

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Talking in Class: New entrant teachers' beliefs about oral language

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education (Special Education)

Massey University,
Palmerston North, NZ

Shona McDonald
2005

ABSTRACT

While oral or spoken language is a primary medium for teaching and classroom communication, there is an absence of literature that relates to the beliefs teachers have about oral language. This study aims to document and discuss seven teachers' beliefs about oral language. To do so, the recording and transcription of the teachers' beliefs about the development of children's oral language, including the strategies and programmes used to assess and promote it in new entrant classrooms, is undertaken. Later, following a period of reflection, each teacher outlines the changes or affirmations to their earlier beliefs, assessments, programmes or teaching strategies that they have considered or implemented. While this study documents the teachers' beliefs, it also discusses them in light of their implications for teaching and learning. In particular, the findings suggest the emergence of a literacy paradigm that includes reading, written and oral language, and within which the teachers view oral language primarily as a conduit to the promotion of reading. Although the teachers discuss how the engagement of learners with and through reading is actively promoted, oral language and its potential to engage five-year-olds in classroom communications, meaning making and learning is not promoted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In order to understand the role of oral language in the classroom, this thesis highlights the importance of acknowledging and considering the classroom practitioner's paradigm. Seven highly skilled and dedicated teachers shared their knowledge and beliefs in this project and I wish to acknowledge them with gratitude and respect as part-authors of this project. It was their stories, their experiences and their thoughts that formed the matrix of this study. Without their participation and enthusiasm, their narratives and their responses, this study would not have been possible. Each teacher took time and shared a small vista of their professional landscapes, which allowed us a momentary view of their individual beliefs, thoughts and feelings about oral language and its development on one particular day at one particular time. Possibly, those same phenomena that they shared have long since been discarded, reviewed or reconsidered. As I listened to the beliefs and thoughts shared by each teacher, I, too, was challenged to meet and confront my own beliefs about oral language and its role in the new entrant classroom.

This learning journey would never have been possible without the wisdom, advice, guidance and support of many very special people. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the support of my husband, Peter, and sons, Hugh and Angus. I would also like to record my indebtedness and thanks to all those wonderful past and present colleagues, including the Massey University library staff, who have assisted me along the way. I have not included their names here as some have asked not to be named, and others for fear that one may be omitted inadvertently. I do, however, hope that

each of them will accept this as a personal acknowledgement.

Special mention must also be made of the guided journey afforded by my supervisor Professor Joy Cullen, and co-supervisor, Brian Finch. I recall that, prior to being assigned a supervisor, I was asked to submit the name of the person/s I would like to be approached. I replied that I would be grateful for anyone who would be kind enough to have me! I thank Joy and Brian for their compassion and acknowledge my good fortune. Both Joy and Brian have ensured that I charted the journey, reviewed the map and explored new and challenging mental landscapes and horizons. A record of part of that journey is recounted and represented in the pages that follow.

Shona McDonald

October 2005

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
TRANSCRIPTION KEYS	xi
GLOSSARY	xii
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	1
Origins of the research	1
Purpose of the study	7
Research puzzle	8
Research questions	8
CHAPTER TWO: A Review of the Literature	10
Oral language	10
Teacher beliefs	27
Reflection and reflective practice	40
Chapter summary	45
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Procedures	48
<i>Part one: Methodological approach</i>	49
Case study	49
A phenomenological approach	50
The narrative	52
Reflection and review	54

The semi-structured interview	55
Ethical issues	57
<i>Part two: The Procedures</i>	58
Phase one:	
Pre-project discussion and trial	58
Initial contact	59
Informed consent	59
The first interview	60
Data transcription	60
The role of interviewer	60
Phase two:	
The second meeting	61
The reflective phase	61
The second and final interview	62
The participants	62
Phase three:	
Meaning making	66
Validity and reliability	68
Chapter summary	69
CHAPTER FOUR: Talking with Teachers: Results Phase One	70
The first interview	70
How teachers develop beliefs	70
Beliefs about oral language	72
Beliefs about the role of the teacher	73

Beliefs about the function and purpose of oral language	75
Concerns expressed about the development of oral language	77
Beliefs about the parameters of oral language in the classroom	79
What is oral language for?	80
Is oral language important?	83
How teachers assess oral language	87
Facilitation of oral language in the classroom	94
Triangulation of narratives	104
Chapter summary	109
CHAPTER FIVE: Reflection and Review: Results Phase Two	111
The second interview	111
Reviewing and reflecting	111
Thinking trialling and making choices	115
Assessments reviewed	116
Reflection and review	120
Programmes to develop oral language	130
In retrospect	133
Chapter summary	133
CHAPTER SIX: Discussion and Conclusion: Talking in Class	135
Beliefs about oral language	135
The assessment of oral language	153
The promotion of oral language in the classroom	156
Reflection and review	157
Assessment	158

Strategies and programmes	159
In summary	160
Implications for teaching	160
Limitations and strengths of the project	162
Future directions	168
In summary	170
Talking in class	171
REFERENCES	173
APPENDICES	199
Appendix one: Information sheet	199
Appendix two: Letter to school	201
Appendix three: Principal consent form	203
Appendix four: Letter to prospective participants	205
Appendix five: Teachers' consent form	207
Appendix six: Interview schedule #1	209
Appendix seven: Suggestions for reflection	213
Appendix eight: Interview schedule #2	215

LIST OF TABLES

2.2	Oral language assessment tools	24
3.1	Participants' profiles	63
3.2	Class numbers and ethnic composition	64
3.3	Participants' profiles	65
4.1	Activities and programmes to develop oral language	97
4.2	Formal and informal teaching practices	104
4.3	Sample of narratives, responses and classroom artefacts	108
5.1	Comparative list of teaching strategies	129

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1 Elements of speech and oral language structures

11

TRANSCRIPTION KEYS

...	Words deleted
(word)	Definition/meaning making
(<i>kupu</i>)	Maori language
" <i>Word</i> "	Voice of participant/s including captured conversations
[word]	Researcher's transcript addition/s
<u>word</u>	Spoken emphasis
<i>word</i>	Quotations from texts including non-research participants

GLOSSARY

<i>Ako (Maori):</i>	The unified co-operation and symbiotic relationship of teacher and learner undertaking an agreed task that acknowledges the concept that when you teach you also learn.
Assessment:	The process of obtaining evidence of students' achievement or competence and/or the act of interpreting or describing students' achievement.
<i>Awhina (Maori):</i>	Assist or benefit
Decibel (dB):	A logarithmic unit of sound intensity or sound pressure (1 decibel is the faintest audible sound).
Decile:	A ranking given to schools in New Zealand based on statistical information that seeks to reflect the socio-economics of each school's catchment area.
Discourse:	The dialogue and discussions that occur during conversation.
New entrant classroom:	A reception class in New Zealand schools where five-year-old students are traditionally placed.
Intonational contour:	A speaker's ability to add meaning using pitch and emphasis.
Ipsative assessment:	A student evaluates their performance against their previous performance.
Makaton:	A language programme that includes a signing system.

Oral language:	The receiving, making, constructing and transmitting of meaning to others using the spoken word.
Oracy:	The ability to hear, speak and use language for specific purposes in particular contexts (a term attributed to Andrew Wilkinson, 1965).
Reading recovery:	A research-based 1-1 teaching procedure aimed at preventing reading and writing difficulties.
Register:	The range of words, phrases and sentences, utterance choices and language styles that enables a speaker to meet the expectations or needs of a listener – a spoken genre.
Spoken language:	To receive, make, construct and deliver meaning to others using the spoken word.
Text:	A coherent complex of words, messages, signs or symbols that are written, printed or transmitted.
Tomorrow's schools:	A self-managing initiative developed in 1988 for New Zealand schools aimed at reforming education administration.
Vernacular:	The form of spoken language used by a particular group.
<i>Whakawhanaungatanga (Maori):</i>	The process of establishing relationships in a Maori context.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Classrooms are places where teachers and students communicate. Their communications are usually facilitated through spoken, written, gestural or assistive means. However, when teachers and students attempt to transfer or clarify meaning within the classroom, it is predominantly their spoken language that plays a unique and important role. Whether as an individual or as a class group, collective classroom communications require learners and teachers to make and take meaning from one another. Kougl (1997) reminds us that as we live in a communication age: *Communication in the classroom matters more now than ever before because the Information Age is redefining the meaning of knowledge, learning, and teaching and the importance of oral communication skills* (p3).

Origins of the research

The main purpose of oral language is to communicate meaning and to make and take meaning from what others say. Dating from the time of Socrates over twenty centuries ago, oral language has been the primary medium of teaching and learning. Teachers and students have engaged over the centuries in communicative interactions that have involved more than just a transfer of information. Every time a teacher communicates with students and vice versa, each and all become involved in complex exchanges of meanings and interpretations. Today, classroom communications are dependent on who talks to whom, when and how. Oral language is pivotal to

communication and the educational process because it enables students to develop and use concepts to understand and communicate with others. As Long (2000) notes: *Language depends on, and is the basis for, learning and memory, as well as general thinking abilities* (p188).

In particular, I would argue that as students in New Zealand move from the early childhood sector to the new entrant classroom, the communicative transitions that they are required to make to access compulsory education at age five, set important frameworks for later learning. However, the literature indicates that oral language and its development and role in the classroom has, in comparison with reading, been largely neglected.

My interest in spoken communication has arisen not only through my work as a speech-language therapist, but also in my work as a teacher within the early childhood, compulsory and post-compulsory sectors of education. Most recently, as a resource teacher of learning and behaviour, my particular interest in the discourse of the classroom and the influence that a teacher's talk has on students' language, learning and behaviour has been renewed.

Central to this project are the beliefs that new entrant classroom teachers recount about oral language and the roles that oral language plays within and between individuals in the new entrant classroom. Do teachers believe that in new entrant classrooms the primary medium for talking, teaching, learning, meaning making and classroom communications is oral language? What teachers believe about oral or

spoken language and the assessment and development techniques they employ individually and collectively to assess, remediate and accelerate students' oral language and its development within the classroom appears to have received scant attention from researchers. Why is that?

