for all pupils.

My research evidence has reinforced my belief that policy continues to drive the pedagogy for oracy in education. In Chapters 1 and 2 of the thesis, I cite examples of government initiatives that have had a tremendous impact on the teaching and learning of oracy. Several of these initiatives were seemingly thrust upon teachers without any negotiation or discussion. I remain concerned that some early career teachers are highly influenced by policy directives and perhaps, understandably to some degree, they do not feel that they are in a position to question them. My overriding concern is linked to the imposition of pedagogical practices with policy directives, particularly with regard to oracy. It is particularly those that do not align with fundamental principles surrounding the nature of the field of education that are of concern.

In some school settings, policy initiatives appear to be endorsed and supported without question by the head teacher, whereas in some other schools they decide to be selective regarding what they implement from policy directives. In this era of accountability, league tables and Ofsted inspections, I fully appreciate that many schools feel conflicted about the best course of action to undertake. Coultas goes so far as to state 'these pressures may paradoxically deter teachers from using a range of pedagogical styles '(Coultas 2010, p.17). I have made explicit reference earlier in the thesis to the impact of the Government National Strategies .The many confusing and ambiguous key messages embedded in them about oracy practice has had a profound effect on the pedagogical approach to oracy teaching. I remain concerned that this is still the case and policy is still having a less than optimal impact on pedagogy. However, I also believe that the pockets of good practice, as referred to earlier in the thesis, are a clear indication that the pedagogy of oracy in some school

settings, particularly those who adopt a whole school approach, is becoming more established. I regard that as a very positive and democratic development.

I have also concluded that I believe that policy directives also drive the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offered for teachers. Throughout this thesis, I raise concerns about the traditional knowledge transmission model of CPD and the limited long-term impact this can have on a school's development. I referred to the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) earlier in the thesis, and mentioned the many high profile projects and initiatives that they had created and subsequently rolled out in school. I still view these with some caution. Whilst I believe that many of these initiatives may have some short-term impact, depending upon who is involved and how they are disseminated, Coultas reminds us that 'for oracy to flourish, we need to think again about top-down school improvement projects and start arguing for much more real debate and democracy in school', (Coultas 2010, p.18). I would consider it a challenge to professionalism if teachers were simply required to deliver content and curriculum according to a technical set of guidelines. My belief is that teachers who deliver a curriculum with knowledge, understanding and passion for life-long learning will become masters of their profession when they are able and encouraged to make policy 'good' in context by exercising their professional judgement in educationally sound ways.

My research findings have led me to conclude that strong leadership is essential to managing policy pressures in school and of making policy imperatives good in practice. The head teacher has a great responsibility to create a culture and ethos that supports the development of high quality teaching and learning for all. I fundamentally believe that a firm understanding of the pedagogy of oracy practice for all teachers is critical in terms of success or failure for oracy learning in primary classrooms. If teachers do not have this firm understanding when they enter the profession, then they require appropriate professional development opportunities to develop a stronger pedagogical approach as an integral part of their CPD.

A review of the Methodological approach

In implementing the case study, I adopted an interpretative stance believing that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world. This proved to be an appropriate methodology for the focus of the study and the questions it raised. I was able to use a wide range of methods to bring this case study to fruition and I have reported it with as much authenticity as a study of this interpretive nature allows. I decided, quite uniquely, to use a wide range of oracy practices and talk strategies, as part of my methods, to communicate with the research participants. On reflection, one of the most successful starting points linked to this was the semi-structured Discussion Forums. I arranged these to include discrete groups of research subjects. The Discussion Forums provided a wealth of rich data. The various participants were relaxed enough to speak freely and they demonstrated a high level of trust in myself as the researcher to adhere to the aspects of confidentiality and anonymity as agreed at the beginning of the process. I operated an inclusive model with the participants of the forums and this enabled a larger representative group of the school community such as parents, TAs and governors

to have a voice. The Pupils Discussion Forum was held with slightly modified questions, and the use of some visual images, and this proved to be incredibly successful in prompting the pupils to talk freely. The pupils communicated with me, as the researcher, and with each other with great confidence. There was evidence that I had provided the permitting circumstances to allow a purposeful and focused discussion to take place.