Do teachers believe that the primary mode of language is speech or do they consider writing and reading to be a primary mode of language? Justice (2004) suggests that individuals need to consider carefully what the primary mode of language is and consider the probable time they developed speech versus when they were reported to have developed reading and writing. If a new entrant teacher believes in the primacy of spoken language in the new entrant class setting, then they might also consider that it performs a pivotal role in linking the cognitive and social domains within and between learners. However, in contrast, if a teacher believes the primary mode of language is reading and writing, then they might be less likely to ascribe a role to oral language that links the cognitive and social domains within and between all learners, including the class teacher.

Since 1970, a small group of educational researchers, generally with backgrounds in the area of linguistics, have highlighted the role of talk as a tool for learning within the classroom (Barnes, Britten & Rosen, 1971; Cazden, 1988a; Flanders, 1970; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). However, it would appear that what happens within the classroom in terms of teacher-student language or classroom discourse has received little attention and has remained relatively unchallenged over the years. Why is this so?

Invariably, students within the compulsory sectors of education are required to demonstrate their learning and undertake classroom instruction through oral responses and within a verbal communication system that each teacher establishes. However, the form and content of the oral language register or 'teacherese' that each teacher establishes appears to have received little research attention in New Zealand. While the linguistic proficiency of a five-year-old differs in its form, use and content to that of older students, the transitions in communicative use and understandings that a five-year-old is required to make are, I believe, challenging and noteworthy for learning. Tayler (1992) elaborates on this when he talks about language as the major medium of the classroom.

Language and the communicative context in which language exists is the essence of any learning experience. Language not only reflects covert thinking about one's role, but also reflects those factors which teachers and pupils consider important in relating to others. Language is the major medium through which teaching and learning is conducted... (p123).

The importance of understanding teachers' beliefs about spoken language in classrooms may be central to controlling and improving learning and behavioural outcomes. For example, the way teachers communicate in class may influence the way student's learning progresses. *A teacher who monitors his or her own language in the classroom is in command of a powerful medium of professional self development (Tayler, 1992, p141).*

Teacher talk has interested several researchers, including Mercer (2000), who studied the classroom talk of teachers in several countries. What he noted was that whatever the country, language or culture, teachers use the same traditional conversational teaching techniques of recapitulations, elicitations, repetitions, reformulations and exhortations. Others also identified the unique conversational behaviour that teachers employ, namely telling pupils what to talk, when to talk and how well they have talked (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Stubbs, 1983). While teaching techniques that utilise spoken language remain a teacher's main tool of trade in the classroom, we know little about the assumptions or beliefs that teachers hold about oral language.

It is acknowledged that students develop the ability to communicate orally not from dictionaries, but from others. If schools wish to enhance and develop the oral communication of young students, Mercer (2000) contends that:

An adult has to make careful judgements about what a child understands at any one point in time, to base their communications with the child upon these judgements, and adapt the kind of intellectual support they give the child to take account of their developing knowledge and understanding. If they do so systematically while engaged in joint activity with the child, the adult can enable the child to make progress which they would not have been able to do alone (p139).

Do teachers go about making careful judgements about a child's oral language and promote its development in a systematic way? The theories and practices espoused by Mercer (2000), and the earlier theories of Vygotsky (1962) and Bruner (1990), clearly link language development with learning. This project hopes to highlight whether classroom teachers subscribe to such theories.

Of particular personal interest have been the varying beliefs that teachers have expressed informally about what is or isn't oral language, how they facilitate its development in the classroom and the importance or otherwise they assign to 'talking in class.' It was a remark made last year by a teacher that provided additional impetus for this project and caused me to reflect on the importance of teachers' beliefs. June (pseudonym) said: "*Oh no, I don't do oral language in my class because Mary is working with them in the morning - she takes them for oral language not me.*" I thank June for her remark as it made me think about the importance of teachers' beliefs and, in particular, beliefs held about oral language.

In the past ten years, interest in the language of the classroom has had a strong literacy focus, although as MacLure (1992) points out, even a simple verbal communication requires all sorts of abilities, ranging from the linguistic and intellectual to the interpersonal, cultural and emotional. While five-year-olds may have an impressive array of knowledge and expertise when they enter school, they still have a long way to go in developing those abilities. It is important to acknowledge that such abilities are usually accomplished when they are acting and talking with each other and adults (Mercer, 2000). Through talking, students establish the conditions

necessary for meaning making. As they make and take meaning from others and the world around them, they continue to practise, refine, transform and shape their tool-kit of oral language to meet ever-changing communicative and learning needs.

While meaning making and meaning taking are essential features of oral language, how teachers believe they promote spoken language within their class and what strategies or programmes they use to do this is less clear, as are the changes to existing beliefs about oral language in new entrant classrooms that might occur following a period of review or reflection. While the central role that teachers can play as change agents is now acknowledged, there is also growing awareness that teaching practice can be influenced by the beliefs that a classroom teacher holds. If we are to examine and consider assisting student's oral language development and the discourse of the classroom, then it would seem paramount that we begin by first seeking to understand and acknowledge the classroom practitioner's paradigm.

Purpose of the study

The aim or purpose of this project is to gain insight into what beliefs teachers have about oral language and its development in new entrant classrooms. However, in order to promote the oral language development of five-year-olds, their teachers' beliefs about the nature and purpose of oral language need to be ascertained. This project involves three phases:

- The first, to document seven teachers' beliefs, experiences and perceptions of the nature and purpose of oral language, including its assessment and

promotion in the new entrant classroom.

- The second, to establish whether each teacher's beliefs, opinions and ideas show evidence of change following a period of review or reflection.
- The third, to narrate the themes, to make meaning from them, and then to reflect, review and consider the issues and implications of the documented material.

The research puzzle and problem

In a classroom of five-year-old students, spoken language presents as the all-pervasive primary medium for teaching, learning and classroom communications, although little research into the beliefs, theories or practices that teachers have about student's spoken language and its development has been undertaken.

The research questions

- What beliefs about the nature and purpose of oral language are held by new entrant teachers?
- How do teachers believe they assess a five-year-old student's oral language and facilitate its development?
 - When asked to undertake a reflective assignment, do teachers confirm, challenge or modify their beliefs about oral language?

It is hoped that with an understanding of the complexity and interrelatedness of teachers' personal experiences, beliefs and practices, a greater understanding about teaching, learning and meaning making in the new entrant classroom will result.

CHAPTER TWO

A Review of the Literature

This review seeks to provide a background to the literature and the topics central to this project namely oral language, teacher beliefs and reflection. For coherence, dedicated subsections relating to oral language, teacher beliefs and reflection are provided and summarised briefly.

Oral language

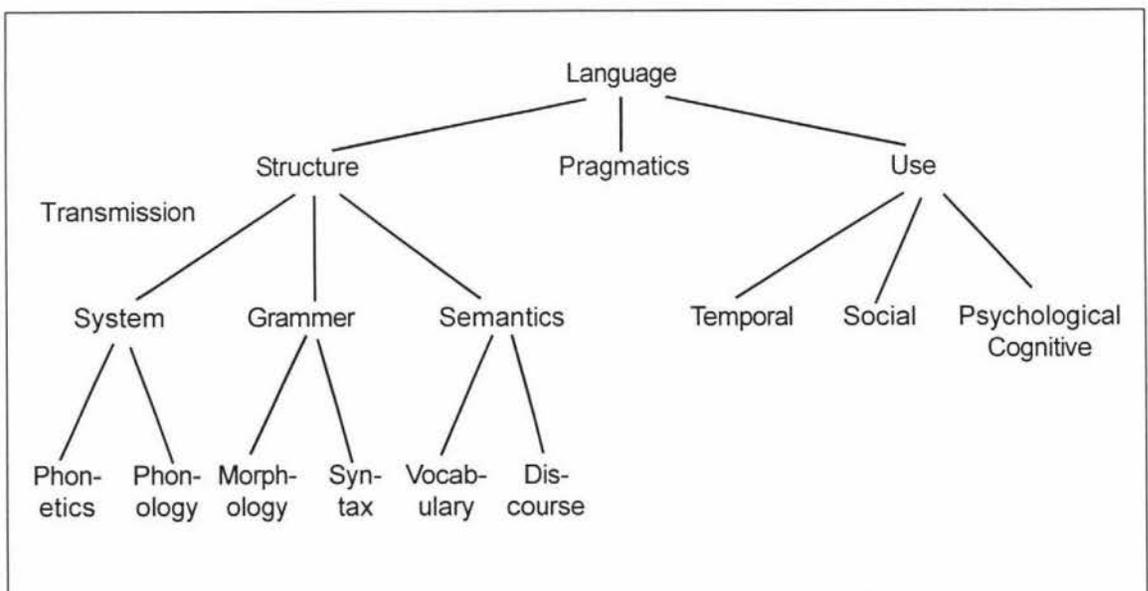
When we learn to talk, we learn to respond and engage with others in unique and structured ways. From birth, we begin to use our oral language to influence others and, in so doing, both our own and others' thoughts and actions are influenced. It is that influence on what we think and do, and what others think and do, that places oral language at the heart of teaching and learning. Although the context within which and with whom we communicate is of pivotal importance, oral language is also the primary vehicle at a new entrant teacher's disposal to elicit, guide, shape and direct learners in the class setting.

However, while *The English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994a) framework gives achievement objectives, it does not define oral language or its role in teaching and learning. For the purposes of this project, it was considered important to identify the significant aspects of oral language that contribute collectively to a framework that gives form and function to a child's spoken language in a variety

of contexts (Crystal, 1987; Crystal, Fletcher & Garman, 1989; Wiig & Semel, 1984). When we speak, we engage many processes and actions that combine, integrate and synergise to form sounds and words. However, the range and complexity of these processes that make, take, shape and transmit meaning are also acknowledged.