One extremely notable and poignant comment occurred during the Pupil Discussion Forums and I believe is worth citing here. One pupil stated that she did not really like to take part in talk. She was actually the only one in the group who responded in this manner, and this was respected fully. In response to this comment, another pupil in the group stated, 'but you are a good listener'. I found this to be a very insightful remark from a young pupil, and it was an indication of the supportive culture in the school in terms of respect and acceptance. One pupil had clearly recognised the need to support another pupil by highlighting a strength. I thought this was an incredibly powerful act, and not only did it offer reassurance for the pupil but, on this particular occasion, the pupil then engaged fully with the discussion group thereafter.

I adopted a pilot approach to the Joint Practice Development workshop, and this proved to be a successful method to use. The teachers fully engaged with the process and I concluded that this approach was of mutual benefit as both parties, the teachers and myself, gained knowledge and understanding from it. The workshop included a wide range of purposeful dialogue, the importance of which was already explored in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The JPD approach successfully made the staff feel comfortable to engage and contribute effectively. It also provided an opportunity to challenge the teachers to think, in a non-threatening manner, about the practice and their pedagogical approach in the context of their school setting. It provided a unique experience for the teachers to share their knowledge and experience, and also to focus on the context of the school for improvements in classroom practice with regard to oracy development. I do believe that this is a helpful and useful approach to CPD that could be utilised, in a cost-effective manner, in other school settings.

A very influential method used in the research process was the opportunity for the researcher and teacher to jointly plan and co-deliver a teaching session in school. Firstly, this proved to be very illuminating for the teacher and she confirmed that this had provided a unique experience by allowing her to observe her class at work, with a focus upon the oracy development. She was able to identify some of the key talk behaviours that she had taught the pupils, such as Talk Partners, and she was very proud to acknowledge that they were carrying them out very confidently. She was also able to identify talk behaviours that required further development, such as group working experiences. Secondly, as I had entered the classroom in the process in the dual role as researcher and the co-teacher this also provided me with a unique experience. I had the opportunity to deliver my agreed focus for the session, which was linked to group work. In doing so, I applied my understanding of theory linked specifically to the work of Vygotsky and scaffolding. I was able to manage a group working situation with groups of pupils with some skill and I demonstrated scaffolding of learning with one group of pupils with an appropriate teacher intervention. I used

effective questioning and dialogue to clarify some misconceptions and move the learning on. The teacher benefited from observing me working in this way and she acknowledged that some of the strategies that I used would support her own practice when revisiting group work as a strategy for talk.

It was unfortunate that during the time of this small-scale study that one teacher had to take sick leave. This meant I was only able to undertake one co-teaching session with a teacher due to the strict timeframe and scope of the research. The teacher did not return work for some considerable time and it was not deemed appropriate, or ethical, by me to bring another teacher into this at such a late stage in the process. A second co-teaching experience would have potentially provided me with some additional data and experiences. This would have allowed for a comparison between the two that would have been interesting to analyse, however such is the reality of real-world research.

The semi-structured interviews with the teacher and head teacher proved to be a very effective method as they provided a wealth of rich data. The interviews took place with two people who had experienced the research process from different perspectives. The teacher had been involved in all aspects of the research process, and the interview responses were analysed with awareness of that. The head teacher took on the key role as gatekeeper and she was deliberately not actively involved in the full research process. Whilst analysing the two interviews together, I identified that there were some parallels in the responses, which I have already highlighted in Chapter 4. I also noticed that there were some distinct and subtle differences within the core themes. The teacher regarded the whole research process as being incredibly positive for her as a teacher as it provided an opportunity for reflection and thinking about learning the head teacher also recognised the positive experience this had brought and she also acknowledged the importance of being involved in educational research. The teacher also highlighted the importance of reflecting on various initiatives in school, and the head teacher accepted that this research had brought some key things back into focus for school. Both the teacher and the head teacher reflected upon the importance of talk for learning with the head teacher making explicit reference to talk for language development. She also re-iterated the importance of a whole school approach to CPD and the reality of this approach in school was evidenced in my findings.

On closer analysis, the responses from the head teacher interview reflected the overview, which she was fortunate to have in her role, of the whole school practice with regard to oracy. I believe that the strong leadership provided by the head teacher was a vital part of the oracy success in this challenging setting. The overall conclusion that I made from the head teacher interview was that she took full responsibility for the culture and ethos in the school but she acknowledged this in a democratic manner. She accepted that the whole school community played a valuable part in the commitment to oracy practices. An unexpected outcome of the research was that the head teacher expressed her delight at being part of the research process. She believed that more teachers should be engaged with research practices. This is something that she was going to develop in her school setting. I felt that this was a powerful outcome of this small-scale study.

I successfully completed the research process with the school feeling very satisfied that I had managed the process with highly appropriate methods. The unique range of talk-based methods that I used for this small-scale study not only allowed me to gain rich data and information, but most importantly, I believe they facilitated an inclusive process. This process allowed me to use dialogue to gain the views of a wide range of research participants and I fully respected their contributions.

My recommendations:

I recommend the following:

1. Teachers require a strong grasp of pedagogy to understand the complexity and potential of oracy for learning. Without this fundamental knowledge and understanding, in my opinion, they will not be able to deliver oracy successfully in classroom settings. If teachers have a strong pedagogical understanding, they will approach the development of oracy with sufficient autonomy and this if likely to increase their chances of success. I do not believe that it is possible to separate the culture of a school from its pedagogy and therefore for a school to implement successfully high-quality oracy, the culture and ethos of the whole school need to be integral to this.
2. Teachers require appropriate professional development opportunities to strengthen and grow their own pedagogical understanding. I believe that appropriate further professional development experiences, beyond that of initial teacher education, should allow them to revisit theory and practice providing opportunities for them to reflect purposefully on their own approach. This will enable them to become highly skilled practitioners.
3. The model of JPD (Fielding et al. 2005) has the potential to provide an approach to professional development that is democratic, respectful, evidence-informed and autonomous for those involved. It can involve members of the school community working together for mutual benefit, sharing expertise and being more mindful about their own practice in school.
4. The work of Cambourne (1999) linking brain-based research, conditions for literacy learning, and the impact on the classroom environment provides a persuasive foundation for all teachers to start to build their pedagogy and practice. I believe that Cambourne's work should be recognised and used in teacher training and professional development.

Concluding Remarks

At the time of writing this thesis, Parliament has set up an All-Party Group of MPs to take evidence and make recommendations about the need for better oracy education in England's schools. This not only signals an important revival of the talk

debate, as mentioned earlier in the thesis, but it also provides some optimism that oracy may finally get the recognition and status that it deserves.

In a further development, the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) is urging all political parties fighting the 2019 General Election to commit to boosting the quality, status and professionalism of teachers. To this end, it is calling for an entitlement for all teachers to have access to fully funded continuing professional development, including that delivered at master's level. They believe it is time for the political parties to strengthen their commitment to teacher professionalism.

Teachers, writers and researchers who recognise the value of oracy in the primary curriculum need to work together. The government should be providing them all with the appropriate resources to share good practice, teaching and learning materials and appropriate research opportunities linked to the theoretical underpinning of work.

Fundamentally, I firmly believe that oracy should be considered as part of a democratic pedagogy and an effective teacher's repertoire. In closing, I would argue that oracy is not a subject, but rather a condition for learning. Head teachers, leaders and members of the wider school community would be failing in their professional duties if they do not consider oracy development as an integral part of their practice. This thesis has found oracy to be an essential aspect of a deep pedagogy.

Talk should include activities that visualise, symbolise and kinaesthetically express ideas

Appendices

Modified and Adapted by JDP and KLW (2008) from: Shropshire and National Oracy Project

Appendix 1

Speaking and Listening Strategies

Information Gap
Paired work – both students are given access to half the information. By working together, they try to complete the task. Advanced into **Triads**

Listening Triangles (Triads)
In groups of 3, students take on the roles of a

- speaker: who explains the topic
- questioner: who finds areas for clarification or further detail

Hot seat
One student in 'role' (character from a book or play) or as an expert. Others students ask questions (small groups working towards whole class).

Snowballing
Students first talk in pairs to develop initial ideas. Pairs can double up to fours to build on ideas. **(2s to 4s)** Fours double up to tell the other group about their group's ideas. (linked to **envoying**)

'Scan and check' exercise
Paired work: each student has a sheet containing some information

- Scan quickly (max 5 mins)
- 1 minute to tell your partner what you've found out
- Partner feeds back to class.

Envoying
Once pairs/groups have completed a task, individuals from each group are elected as 'envoys', moving on to a new group in order to summarise, expand ideas and/or explain their group's ideas.

"Thought Showers"
Quick collection of ideas from members of a group.

"Bullet Point Thinking" (and talking)
Students articulate (annotate or "finger") a short series of points as a result of ITT, paired and/or group talk.

Individuals
"30 & 60 second" presentations

Mini Presentation
Groups must collect and present certain information. They need to discuss and decide on different jobs

YES/NO questions
To practise asking questions, improve listening skills and reinforce a growing number of words relating to a topic.