Figure 2.1

Elements of receptive and expressive speech and oral language structures that contribute collectively to a framework that gives form and function to a child's oral language. (From David Crystal, 1987, p51)



Some of the elements of oral language identified (fig 2.1) that interconnect to give form and function to a child's oral language are also identified by other linguists, speech pathologists, psychologists and language specialists (Crystal, Fletcher & Garman, 1989; Gleason, 2005; Justice, 2004; Ministry of Education, 1996a; Shames & Wiig, 1982; Smiley & Goldstein, 1998; Wiig & Semel, 1984). They refer to frameworks that include:

The transmission system. The structural transmission system of oral language can be described in terms of its phonetics and phonology. Crystal (1987) notes that phonetics is about: *The vast range of sounds that the human vocal tract can produce and the human ear perceive (p46)*. It involves articulation, acoustic transmission and auditory reception. Phonology, on the other hand, describes the way a language differentiates its sound systems and is about: *the much more restricted range of sounds which actually appear in a language (Crystal, 1987, p46)*.

Grammar. Grammar also forms part of the structure of oral language and includes morphology, which is how units of meanings are added to words, and syntax, which is how spoken words are organised to become meaningful sense units. (fig 2.1)

Semantics. Semantics is about the meaning of language and involves meaning making and meaning taking. It also forms part of the structure of oral language. Semantics includes vocabulary, the words that form the language, and discourse, or how words cohere to form dialogue and discussions during conversations. Discourse was defined by Gee (1996) as: *“...the word “discourse”, with a little “d”, to mean language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories). “Big D” Discourses are always language plus other stuff ” (p17), (Parenthesis in original)*. Gee’s definition also links with the temporal, social, psychological and cognitive aspects of language use that Crystal (1987) identifies (fig2.1).

Pragmatics. Pragmatics is the way oral language is applied in various social situations or contexts. It focuses on how language is used rather than the way it is

structured. Pragmatics is about: when to say what, to whom, and how much (Hymes, 1971), (fig 2.1).

The use of language. The use of complex temporal, social, psychological and cognitive synergies in oral language enable words to be used in various contexts for whatever meaning-making or meaning-taking tasks are temporally dictated by individuals. The phenomenon that is oral language occurs when those thoughts are received, considered, discarded, 'filed' or put into words (fig 2.1). Such phenomena require synthesis and integration. The integration of the processes involved in the development of oral language is exceedingly complex, as is the interpretive function of oral language itself.

There is a growing research interest in how language development interfaces with student's social and psychological development (Gleason, 2005). This development can be illustrated when: [Students]... *use language to clarify and extend their thinking, then communicate their understandings to others* (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994, p75).

While oral language is concerned with the receiving, making, constructing and transmitting of meaning to others using the spoken word, it remains an essential tool for meaning making and meaning taking. However, the transmission, grammar and semantics of oral language are influenced in the school setting by specific curriculum areas, particularly as a child advances through school, where linguistic identifiers or subject registers become more specific. Although subject areas have unique registers

of spoken and printed words, words in printed form differ in fundamental and significant ways to spoken words. As Halliday (1985) notes, writing [and reading] and speaking are not just alternative ways of doing the same things but ways of doing different things. This project may also indicate if Halliday's viewpoint concurs with the teachers' beliefs.

In New Zealand, we have a large number of world-recognised teachers, researchers, academics and policy makers in the area of literacy and its development. They include, amongst others, Clay (1972), and also Chapman, Croft, Glynn, McNaughton, Limbrick, Hohepa, Nicholson, Smith, Thompson and Tunmer, who were invited as acknowledged literacy experts by the Secretary of Education in 1998 to provide advice to the Ministry of Education on literacy and literacy instruction. Their recommendations were published as a report to the Secretary for Education by the Ministry of Education (1999). As a group, these authors have highlighted individually and collectively the many important dimensions that contribute to the effective teaching of literacy and have staunchly advocated for effective literacy practices. However, while new entrant classrooms have the benefit of their great wealth of expertise and knowledge in the area of literacy practice, it would appear that the specific area of oral language has been comparatively neglected. While there are oral language programmes available, and strategies that purport to assist learners, we lack research on effective classroom oral language assessment methods or research on the strategies and programmes that affect oral language development in New Zealand classrooms.

The *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* document was developed by the Ministry of Education in 1994(a) for implementation in New Zealand new entrant classrooms and schools. It defined parameters of language within the classroom and aimed to assist teachers to identify and respond to a wide variety of forms of language in the class setting. In the document, reference to literacy is made only once (p6). However, that reference is in contrast to more recent publications where oral language, oracy and classroom discourse are placed within a literacy construct, and reference is made to oral language texts (Ministry of Education, 2002a).

While readers make and take meaning from print, speakers communicate meaning through talk, and make, take and develop meaning from and with talk. However, while thoughts depend on linguistic abilities, the linguistic framework oral language provides also assists learning and communication (Smith & Elley, 1997). If teachers view oral language as solely part of *English in New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994a), then, maybe as McNaughton (2002) notes: *The activities selected, arranged and deployed by teachers working with beginning children may deliver a curriculum that narrows, rather than broadens, a child's emergent expertise...*(pp101-102).

While there is an emerging bank of empirical research in the areas of oral language and classroom discourse outside New Zealand, little has been undertaken in New Zealand that relates to new entrant classrooms. Similarly, research that demonstrates how children in New Zealand transition from early childhood to new entrant classrooms has been slow to emerge, although continuity in programming between the early

childhood and the compulsory sector is advocated in the early childhood *Te Whaariki Curriculum* document (Ministry of Education, 1996b). *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b) begins with the learner, and communication at non-verbal, verbal, experiential, cultural, discovery and creative levels is celebrated and encouraged from an holistic perspective. The links between *Te Whaariki* and the *Essential Skill Areas* and the *Essential Learning Areas* within the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1994b) are also clearly documented and promoted in *Te Whaariki*. In *Te Whaariki*, children's development is promoted from an integrated perspective. The document advocates that children are empowered to learn and grow in their own environments. Within the *Te Whaariki* framework, language in all its forms is promoted and a child's learning and experiences are considered interconnected. Language is viewed within an integrated curriculum. Verbal communication and other language registers such as images, drama, movement, mathematics, music and rhythm are also viewed within *Te Whaariki* as important connective threads of communication. Unlike *English in The New Zealand Curriculum*, the terms 'oral language', 'spoken language', 'discourse' and 'literacy' are not mentioned in *Te Whaariki*, although reference is made to verbal and non-verbal language and verbal and non-verbal communication styles. The document *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, in contrast to *Te Whaariki*, builds a framework for primary school language and the secondary school English practices. *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* also focuses on achievement objectives, whereas *Te Whaariki* focuses on a child's learning outcomes, where knowledge, skills and attitudes are viewed in terms of their interconnectedness.

Research was undertaken with students and teachers of four- to six-year-olds for a project in the Mangere-Otara area of New Zealand (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2000). It looked at effective ways to support literacy, including oral language development. The project was titled 'Picking up the Pace' and detailed how innovative interventions raised literacy levels and how, with specific support, a student's low progress in decile one schools is neither inevitable nor immutable. It demonstrated too that with appropriate programming and support, including targeted professional development for teachers, children's literacy progress can be accelerated (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2000). Although the interventions focused on enhancing children's literacy, they also were directed towards changing teachers' beliefs about language, learning and literacy. On review, the research would appear to highlight the need for oracy, literacy, language and vocabulary to be clearly defined by educationalists to ensure that there is a common semantic framework. As Munby (1982) points out, there are frequently false assumptions made that teachers and researchers share perceptions and therefore understand language identically.

Of particular interest and relevance to this project are the beliefs about oral language and the measures used in the 'Picking up the Pace' study to define and measure it (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2000). As the report states: *Assessments were selected [which]...reflect...[the] language expertise valued in New Zealand schools* (p32).

While teachers' values and beliefs were acknowledged to be important, it might be

inferred from the project that oral language outside a literacy framework is not valued in New Zealand schools. The report indicated that the oral language of students was 'measured' using two assessments of receptive and expressive language. In the first 'measure', the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) was used (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). In this test, a child is given a stimulus word by the examiner and asked to point to a picture from within a group of four. The stimulus words are from the Standard American English vocabulary and not normed for New Zealand students. No verbalisations are required from the student. 'Picking up the Pace' asserts that each student's receptive language abilities were assessed and that the PPVT was chosen for its fit with literacy development. However, no record of each student's auditory acuity or hearing status was documented in the research report. Could it be inferred that auditory acuity was not considered, or is perhaps not considered important for the development of literacy? While auditory acuity is acknowledged as important for the development of receptive language, the differences between a child's receptive vocabulary (semantics) and their receptive language (which also involves the processing and cognitive synergising of the understanding of structure, form and content of the spoken words in context) (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Crystal, Fletcher & Garman, 1989) were not clarified in the study.

Story re-tell was also used in the 'Picking up the Pace' study as a second 'measure' and yielded information about each child's memory, as well as their structure and use of spoken language. Paris and Paris (2003) note that: *Narrative competence is a fundamental aspect of children's comprehension of experiences before they begin to read, and it helps children map their understanding onto texts* (p40).

The story re-tell task, 'Tell Me', is a criterion-referenced language assessment procedure and currently forms part of the New Zealand School Entry Assessment Battery or SEA (Ministry of Education, 1997). 'Tell Me' has two assessment phases: one of familiarisation, the other assessment. The familiarisation phase requires a child to listen to a tester read an unfamiliar story. The child then re-tells the story to an audience of same-age peers using the teacher's book. The strength of this procedure is that when a child constructs a storyline, the teacher has an opportunity to measure a child's independent language production and comprehension in a meaningful context (Bruner & Haste, 1987; Paris & Paris, 2003). Following the re-tell task, each child receives a score from the teacher based on their comprehension, sentence complexity, vocabulary and cohesion (organisation, description and content). As the teacher listens and scores the re-tell, they gain an understanding of each child's language and how that child re-tells the language of the book. This ability to re-tell a story from a text is considered by Paris and Paris (2003) to be an important literary skill.

In the quest to ensure that children read and write, have new entrant educators shifted their focus to literacy, including literary skills, and away from children's oral language development? Could there also have been an accompanying shift away from using spoken language in context for meaning making, for playing, for having fun and for learning? From another perspective, it could be contended that literacy, rather than oracy, is now being redefined to become the primary mode of communication in contrast to previous millennia, when spoken communication was valued as a communicative meaning-taking and meaning-making tool. As Johnson and Kress

(2003) point out: *Globalisation is placing new demands on the kinds of 'literacies' we need in the workplace as much as in the communication demands of everyday life* (p5).