"Individual Think Time"
Timed personal, silent thinking before paired or group talk.

"Thought Showers"
Quick collection of ideas from members of a group.

Role Play
● students have different characters. ● Clarity of speech and intonation. ● Talking for different purposes / audiences – (more formal) at times

Talk Partner (A/B – formal part of paired work)
Each student has a partner whom s/he can share ideas, express opinions or plan. Increases confidence and articulation, oral rehearsal of key ideas.

Rainbow Groups
Groups discuss a topic. Students regroup by number, so new groups are made up of representatives of every original group. Individuals take turns to report back to each other (like all children becoming envoys).

Jigsawing
Home groups of students work together, and each student is given a question in a topic. Expert groups formed from those in the 'home groups' that have the same question, work together and then return to their home groups to share their findings.

Appendix 2

University of Sunderland

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET FOR DISCUSSION GROUP

Study Title: 'Oracy- deep or shallow pedagogy?'

What is the purpose of the study?
To explore oracy practices in a primary school setting and produce an anonymised case study report.

Who can take part in the study?
Consenting adults, with the authorisation of the head teacher of the case study school, and children with authorisation from the head teacher and parents.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study, **you can withdraw at any point during the session without giving a reason and without penalty**. After you have completed the study, you can also withdraw your consent for your data to be included by contacting me via email **within two weeks of participation**. If you decide to withdraw during the study or in the subsequent two week period, your data will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?
The researcher will invite you to a short discussion forum held within normal working hours within your school setting.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks to you by your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Benefits include the opportunity to share your thinking and understanding of oracy in the school setting, which would be of great value to the researcher.

What if something goes wrong?
If you change your mind about participation, please contact your headteacher in the first instance. The headteacher will then inform me immediately, and the issue will be addressed appropriately. If you feel unhappy after the study, please contact me immediately or the Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee, whose contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes, your contribution to the discussion forum will be anonymised. All data will be

stored securely on an encrypted device. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The researcher plans to produce a detailed case study of your school setting. If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The researcher has sole responsibility for organising and funding the research.

Who has reviewed the study?
The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved the study.

Contact for further information:

Karen Watson (Researcher)
Email: karenlesley.watson@yahoo.co.uk

Dr Lynne McKenna (Research Supervisor) and Prof Maggie Gregson (Research Supervisor)
Email: lynne.mckenna@sunderland.ac.uk or maggie.gregson@sunderland.ac.uk

Prof John MacIntyre (Chair of the University Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland)
Email: ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

Appendix 3

University of Sunderland

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PUPIL PARTICIPATION

Study Title: 'Oracy- deep or shallow pedagogy?'

Who is the researcher?
My name is Karen Watson. I have been involved in education for over 25 years; I have been a primary school teacher, a deputy headteacher and I now work for the University of Cumbria. I have a keen interest in oracy (speaking and listening) and I am very excited to be given the opportunity to undertake a small scale research project in your child's school.

What is the purpose of the study?
To explore speaking and listening practices in a primary school setting and produce a short report.

Who can take part in the study?
Children can take part in the study with the permission of their parents/legal guardian and headteacher.

Does my child have to take part?
No, their participation is voluntary. If you change your mind about your child taking part in the discussion group, please contact the class teacher. You do not have to give a reason.
If you change your mind after your child has taken part, you can withdraw your permission for your child's comments to be included in the study report. To do this, you should contact your child's teacher within two weeks of the discussion group. The teacher will then inform the researcher and their comments will not be used in the study report.

What will happen to my child if they take part?
The researcher will invite your child to a short session during their normal school hours where they will be encouraged to take part in a group discussion about speaking and listening.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks to your child by their

participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Benefits include the opportunity for your child to contribute to some very valuable research.

What if something goes wrong?
If you change your mind about your child's participation or feel unhappy, please contact your headteacher in the first instance. The headteacher will then inform the researcher immediately, and the issue will be addressed appropriately. Alternatively, you can contact the Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee, whose details are given below.

Will my child's participation in this study be kept confidential?
Yes, children will not be named in the study report and the video recording will be destroyed at the completion of the study. All data will be stored securely.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The researcher plans to produce a detailed case study of speaking and listening in the school setting. If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The researcher has sole responsibility for organising and funding the research.

Who has reviewed the study?
The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved the study.