Is there a difference between literacy and oracy? Nine years ago, the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1996a) signalled important differences between oracy and literacy:

Language development is crucial to learning because it is through language that young children construct meaning and communicate with others....The ease with which young children learn to communicate orally demonstrates that it is not learning language that is hard but learning it in classrooms! (p8)

Growing evidence suggests that learning language in a classroom context differs from learning language in the context of the home and that teachers talk very little with individual children in pre-school (Dickinson and Sprague, 2001). However, in terms of spoken communication, there also appears to be a lack of information in New Zealand on how much dyadic conversation either a new entrant teacher or individual children engage in, and with what effect on a child's learning and/or behaviour.

In 1994, the Ministry of Education noted that: *[Teachers need to]...identify patterns of development in their student's use of language; know how to facilitate learning*

through the students' awareness of their own language skills; understand the organisation and functions of the English language (1994a, p9).

Since 1996, the role of oral language as a meaning-making tool appears to have received less emphasis in the New Zealand context. There are striking differences between the publications of nine years ago to those published within the last three to four years, and oral language appears to have become aligned with and incorporated into a literacy paradigm. For example, *Oral language underpins all literacy learning* (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p2).

An all-embracing concept of literacy now appears to have emerged. It includes oral language and oracy within a literacy framework and is signalling a paradigm shift from *English in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework* towards a 'Literacy Curriculum Framework'. Are we, as McNaughton (2002) cautioned, delivering a curriculum that narrows rather than broadens a child's emergent needs? *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* emphasises communication skills and focuses on the ability and confidence to communicate competently in English within the areas of oral (listening and speaking), written (reading and writing) and visual language (viewing and presenting). This paradigm shift under a literacy umbrella appears to coincide with the recommendations made by the Literacy Experts' Report to the NZ Secretary of Education (Ministry of Education, 1999) and also includes a 'National Literacy Goal': *By 2005, every child turning nine will be able to read, write and do maths for success.*

The Ministry of Education (2003a) has also signalled an inclusive literacy framework that is far wider than reading and written language. They state that: *Literacy is the ability to understand, respond to, and use those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities* (p19). This inclusive emphasis appears to have been accepted by teaching practitioners and was highlighted by a reading recovery teacher who stated in personal communication with the writer that: “*Literacy is all forms of communications using words*” (Kay, March 2005).

In contrast, *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines literacy as the antithesis of illiteracy (Little, W.; Fowler, H.W.; Coulson, J.; 1973). Children are presumed to be illiterate until they are acquainted with letters. However, if that concept of literacy were considered by educators to be something of an anachronism, then maybe the definitions now applied to literacy in this century may also prove anachronistic in the future. Does this signal the emergence of a new literacy paradigm, given that there is strong evidence to suggest that the old paradigm is unable to deal with the way literacy is now viewed? Kuhn (1970) would suggest that it does. Christie (2004) too contends that English has now become synonymous with literacy and that a robust theory of knowledge about language is needed, and suggests that the curriculum area of English needs new directions of a kind that only functional theories of language can provide.

How do teachers of new entrant children seek to understand or assess a child’s oral language? While there are a number of reading assessment tools available for New Zealand teachers, there are relatively few guidelines available to assist teachers to

identify patterns of development in students' oral language. In New Zealand, new entrant teachers have, in the past few years, used one or more of the oral language assessment tools outlined (table 2.1). As the assessments outlined measure only some discrete aspects of spoken language, their value in widening a teacher's understanding of an individual child's oral language development and its links with learning and meaning making appear to have received little research attention.

Table 2.1

Oral language assessment tools used in New Zealand by new entrant teachers.

Assessment publication	Aspects of oral language that the assessment aims to address.
<p>Junior Oral Screening Test JOST</p> <p>Developed by: J.Keaney, A.Clarkson & M. Hunt.</p> <p>Specialist Education Services, NZ. (1998).</p>	<p>An oral language screening tool that views how a child uses discrete aspects of oral language: the transmission system; grammar; semantics (including receptive and expressive vocabulary); and pragmatics. The child’s use of spoken language can be gauged, although there are no pass or fail criteria. This test aims to assist teachers to identify students who might have specific oral language needs requiring additional classroom support, programme modification or referral to a speech-language therapist.</p>
<p>Record of Oral Language ROL</p> <p>M.Clay, M. Gill, T.Glynn, S.McNaughton, & K.Salmon Heinemann (1983).</p>	<p>This is a sentence repetition task. The teacher dictates sentences of increasing length and complexity and the student repeats them. Its purpose is to assist teachers make planning decisions based on the data collected. While repeating sentences is one aspect of measuring a child’s short-term memory, control over the structure of language for phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary is less able to be gauged. For example, some children have the ability to memorise and repeat sounds and words even though they do not understand the meaning (Gentile, 2001). The limitations of the ROL are that it does not allow a child to employ the functions of language for social use and the learner does not communicate any personal thoughts, feelings or intentions, which Wells (1996) considers essential.</p>

<p>Communicate To Participate C to P</p> <p>Developed by C.Grace, J. van der Wal, J.Harris & L.Rivers. Special Education Service (1999).</p>	<p>A New Zealand kit designed to assist teachers to identify childrens' language strengths and guide the teacher to make decisions, for example in-class programming or referral to a speech-language therapist. The kit includes the JOST and additional checklists for the transmission system (including speech intelligibility, voice quality, fluency and phonological awareness), grammar, semantics and pragmatics. The interdependency of a child's motor development, their play, and attending and listening behaviours and their 'transdependability' with the development of oral language is emphasised.</p>
<p>The First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum.</p> <p>Developed by the Education Department of Western Australia (1994). Longman.</p>	<p>This Australian programme identifies milestones in children's oral language growth and development (key indicators). It recommends the compilation of an individual student file and makes links between the assessment areas of systematic observation and recording, teaching strategies, and language and literacy behaviours.</p>

Prior to the emergence of a 'new' literacy focus, a publication by the Ministry of Education (1996a) cited important differences between children's conversational and written communications. Those differences between speaking, reading and written language were flagged as important, not only for teacher awareness, but also for classroom teaching and children's learning. During the past ten years, however, a strong emphasis on literacy has been advocated. For example, the

Ministry of Education (2003a) stated that it is necessary for all teachers to have an extensive and continually developing knowledge of the process of becoming literate, about teaching strategies and the strategies students need to master in the reading process.

The Ministry of Education (1996a & 2003a) has also advised schools to be aware when developing language programmes for children that the language backgrounds of the students and their culture, as well as the teachers' beliefs about how students learn, should all be considered and factored into decision-making processes. While no national empirical data on students' home-language backgrounds is available in the public domain, this factor was included in this project because it was considered important for oral language development, teaching and learning in new entrant classrooms.

In summary: It is contended that oral language is at the heart of teaching and learning and has a profound influence on what each person in the classroom thinks and does. It is also acknowledged that, while curriculum statements are not intended to define oral language, for the purpose of this project, a sketch of the structures and uses of oral language is considered important, as are the assessments New Zealand teachers use to record five-year-old students' oral language development. Some New Zealand research is identified that highlights the various understandings and beliefs that are held about oral language and literacy. There are also indicators within the literature that suggest that a paradigm shift has occurred in how English, oral language and reading are regarded by policy makers and classroom practitioners.

Teacher beliefs

Kagan (1992) defined teacher beliefs as being: *Tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught* (p65). Goodenough (1963), however, noted that beliefs can be: *Accepted as guides for assessing the future... cited in support of decisions, or... referred to in passing judgement on the behaviour of others* (p151).

In view of the comments of Goodenough (1993) and Kagan (1992), the relationship between the beliefs held by teachers about spoken language and how teachers currently interpret English within the *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* framework was not evident in the literature. However, Woods (1996) offered a view of beliefs about spoken language when he postulated that: *People unconsciously internalize beliefs about language throughout their lives, and so the beliefs about what language is, what 'proper' language is ...vary from individual to individual and are often deeply held* (p186).

Do a teacher's assumptions and beliefs in turn affect their classroom priorities? Kagan (1992) noted that a teacher's priorities in the classroom are likely to be dependent on their particular assumptions about language, learning and teaching. Do teachers' beliefs about oral language evolve from a curriculum document or from pedagogical beliefs or neither? Kagan (1992) and Woods (1996) imply that pedagogical beliefs form the keystone of a teacher's beliefs and typically do not change, but continue instead to be reflected in a teacher's in-class teaching. What happens when teachers do not have the background training in a subject or the

relevant information to make decisions about what and how to teach a particular subject area? Shavelson, Cadwell and Izu (1977) found that when relevant information was available for decision making, then the teachers used that information to make decisions. However, when information was not available, Shavelson et al. (1977) postulated that teachers' beliefs about education and teaching then guided their practice.

Are teachers' beliefs resistant to change? Rokeach (1968) questioned whether the priorities that people ascribe to more deeply held beliefs also make their beliefs more difficult and resistant to change. In tandem with Rokeach (1968), Raths (2001) expresses similar views to Kagan (1992) and Woods (1996), and postulates that assumptions about teaching are core beliefs and are therefore immutable.

What effects do a teacher's beliefs have on their day-to-day teaching practice? Beliefs and values are shaped by teachers' expectations, as well as their theoretical knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2003a). Braithwaite (1999) and Hedges (2002) also explore teacher beliefs and contend that they impact on the curriculum and on the pedagogy that teachers provide, because their beliefs automatically become enmeshed in day-to-day teaching practice. Beliefs then act like a filter and only person-specific beliefs make it through the filtering process to direct perceptions and behaviours. From the work of Braithwaite (1999) and Hedges (2002), it could be inferred that, to a classroom practitioner, curriculum documents are largely irrelevant, because it is not the curriculum but the enactment of a practitioner's beliefs that drives day-to-day teaching practice.

Johnson (1994) appears to concur with Lortie's (1975) idea that a teacher's beliefs act like a filter throughout their day-to-day teaching practice. Johnson notes that, within the literature, three basic assertions are made. Firstly, that a teacher's beliefs influence their perception and judgement. Secondly, that a teacher's beliefs play a role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices. Thirdly, that an understanding of each teacher's beliefs by in-service and pre-service educators is an essential first step if there are changes anticipated to improve teaching practices and teacher education programmes. On the other hand, little is written about phenomena that shape a teacher's beliefs about oral language, or about the beliefs that teachers hold about what roles oral language and its development play in classrooms.

Evidence suggests that in areas of educational research, there is a movement towards describing phenomena that shape our beliefs. Fang (1996) writes about a move away from studies of observable teacher behaviours (for example observing what a teacher does in class) towards a cognitive behavioural focus on what teachers think and believe. Fang (1996) argues that this focus shift should enhance our understanding of teaching processes and practices. Nisbett and Ross (1980) also advocate a move away from observing what teachers do in class towards what teachers' think and how their theories and beliefs can be employed to improve teaching practice. This endorses the views of Johnson (1994), Kagan (1992) and Lortie (1975) that a teacher's values, beliefs and culture are important and should be acknowledged.

Within the literature, there appear to be two competing theses, one of consistency versus one of inconsistency, relating to teacher beliefs and practices. For example, a teacher's espoused beliefs may appear consistent, yet when viewed against their day-to-day practices may appear less consistent. There is evidence to suggest that what educators say or believe they practise may differ perceptually from an observer's perspective of that educator's practice.

Furthermore, it could be asserted that each teacher holds differing beliefs about oral language. Deford (1985) considers an individual teacher's knowledge aggregates to form a system of beliefs and attitudes that direct his/her perceptions and behaviours. Schulman (1986), in contrast, reconfigures the notion of individual perceptions into beliefs and perceptions that form intersecting spheres of influence. Those beliefs, in turn, embrace subject matter and pedagogical and curricular areas; all are interdependent. What each teacher believes, and their rationale for determining the incorporation and practice of oral language in the classroom, is at the heart of this project.

Delamont (1995), Grundy (1987), Hargreaves (1994) and Holes (1998) all acknowledge that teachers' thinking, knowledge and beliefs are important. They contend that to paint a comprehensive and complete picture of teacher practice, we need to view it in context. Kagan (1992), on the other hand, takes a more pragmatic approach than that taken in the later work by Hargreaves (1994) and Holes (1998) and suggests that teachers obtain most of their ideas and beliefs from their own and fellow teachers. Hargreaves (1994) and Holes (1998) suggest that teachers filter

colleagues' ideas and beliefs through their own belief systems to create personalised pedagogical beliefs. Again, questions about the particular belief systems that teachers possess about oral language development and the discourse of the classroom surface. Based on the literature, observational and experimental research methods would be inappropriate for a study of teachers' beliefs, as would questionnaires alone, given the uniqueness, depth and complexity of each classroom teacher's beliefs (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

Connecting with the notion of beliefs, Zeichner and Tabachinck (1981) postulate that the thousands of hours that teachers have spent as pupils in classrooms doing an apprenticeship of observation, usually over ten thousand hours, have shaped their beliefs about teaching. They speculate that most teachers' beliefs about teaching remain dormant until they became teachers and re-enter the classroom. This viewpoint concurs with research among teacher trainees. There, it is noted that trainees believe they already know what it takes to be a good teacher and therefore have little to learn from studying teacher practice (Kennedy, 1997). Do such preconceptions exist for oral language? Bruner (1996) notes that teachers not only have preconceptions, but also have acquired a 'folk pedagogy' reflecting some: *Wired in human tendencies and some deeply ingrained beliefs* (p46).

However, the question again arises: are beliefs merely assumptions or are they guides for future action or is there something unconscious that goes on as well? Clark and Petersen (1986) review the literature in relation to teachers' beliefs and use the term 'thought processes' rather than beliefs or assumptions. These 'thought processes'

they compartmentalise into teacher planning, interactive thoughts and decisions, and teachers' theories and beliefs. It is the latter (theories and beliefs) that Clark and Petersen (1986), together with Munby (1982), suggest contribute to a teacher's general knowledge and how they perceive, process and act upon classroom information minute by minute. Their writings also concur with the works of Deford (1985) and Schulman (1986).

Is teaching practice also affected by a teacher's beliefs? Fang (1996) highlights that each teacher needs to believe in a particular notion or practice before they undertake it in their classroom. Fang asserts that beliefs are important and fundamental. In other words, if a teacher believes that you need to ask questions to develop a child's language, then that same teacher might be less inclined to embrace any other notion. In contrast, if a teacher had never seriously considered oral language or its development, they might assume that oral language is of relatively little importance to learning or meaning making. However, Fullan (1991) reminds us that: *The relationship between prior beliefs and program experiences is crucial, complex and not straightforward* (p296).

Earlier work by Lashley (1980) issues a challenge to pre-service teachers to examine their beliefs or otherwise perpetuate current practices and maintain the status quo when they too become classroom practitioners. This links to the later writings of Delamont (1995), Grundy (1987), Hargreaves (1994), Holes (1998), and Nisbett and Ross (1980). Nevertheless, how each teacher's assumptions or thought processes influence oral language and its classroom development are considerations for this

project. Brophy and Good (1974) are amongst the earliest to assert that a better understanding of teachers' belief systems can only enhance and contribute to educational effectiveness. Recent research also suggests that didactic approaches to teacher development are alone insufficient to alter teacher beliefs and practices (Hargreaves, 1994; Putnam & Borko, 1997).

Another notion is that teachers' practices and beliefs are affected by the curriculum. Arksey and Knight (1999) found that in the United States, the National Curriculum affects what teachers believe about particular subjects. It may well be that *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994a) and *The Essential Skill Areas within The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1994b) are also influencing how New Zealand teachers perceive and cater for oral language development in their class setting? In a recent publication, the Ministry of Education (2003a) states that: *Teachers' expectations are shaped by: their beliefs and values; their professional and theoretical knowledge* (p15).

If expectations are shaped not only by beliefs, but also by pedagogical theories and professional knowledge, then understanding what professional and theoretical knowledge teachers articulate about oral language and its ongoing development could be important. Such professional and theoretical knowledge of oral language is identified by Halliday (1993) who, as a linguist, identifies spheres of language development in children that he suggests need to be recognised if children's classroom learning needs are to be addressed. He contends that there are three interconnecting spheres of language development that need to be acknowledged by

educators: how a child develops and learns language; how a child learns through language; and later how a child learns about language.

However, do educators believe in a theoretical and professional framework that positions oral language and its development only within a literacy framework? Although there is little in the literature that relates specifically to teachers' beliefs about oral language, there is literature on teachers' beliefs about reading that contends that a teacher's personal beliefs about teaching and learning do have effects on decision making in the classroom. Other studies support the notion that teachers possess particular theoretical beliefs about reading that shape and define the nature of the reading instructional practices in their classrooms (Blanton & Moorman, 1987; Brophy & Good, 1974; Longberger, 1992).

In terms of shaping and defining beliefs, Phillips, McNaughton and MacDonald (2000) note that the interventions employed in their study effected positive changes in the teachers' attitudes, expectations and understandings about literacy. Their study found that: *Teachers' attitudes, beliefs and expectations changed as a result of the professional development and this was accompanied by an added willingness to take responsibility for children's achievement* (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2000; p190).

When, or if, we stop to consider our own beliefs, assumptions or thought processes, do we, in the process of review or reflection, create impediments to what might have been a naturally occurring phenomenon? Katz and Raths (1985) and Raths (2001)

propose that each person's skills represent only a capacity to act, while a person's beliefs, in contrast, reflect an individual's disposition to act. Raths (2001) suggests that if the concept of 'dispositions' was used, rather than 'teacher beliefs', many of the issues that hamper the improvement of current teaching practice would be avoided. The issue of how to overcome this conundrum was addressed in a New Zealand project during which the professional development undertaken focused on a co-constructivist view of language, literacy and learning for effective classroom practice (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2000). Mc Naughton (2002), in a later work, describes how:

High expectations held by teachers (about literacy) are derived from beliefs that effective patterns of co-construction can be achieved in classrooms and schools. The corollary of this claim is that difficulties in developing conventional literacy at school are a reflection of the patterns of co-construction in the classrooms (p209).

Is this merely semantics or do teacher beliefs (like those of parents) influence what teachers do and how they do it? Palacios, González and Moreno (1992) looked at the links between the beliefs of parents and their educational practices. In particular, a strong correlation was noted between parents who had beliefs in their children's capabilities and how they interacted with them. Teachers' beliefs about classroom practice, in comparison, are highlighted by Braithwaite (1999), McNaughton (2002)

and Brock (2003), who identify the significant interplay between each teacher's personal ideologies and their classroom practice, which affects pedagogical encounters in the classroom. Likewise, Jordan and Stanovich (2003) cite how differences in teachers' beliefs show co-relatedness with their classroom instructional practices, affecting teacher-student and teacher-class interactions, although there appears to be little in the literature that identifies whether teachers are consciously aware of how their beliefs are reflected and used in their teaching practice.

Research undertaken suggests that while teachers hold professional beliefs about reading, they also possess strong theoretical frameworks about reading (Brophy & Good, 1974; Harste, Woodward & Bourke, 1984). This is partially supported by Elley's (2004) research, which looks at effective reading programmes within the junior school area of thirteen New Zealand schools. All the schools followed standard literacy programmes. The major teaching focus identified was an emphasis on meaning making, while the meaning focus was developed through lots of reading to, with and by students. The teachers interviewed were also avid recreational readers and knew a great deal about the reading process, which is attributed to their Reading Recovery training.

Beliefs and theories about classroom language are articulated by Cazden (1990, 2003). She argues that classroom discourse affects the unobservable thinking of each student, what they learn and how they make and take meaning from communications. Cazden (1990; 2003) also emphasises that meaning making is governed by language. Howe (1997), in accordance with the work of Cazden,

highlights the importance of 'talking in class' and describes how children's talk and the talk of the classroom can no longer be regarded as a means to an end or something that helps a child learn to read or participate in a math lesson. However, there appears to be an absence of literature to indicate whether teachers also believe in and endorse the work of either Cazden (1990, 2003) or Howe (1997).