Contact for further information:

Karen Watson (Researcher)
Email: karenlesley.watson@yahoo.co.uk

Dr Lynne McKenna (Research Supervisor) and Prof Maggie Gregson (Research Supervisor)
Email: lynne.mckenna@sunderland.ac.uk or maggie.gregson@sunderland.ac.uk

Prof John MacIntyre (Chair of the University Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland)
Email: ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

Appendix 4

University of Sunderland

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW/PEER REVIEW

Study Title: 'Oracy- deep or shallow pedagogy?'

What is the purpose of the study?
To explore oracy practices in a primary school setting and produce an anonymised case study report.

Who can take part in the study?
Consenting adults, with the authorisation of the headteacher of the case study school, and children with authorisation from the headteacher and parents.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study, **you can withdraw at any point during the session without giving a reason and without penalty**. After you have completed the study, you can also withdraw your consent for your data to be included by contacting me via email **within two weeks of participation**. If you decide to withdraw during the study or in the subsequent two week period, your data will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?
The researcher will request the opportunity to undertake a short lesson/session observation, followed by a joint peer review session. You will be expected to engage in a short discussion with the researcher on the practice of oracy in your classroom.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks to you by your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Benefits include the opportunity to share your thinking and understanding of oracy practice in your classroom, which would be of great value to the researcher.

What if something goes wrong?
If you change your mind about participation, please contact your headteacher in the first instance. The headteacher will then inform me immediately, and the issue will be addressed appropriately. If you feel unhappy after the study, please contact me immediately or the Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee, whose contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes, your contribution to the interview and peer review process will be anonymised.

All data will be stored securely on an encrypted device. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The researcher plans to produce a detailed case study of your school setting. If suitable, the results may also be presented at academic conferences and/or written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The researcher has sole responsibility for organising and funding the research.

Who has reviewed the study?
The University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved the study.

Contact for further information:

Karen Watson (Researcher)
Email: karenlesley.watson@yahoo.co.uk

Dr Lynne McKenna (Research Supervisor) and Prof Maggie Gregson (Research Supervisor)
Email: lynne.mckenna@sunderland.ac.uk or maggie.gregson@sunderland.ac.uk

Prof John MacIntyre (Chair of the University Research Ethics Group, University of Sunderland)
Email: ethics.review@sunderland.ac.uk

Appendix 5

Discussion Forum Participation Consent Form

Study title: 'Oracy- shallow or deep pedagogy?'

- I am over the age of 18 ☐
- I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this study ☐
- I understand that my voice will be recorded during the discussion forum and, by signing below, I consent to this ☐
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself ☐
- I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded, i.e., 2 weeks after taking part in the discussion forum) ☐

Signed:
_____
Print name:
_____
(Your name is important to confirm your consent, but will be used for no other purpose)
Date: _____

Please complete and return to your headteacher.

Appendix 6

University of Sunderland

Parental/Guardian Consent Form
Study title: 'Oracy- shallow or deep pedagogy?'

- I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named below ☐
- I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I give permission for my child to participate in this study ☐
- I understand that my child will be video recorded during the discussion group and, by signing below, I give permission for this ☐
- I understand that an appropriate member of the school staff will be present at all times ☐
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself☐
- I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about my child participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded, i.e., 2 weeks after taking part in the discussion group ☐
- I am prepared to share the information contained in the attached 'Project Information Sheet' with my child in an appropriate manner, and to make sure that they are happy to be involved in the study ☐

Name of child:

_____

Name of parent/legal guardian:

_____

Signed:

_____

_____

(Your name is important to confirm your permission, but will be used for no other reason)

Date: _____

Please hand your completed form back to your child's headteacher

Appendix 7

University of Sunderland

Pupil Participation Permission Form
Study title: 'Oracy- shallow or deep pedagogy?'

- I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named below ☐
- I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I give permission for my child to participate in this study ☐
- I understand that my child will be video recorded during the discussion group and, by signing below, I give permission for this ☐
- I understand that an appropriate member of the school staff will be present at all times ☐
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself☐
- I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about my child participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded, i.e., 2 weeks after taking part in the discussion group ☐
- I am prepared to share the information contained in the attached 'Project Information Sheet' with my child in an appropriate manner, and to make sure that they are happy to be involved in the study ☐

Name of child:

_____

Name of parent/legal guardian:

_____

Signed:

_____

_____

(Your name is important to confirm your permission, but will be used for no other reason)

Date: _____

Please hand your completed form back to your child's teacher

Appendix 8

Teacher Interview and Participation Consent Form

Study title: 'Oracy- shallow or deep pedagogy?'