Furthermore, an absence of talk and the subsequent effects of this on learning was highlighted by Ward and Dix (2001). They noted in reference to written language that ten-year-old children had few opportunities to talk, ask questions and share or offer suggestions. Do teachers also believe that if five-year-olds have reduced opportunities to talk, then their developing abilities to make and take meaning from what they hear will be affected? If talk can benefit learning, it would seem imperative that we establish what beliefs teachers of five-year-old students hold about the nature and purpose of oral language and its development in the classroom. Evidence would suggest that language and learning share a unique, ongoing inter-relationship and, as Halliday (1993) asserts, when children learn oral language they are learning the foundation of learning itself. Wells (2001) also acknowledges that the primacy of dialogue between people is fundamental to learning and to understanding. In a similar vein, Grudgeon, Hubbard, Smith and Dawes (2001) note that classrooms are immersed in talk. Collectively, these writers also note that although talk is the easiest, most used and most accessible form of human communication in the classroom, it is usually under-recognised and underutilised as an essential tool for meaning making.

When classroom practitioners talk about oral language and the talk of the classroom

as part of reading and written language, is there a complex interplay of beliefs and values at work? Duffy and Anderson (1984) note that teachers of reading clearly articulate their beliefs about the teaching of reading outside the classroom, but their classroom practices appear demonstrably different to their espoused beliefs. The conclusion they reached was that the minute-by-minute, day-by-day demands of the classroom are strong influencing factors and, given such factors, a teacher's classroom practice may not always align with beliefs. The classroom is a busy and complex place for teachers as well as children. With so many variables present in a classroom, what a teacher says and does may depend on ever-changing contexts and situations.

Where schools and classrooms are located, their physical features and available resources also present as influences on teachers' beliefs and practices. Fang (1996) cites strong threads in the literature that suggest that contextual factors can and do exert a strong influence on teachers' beliefs. While contextual factors can affect classroom practice, they can also contribute to the accompanying pedagogical dilemmas that a classroom teacher faces. Some research would suggest that there are dilemmas and inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and their practices. Roehler and Duffy (1991) take the more pragmatic approach and argue that classroom realities influence a teacher's beliefs.

Underpinning the research on teacher beliefs is the importance of the methodologies used and the validity of their construct designs. Fang (1996) notes that when researcher-determined statements have been used for teachers to respond to,

mismatches have been noted between teachers' beliefs and their practices, for example 'I believe in correcting children when they mispronounce words': True or false? The teacher may have made a decision on some occasions to give a child corrective feedback but may rely heavily on making professional judgements about the appropriateness of his/her actions. The research question asked may not have allowed for context-specific or professional judgements. Constructs are open to different interpretations, and a participant's interpretation of a statement versus a researcher's semantic understanding may differ significantly. This returns us to the earlier dilemma relating to semantics and shared understandings and how question choices may be incongruent with the participants' beliefs, which might, in turn, compromise the validity of their responses. The use of a semi-structured interview and narrative format in this project may help to address this dilemma.

While some writers suggest that beliefs act as filters to teacher knowledge, other writers contend that a teacher's beliefs about classroom practices may operate to impede that teacher's capability to make changes to their teaching practices (Anderson & Piazza, 1996; Bratlinger, 1996). Could it be that teachers act as they do because their experiences and beliefs make sense to them? Are subsequent judgements then made from the basis of their individual psycho-cognitive and psycho-linguistic frameworks? Pajares (1992) describes teachers' belief formulations as cognitive-linguistic adaptive functions performed during teaching practice. Does that adaptability also effect change in a teacher's beliefs about oracy or oral language development?

In summary: At this point, an outline of the literature on teacher beliefs has been provided and it has also been acknowledged that beliefs, particularly about language, are often deeply held. The effects of beliefs on teaching practice have also been considered, as have their effects on a classroom teacher's perceptions and behaviours. While the view of beliefs as assumptions was considered, so were the influencing roles of the curriculum and professional development. However, it is also acknowledged that the minute-by-minute and day-to-day realities of the classroom have a significant influence on what a teacher says and does.

A trend was also identified in the literature that suggests that with greater understanding and recognition of teachers' belief systems, the possibilities to effect change and improve learning outcomes for students can be enhanced. The intention of this project is to use appropriate methodological frameworks to document and acknowledge each classroom practitioner's unique beliefs.

Reflection and reflective practice

Reflection and review have some similarities with narrative as all are dependent on talk. A reflective assignment and the documented changes that occurred following the period of review form part of this project's research design. The reflective assignment aimed to engage each teacher in the reflective process. However, what is reflection?

Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it... The capacity to reflect is

developed to different stages in different people (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p19).

Why is reflection important? Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein, Fleishman, Holbrook, Tuman and Waissbluth (1996) suggest that if we continue to teach the way we have been taught rather than the way we have been trained to teach, then we probably will just perpetuate the models we each learned as a pupil. Do our beliefs and our past experiences always have a part to play in reflective practice? Dewey (1933) describes reflection as: *An active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds supporting it and future conclusions to which it tends* (p6).

While beliefs appear strongly linked to reflection, Jackson (1986) suggests that much teaching is undertaken from a platform of personal experience governed by impulsiveness and intuitiveness rather than reflective thought and professional education. The impulsiveness that Jackson (1986) talks about is in contrast to the more circumspect recollective process described by van Manen (1990), who talks about recollective reflection on lived experience. Dewey (1933) also speaks about reflection as a process that draws connections and links between experiences. The literature suggests that reflection is like a circuitous process involving thinking, reviewing, affirming, refining, reforming, refuting, conforming, altering, adjusting, and trialling and mirroring personal perceptions.

In a small study undertaken with pre-service teachers, Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein

et al. (1996) attempted to unlock the tacitly held beliefs of five pre-service teachers. During their 'reflective assignment', the teachers reported that as they paused to reflect on a prior experience, their beliefs were shaped. Likewise, Burns and Bulman (2000) acknowledge that with an awareness of reflection, teachers can draw attention to their practice and its outcomes. They identify four outcomes of reflective practice: new perspectives on experience; change of behaviour; readiness for application; and commitment to action. On the other hand, a good job performance is not necessarily related to overt reflective behaviour and it is possible to be a skilled teacher and review your work practice without ever consciously being a reflective practitioner (Tomlinson, 1999).

However, Walsh, McAllister and Morgan (2002) postulate that reflection does not occur in a vacuum and is unlikely to bring about change that is independent of other influences. Although reflection on practice might allow a teacher to become more insightful, it may not lead to change, although it might be the necessary first step (Cooney, 1999). Perhaps there is an underpinning consonance between reflection or review and a teacher's day-to-day professional practice that affects insight and promotes opportunities for ongoing learning to occur.

Kemmis (1985) notes that as we reflect and/or review, we take stock of something that has happened. Such actions then give rise to interactions between our internal and external worlds. At that point, we become orientated towards further thought and action. Kemmis (1985) also uses the term 'meta-thinking', or thinking about thinking, as individuals consider their actions within a particular context. Reflection becomes,

not an isolated act, but an act requiring a mental review that influences subsequent actions.

Are there links between reflection and reflective practice? Van Manen (1977) speaks of reflective practice as a progression involving three distinct stages. The first involves the effective application of skills and technical knowledge (for example "*Is this group of students benefiting from the use of the task board?*"). During this first phase, the teacher analyses the effects of the strategies used. The second phase involves reflection on personal assumptions held about specific practice, including the consequences of that practice (for example "*This task board isn't working. I wonder, does it help the students achieve those particular learning outcome?*"). This level of reflection implies that a teacher is looking to validate the educational implications of earlier actions and beliefs. The third phase involves questioning the moral and ethical dimensions of decision making as they relate to the classroom and wider school community (for example "*Why have I set up this task board, is it helping to meet the language learning needs... or... because the principal said there must have a task board in every room?*"). At this level of reflection, a teacher may make connections between the classroom situation and other forces that might be impacting on their work.

Schon (1987) takes a slightly different perspective to van Manen (1977) and refers to different modes rather than phases of reflection, namely reflection on action, reflection in action and reflection for action. Reflection on action is described as thinking or reflecting on one's actions and thoughts after you have done something,

while reflection in action is about thinking or reflecting about what you are doing while you are doing it. The third mode, reflection for action, is the desired outcome of the previous two modes. Reflection for action engages a teacher in reflection for re-engagement. All three modes may occur as part of a situation or event (Hatton, Smith & Hatton, 1995).

The literature seems less clear on whether reflection or reflective practice requires supervision or training. Zeichner and Liston (1996) write about two levels of reflection. The first is routine action guided by an external authority and experience and involves little thought. The second level, reflective action, is concerned with why things are undertaken in the classroom. A critical factor identified, however, is not whether there is a stage or level to reflection but whether the process of reflective thinking has a structure that might effect change in the classroom. An individual's intention to review their experiences was identified as a pivotal component of the reflective processes (Dicker & Monda-Amaya, 1997).

Other recent writers advocate that in order to establish a climate of reflective practice, we first need to review, acknowledge and address the beliefs that individuals harbour (Pajares, 1992; Phelan & McLaughlin, 1995). There appear to be connective strands that link beliefs and reflective practice, yet Yost, Sentner and Forlenza-Bailey (2000) point out that fixed beliefs held by an individual will often work counter to reflection because they don't always accommodate multiple viewpoints. Might teachers also have fixed beliefs about oral language that work counter to reflection or review? Moon (1999) believes that there is a need to determine the core objectives of reflective

practice if you are seeking to determine its effects. Copeland, Birmingham and Lewin (1993) take another perspective and suggest that, instead of looking at the effects of reflective practice, we should be reviewing what constitutes a reflective teacher, what is reflection and how we can recognise reflective practice? Laughran (1996) also postulates that the times you review and reflect will affect what you educate or deduce from that reflection.

In Summary: The literature suggests that reflection is about how individuals review process, think about and learn from their actions. It is probably influenced by, and in turn influences, what educators choose to believe or disbelieve, either about oral language or its development in the classroom. While all the theories on reflection and reflective practice are important to consider, it is those of Kemmis (1985) and Walsh, McAllister and Morgan (2002) that highlight a focal consideration that reflection and assumptions do not occur in a vacuum. Although reflection is person specific, there are indications that reflection and the formulation of beliefs and reflective practice share points of interconnectedness. Reflection is also viewed as part of a chain that influences and is influenced by subsequent actions, and, like language, reflection does not occur in a vacuum and probably influences and is influenced by what individuals choose to believe.

Chapter summary

This chapter has acknowledged that, although oral language is still in a formative stage of development when a child enters school, it is also at the heart of teaching and learning. Oral language is complex and involves not only the transmission of

sounds, words and ideas, but also listening, understanding and responding appropriately in a variety of contexts. Oral language does not exist in isolation and has the potential to elicit, guide, shape and direct learning.

No studies on the beliefs that new entrant teachers have about oral language in New Zealand schools were able to be sourced, neither were any studies sourced that related to changes to pre-existing beliefs about oral language that occur following a period of review or reflective practice. As a result, the task of summarising and synthesising past research for the purpose of this project has presented a challenge as a result of the lack of data relating to the beliefs held about oral language and its development in new entrant classrooms. Added to which, there is little known about how effectively oral or spoken language is used in New Zealand classrooms or how children develop, respond to and use oral language in a range of contexts in the new entrant classroom.

An examination of the recent publications suggests that as the ideas and beliefs about oral language have been repositioned from a separate reading and oral language perspective, a new 'literacy paradigm' has developed. Ten years ago, oral language, oracy and classroom discourse were seen as important parts of the *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*; now, oral language appears to have been repositioned within a 'literacy paradigm'.

A trend was also identified in the literature that suggests that with greater understanding and recognition of teachers' belief systems, the possibilities to effect

change and improve learning outcomes for students can be enhanced. While a reflective phase has been incorporated into this project, the theories of reflection, like those of beliefs, are many and varied and none were located that related specifically to oral language in new entrant classrooms in New Zealand. Although the theories of beliefs and reflection appear to have threads of commonality, they also appear to acknowledge that there are often unconsciously held assumptions and phases of beliefs and reflection that are specific to individuals and situations. Moreover, when teachers undertake reflective assignments, as in this project, there appears to be little known about whether they also engage in what Schon (1987) refers to as 'modes of reflection'. Furthermore, whether such engagement then facilitates a review or reconsideration of previously held beliefs is one of the questions posed in this project. If there is a link between reflection and reviewed beliefs, then it could be hypothesised that each teacher will have a metaphorical mirror during this project in which to view their beliefs. As the teachers review their transcripts, they will then have a further opportunity to reflect on and discuss what changes to their assessment, teaching techniques or classroom programmes they anticipate will advance students' oral language development in the class setting.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Procedures

Chapter three outlines the methods chosen for this project and how these methods seek to address the research questions. There are three sections to this chapter. In part one, the methodological approach is described and justified: the case study, narrative reflection, semi-structured interviews and phenomenological approach. In part two, the procedures are outlined and include a profile of the participants: their classes, cultural links and recent professional development. In part three, the processes for 'meaning making' are outlined. To reiterate, the research questions seek to ascertain:

- First, what beliefs do new entrant teachers have about the nature and purpose of oral language in the classroom?
- Second, how do teachers believe they assess a five-year-old student's oral language and facilitate its development?
- Third, when asked to undertake a reflective assignment, do teachers confirm, challenge or modify their beliefs about oral language?

Part One: Methodological Approach

Case study

This case study involves the conscious assembly of phenomena, namely teachers' beliefs, for the purpose of addressing the research questions. Goode and Hatt (1952) describe the case study as a way of organising social data so that its essential character is preserved as a social unit. The beliefs of seven teachers form the social unit of study and, through the use of a semi-structured interview, each teacher's story was recorded. Each teacher's narrated beliefs about oral language then became the foundations and theme of the case study. The case study allowed differing techniques and measures to be employed, yet provided the structural framework for the teachers to talk and have their utterances transcribed, later to be reviewed, reflected upon and retold or 'restored'. Because of the nature of this project, no comparisons with any other group of teachers were made, because the key component in this case study was its group focus (Bouma, 1996). Stake (1995) also emphasises that a case study should focus on the particular rather than the general and allow for the preservation of each teacher's multiple realities. A case study also allows for changes or non-changes to each teacher's beliefs to be documented at the conclusion of their reflective assignment. Furthermore, the case study method facilitates a framework that enables us to construct or re-tell our multiple realities. It is then our spoken language, or talk, that has the ability to temporally "*concretise*" those thoughts, experiences, perceptions and beliefs as they are verbalised (Cullen, 2004).

A phenomenological approach

Moustakas (1994) contends that:

Phenomenology seeks meanings and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgements and understandings. Phenomenology is rooted in questions that give a direction and focus to meaning, and account for our passionate involvement with whatever is being experienced (p58).

A phenomenological approach underpins the design and methodology of this project and supports a description of the parameters, practice and programmes of oral language to be narrated and responded to from each teacher's perspective.

Van Manen (1990) describes how a phenomenological approach can make us aware of how significant the things are that we take for granted, while at the same time allow us to acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual's perception of an experience. A phenomenological approach also allows the attendant meaning structures that emanate to be made visible for others (van Manen, 1977; Wiersma, 2000). Meaning making that underpins oral language is also the hallmark of the phenomenological approach. O'Neill (1974) refers to the collectivity of meaning structures and of meaning making and meaning taking and how a phenomenological approach helps readers, researchers and participants to make sense together. Our beliefs and our language assist us to make and take meaning from phenomena,

including interpersonal communications. Giorgi (1997) used a story about two adults [teachers] viewing a painting to illustrate the phenomenological approach and the importance of meaning making and meaning taking. For example, one teacher may view a student's artwork and say "John, I think that is untidy," while another teacher may walk into the classroom and view the student's painting and say "John, that is a superb painting. I especially like your use of colour. It's beautiful." For Teacher A, the painting was ugly and had phenomenal properties of ugliness, but for teacher B, the painting was beautiful and had phenomenal properties of beauty. If we assume a phenomenological perspective, we can make no claim that the painting is either ugly or beautiful. The painting's existence and the meanings attached to its existence by Teacher A and Teacher B are what are important. Similarly, with an individual's beliefs, there are no right or wrong answers. It is individual perceptions that are important as the phenomena experienced become formed into a story and their individual perceptions and beliefs become embedded in their responses.

How we tell our own stories and the perceptions we have of those stories is important. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) talk about how people also live stories or phenomena and how, in the narration of their stories, they consciously or unconsciously reaffirm, modify or create new ones. Chase (1997) contends that we need to seriously embrace the idea that people are more able to make sense of life experiences when they narrate them or, as Cullen (2004) points out, 'concretise' them. Would the research methods chosen enable each teacher to 'concretise' their beliefs, experiences and perceptions? The intention was to link each teacher's beliefs about oral language with their reflective assignment and seek to ascertain if their earlier

beliefs had been affirmed or modified.

Only recently has educational research begun to explore systematically the deeper links between beliefs and practices. Phenomenologists might suggest that until we consider the meaning that oral language holds for teachers, our perceptions about oral language in the classroom can have no meaning. In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the linchpin or primary source of knowledge. This project relies on individual classroom teachers to communicate and share the way they each confer understanding and meaning about oral language on the day-to-day realities of the classroom.

The narrative

Fang (1996) suggests that methods that focus on participants' own narratives provide for a greater understanding of each teacher's beliefs. Narrative is both a phenomenon and a method of social science that helps us understand experiences, beliefs and perceptions. Narrative is also about meaning making because it recognises and acknowledges those stories and beliefs that are frequently taken for granted (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is that meaning making and the stories and beliefs that we articulate that enable us to acknowledge and learn from others and, in turn, form an important part of this project's design. Narrative is about how we convey our beliefs to others and how we construct and constitute our worlds and ourselves in our conversations with others through our narrative (Shotter, 1993). A similar point is also made by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) when they talk about how we come to know or discover ourselves and reveal ourselves to others by the stories

we tell. The narrative helps us to relate and recall phenomena, perceptions and experiences within a personally meaningful construct and so casts a different perspective on material that is viewed solely from a phenomenological perspective.

Narrative involves spoken language and, like spoken language, it can also be perceived as a construct that involves making, giving and taking meaning. Our words are drawn from our experiences and, in turn, are reconfigured into mental landscapes. The maps created do not represent a vacuous landscape, but are inextricably linked to other threads, experiences and inter-relationships comprising people, experiences and contexts. As listeners, and readers, do we also assemble new stories when we listen to the stories of others? The teachers in this project work in classrooms and schools, as well as in homes and communities. Their schools, homes, families and past experiences are the acknowledged phenomena for their narratives. The essence, heart and substance of the narrative method are captured by Clandinin and Connelly (1994): *People live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones*" (p415).

Although experience can happen sequentially like narrative, a teacher's beliefs about education is like a study of epiphanies, rituals, routines, metaphors and everyday events, all of which are facilitated by and through language. These events enable teachers to learn about education from thinking about life. In turn, teachers learn about life from thinking about education, and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that:

...thinking about education as experience is part of what

educators do in schools (pxxiv).

Moreover:

...each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future...as we think about a child's learning, a school, or a particular policy, there is always a history, it is always changing and it is always going somewhere (p2).

As part of an experiential base leading to an experiential future, each teacher was asked to review their transcribed interview and their narrative, 'walking through the day' as part of the reflective assignment phase. Kelchtermans (1993) acknowledges the importance of allowing teachers to talk about teaching and contends that a teacher's practice and professional behaviour can only be understood properly when sourced in the broader milieu of each teacher's career and personal history. Heeding the advice of Kelchtermans (1993), this broader milieu was mapped with each teacher involved in this project when they were invited to provide a professional and personal sketch of their professional background and working day.

Reflection and review

Reflection involves fixing our thoughts on a subject or action and giving it consideration. Barnes (1992) noted that reflection is enabled by talk and ... *seems to be an essential prerequisite for critical thinking and the modification of what we believe (p127).*

The role and purpose of the reflective phase in this project was to elicit a review of professional memories, experiences and beliefs. Following the transcription of the first interview, each teacher was invited to review their narrative and interview responses.