- I am over the age of 18 ☐
- I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this study ☐
- I understand that my voice will be recorded during the interview and, by signing below, I consent to this ☐
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself ☐
- I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded, i.e., 2 weeks after taking part in interview ☐

Signed:
_____
Print name:
_____
(Your name is important to confirm your consent, but will be used for no other purpose)
Date: _____

Please complete and return to your head teacher.

Appendix 9

‘**Vignette 1’:** Two talk initiatives highlighted, p.67

It was interesting to note at the start of the collaborative working process that the teachers were looking very confident. They shared the context and purpose of the school’s involvement with ‘restorative practice’. They mentioned that it started with some selected key staff attending training for one day away from school. One teacher highlighted that the training involved working with a set of A6 cards. I was given a set of cards to look at for reference. I was informed that all class teachers have these cards in their possession. The cards outline a simple bullet point list /reminders of what to do in certain scenarios when working with children. For each scenario, a solution-focused approach is used. The teachers went on to explain that many talk strategies are utilised in this approach. If a child has been involved in a ‘naughty incident or an altercation’ with another child they are often taken to a quiet place and not asked ‘*why did you do that?*’, but rather they were asked ‘*can you tell me what happened?’.* The teachers believe that this is was a powerful approach as it not only gave pupils the opportunity to share their side of the story, but it was all carried out in a very calm and quiet manner. They firmly believed that the whole school practices this approach consistently. If they felt it was appropriate they would bring groups of pupils together to talk about the incident in a non- threatening and safe environment. They stressed that there was no writing down, as it was all talk-based and they were keen to stress there were no raised voices. They felt that often matters were resolved amicably through guided discussion and the crux of this was giving pupils the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions rather than applying a blame approach.

The city-wide talk initiative was also shared and this involved schools across the city with a large focus on Speech and Language and Communication (SLC). The process involved a reading test for some children at the beginning of a series of ‘interventions’ and the main thread included a talk boost package for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. I was informed that this involved a 10-week programme of games and confidence building with talk strategies. The teachers received training from an outside organisation to facilitate the various games. The whole process was to boost ‘Talk for Writing Skills’. Whilst the teachers were recalling this intervention, and significantly reflecting and thinking, they were starting to re-evaluate the progress to date. Despite the fact that the initiative and support from external partners had ceased, they indicated that perhaps they should be doing more. As part of that project, the school had access to a speech therapist for one day per week and they felt this was invaluable for its success. The school has a high incidence of speech issues and I was informed that several children arrive in reception with soothers and poor speech. They felt that this initiative had made a real difference. The teachers mentioned the high portion of EAL children in school, citing at least 30% in each class, with numbers on the increase. They felt that the citywide talk initiative had really helped some of these children. They went on to say that they also believe that the use of talk strategies throughout the school benefit these children and they make excellent progress in terms of SLC. The teachers said that ‘Talk for Writing’ features in all of their planning.

Appendix 10

‘Vignette 2’: Co-teaching session highlighted, p.69

The co-teaching session provided a unique experience for me in the dual role of participant teacher and observer/researcher, and for the class teacher in the role of teacher and observer. Prior to the pupils working on their paired activity, the rules of talk were re-iterated. It was evident that pupils had grasped these and it was good to recognise that they had been taught well. There was an opportunity for the pupils to feedback from their paired talk experience and it was very apparent that the listening skills were not as acute as they could be. The pupils were clearly used to talking but not necessarily listening. The class teacher, in her unique role of observer, recognised this immediately as an area for further development.
I introduced and demonstrated a new 2-4’s activity, as agreed with the teacher, to see how the pupils would manage working in small groups. The boundaries and ‘taking turns’ rules were set. The children did struggle with this and on reflection this was probably due to the fact that this was the first time they had done this. The teacher indicated that it had been good to see this modelling of practice. As part of the session the teacher introduced some work around images and each group of pupils were given an image to talk about. Whilst this was happening, the teacher and I seized the opportunity to have some brief discussions about different ways this activity could be reinforced, extended and developed. The teacher indicated that she would use some of these suggestions in further sessions to support pupil development. I continued to model good practice with the pupils in terms of group working by demonstrating for the teacher appropriate seating positions for group work and the need to reinforce key roles for group members. I viewed this as an example of the concept of ‘caught or taught’. The class teacher commented that the opportunity to observe her own class with someone else modelling practice had been a valuable learning experience with her own pupils. She also reflected on how proud she felt that her pupils had coped with a different adult managing the talk activities.

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