While there is a distinction between our beliefs and the processes of reflection, Heron (1985) argues that there is no absolute distinction between reflection, review or experience. He refers to 'phenomenological discrimination', which involves identifying what is going on while it is going on. While the phenomena may be obscure, it may mean trying out different ideas for their capacity to clarify or facilitate perceptual resolution. This 'trying out ideas phase' involves making choices, either about how to move to try something new, or to perpetuate current actions and beliefs. Would the reflective assignment allow the teachers to try out different ideas about oral language then review and choose the most appropriate?

The semi-structured interview

The interview is a recognised way of eliciting an individual's views. The viewpoints that are communicated during the interview also help individuals define who they are and how they act (Murray, 2003). However, during an interview, the interviewer and the respondent are not clearly distinct entities; each is affected by the other (Behar, 1996). An interview can provide the framework to give insight into what a person knows (knowledge and information), what a person likes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs). Kvale (1996) defines an interview as literally an "*inter-view*" or an interchange of views or questions between two people.

The inter-view concept was adopted in this project as it recognises beliefs and dovetails with the case study and phenomenological and narrative frameworks.

Scott and Usher (2003) contend that, in educational enquiry, preconceptions, perceptions and beliefs can be gathered using an interview format. The interviews for this project were held in classrooms at each teacher's convenience. Times varied from 7am to 5pm during weekdays when no children were present. The aim of each interview was to address the research questions. Although the intercommunication on which the interview relies could not realistically collect wholly objective data, it could aim to explore the subjective knowledge, world view, opinions and beliefs of each participating teacher. The interview format also ensured that data to address the research questions was collected. Each participant was requested to give narrative recounts and responses relating to their experiences and beliefs about oral language.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write about the importance of context and the careful consideration that must be afforded those who are living and telling their stories. They also write about the conditions, as well as the context, under which any interview takes place as being particularly influential, for example the place, the time of day, or the degree of formality established, to name a few. Building on those contextual influences, the interviews began with general and biographical questions and moved through a narrative phase to a series of more specific, semi-structured questions. Consideration was also given to the views of Schwandt (1996), who considers it important to view the interview as a form of discourse, while Chase (1997) notes that

it is important to use questions that invite stories as well as those that invite reports. This project sought to elicit narratives and responses to the questions posed. Each teacher was asked to recount their experiences, beliefs and perceptions of oral language in a way that would invite and allow them to share their stories. Their stories and responses were important. We began with each teacher's story of their day ('walking through the day'), which invited a story. Goodson (1995) noted that: *Only if we deal with stories as the starting point for collaboration, will we understand their meaning...* (p98)

Gubrium and Holstein (1998) too expand the concept of narrative as 'narrative within narratives' and suggest that interviewing can be a form of storytelling where the "hows" and the "whats" can be portrayed through the medium of the story and ensuing discourse. What each teacher chose to share would become the story. For that reason, as an introduction, the teachers were invited to narratively walk through a typical classroom day. The semi-structured interview questions were posed to elicit reports and comments and followed after each teacher had narratively 'walked through their day'.

Ethical issues

This proposed research involving human participants was reviewed by the Massey University College of Education Ethics Committee and found to meet the university's ethical guidelines (Reference Number COE04/024). At all times, the agreement and voluntary participation of each teacher was considered of prime importance, as was the adherence to the guidelines outlined in the ethics proposal. Throughout

each interview, every attempt was made to ensure that participants found the interview experience rewarding, although each was aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. It was important as well that each participant was made aware that the goal of the study was not to change their beliefs about spoken language, but to document what beliefs and perceptions about oral language they possessed and to establish whether those beliefs were subsequently modified or affirmed as a result of the reflective assignment.

It was considered important to acknowledge to each participant that the transcript could only be viewed as a record of a verbal communication. Although the thoughts expressed at the interview only existed for a moment in time, the transcripts changed their initial mode of transmission into a more enduring written form. However, it is acknowledged that when each teacher's narrative was transcribed, a modification of the nuances of the initial discourse inevitably occurred.

Part Two: The procedures

Phase one: Pre-project discussion and trial

An associate principal and deputy principal, both of whom teach five-year-old students, volunteered to participate in the pre-project trial. Neither teacher worked in the planned project area but consented to participate and give constructive feedback, with an assurance that their anonymity would be preserved and all recorded comments would be shredded on completion of the trial. The exercise or pilot project also enabled the interview sequences and format of the semi-structured questions

to be reviewed, reworked and discussed. At the conclusion of the trial, a self-review and evaluation by the researcher, together with each volunteer's feedback, was undertaken. It aimed to improve the interview process, procedures, questions and sequences of the project.

Phase one: Initial contact with schools

In August 2004, a letter and accompanying 'Information Sheet for Participating Teachers' was sent to the principals of nineteen primary schools in a New Zealand provincial city (*appendices one and two*). A telephone call to each principal also gauged interest in the project and addressed any questions. If a school expressed interest in allowing a staff member to participate in the project, the principal was then asked to sign a Principal Consent Form (*appendix three*). That formal consent then allowed the identified member of staff to be contacted and provided with information on the project.

Phase one: Informed consent

A letter was then sent to each teacher, together with an information sheet on the project (*appendix one*). An introductory phone call to the nine interested teachers also served as an opportunity to discuss the project and to answer any queries (*appendix five*). Seven teachers acknowledged that they had been satisfactorily informed about the project and consented to sign all the necessary documentation (*appendices four & five*). Two teachers opted not to participate, citing work pressures and impending visits from Education Review Office (ERO) personnel.

Phase one: The first interview

A subject-centred, semi-structured interview and narrative format was used that followed a specific sequence (*appendix six*). The participants did not receive an interview schedule prior to the initial interview, although each interviewee was aware that the interview was designed to gain an insight into the ideas, opinions and beliefs they each held about oral language and its development. A timeframe of one hour was negotiated for each initial interview.

All interviews were recorded using an Olympus DS 2200 Digital Voice Recorder and transcribed using the AS 3000 Olympus Transcription Kit. With each participant's prior consent, the recorded interview was burnt onto a compact disc and given to each teacher. While it is acknowledged that audio recordings capture the spoken word and give it permanence, the recordings also enabled checks to be made on the wording of statements and the accuracy of transcriptions (Bell, Bush, & Fox, 1984; Fraenkel & Wallen 1996).

Phase one: Data transcription

The transcription of the voice recordings was undertaken by a skilled transcriptionist following the formalisation of a confidentiality agreement. This also affirmed participant and researcher confidence in the quality of the transcriptions.

Phase one: The role of the interviewer

Arksey and Knight (1999) describe an interviewer as being something like a jazz musician at a jam session. From their work, the following strategies were adopted

at the interviews:

- Questions were varied in order to fit the flow of the interview.
- The phrasing of the questions was varied to help the conversation seem more natural.
- Some probing, clarifying and following up of responses was necessary.
- The importance of building trust and rapport with interviewees was considered paramount.

As Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest, the researcher's aim was to exercise the essential tools of empathy, sensitivity, humour and sincerity throughout each interview.

Phase two: The second meeting

At the second teacher/researcher meeting, the transcript of the first interview was presented to each teacher for reading, review and hoped-for reflection. The possible methods that could be employed in the reflective assignment, including the recording of reflective practice, were also discussed, as was the optional use of the transcript sheets or a professional journal. Each participant was also given a copy of the interview schedules, which would serve as a framework for the final meeting (*appendices seven & eight*).

Phase two: The reflective phase

Following the re-reading of their transcripts and subsequent review and reflection on their contents, each teacher was invited to share their review and reflections at a second and final interview.

A two- to five-week time interval between the first and second interviews was dictated by each participant's work schedule and it also allowed the participants time to read, recapitulate, review and reflect on their first transcript.

Phase two: The second and final interview

At the commencement of the final meeting, participants were asked to point out any transcription errors or responses they wished to revisit before the final questions were discussed. A transcribed record of the final interview and compact disc was later delivered to each participant for their validation. Each teacher was then contacted again to confirm the accuracy of the final interview transcript.

Phase two: The participants: Biographical information

The seven teachers all formally completed the research documentation and each chose their own pseudonym. The participants were all women, registered teachers and mothers. As a group, they had taught from three to thirty years, or for an average of twenty years. They teach at either decile ten, nine, five or decile one schools (table 3.1). As individuals, they identified with differing ethnic heritages (Scots, Maori, English, Spanish, Irish and Italian) and cultures (New Zealand, Maori, English and Scottish).

Table 3.1

Participants' profiles: Years of teaching, decile of school and the cultures each participant identifies with.

Name	Years of teaching	Culture/s teacher identified with	Country of birth	Decile ranking of school
Ngamihi	3	Maori/N.Z.	N.Z.	1
Jane	30	English/N.Z.	N.Z.	1
Squonk	30	English/N.Z.	N.Z.	5 A church school, now integrated into state sector
Marilyn	18	N.Z.	N.Z.	9 Semi-rural school
Maree	10	N.Z./Scots	N.Z.	10
Amy	19	Spanish/Italian/Irish/N.Z.	N.Z.	7
Kathleen	27	English/Irish/Spanish	U.K.	1

While the teachers identified primarily with a European culture, they also talked about their links to “*the New Zealand culture*”. Ngamihi was also the only teacher in the project with graduate training in bilingual education. She identifies with the *Ngati Kahungunu, Tuwharetoa* and *Te Arawa* people of *Aotearoa*, New Zealand. Ngamihi said: “[I] opt in and out of cultures. It could be Maori or New Zealand.” Only in the decile one and decile ten schools in this project was language other than English known to be spoken in the homes of the five-year-old students. Some of the teachers were unsure about the languages spoken in the homes and stated that as classroom teachers it is not information that they are given.

Table 3.2

Class numbers and ethnic composition of participants' classes.

Teacher	Number of students in class	Ethnicity of students in class
Ngamihi	15	All N.Z. Maori with tribal affiliations to: <i>Ngati Porou</i> <i>Tuwharetoa</i> <i>Tuhoe</i> <i>Ngati Kahungunu</i>
Jane	15	N.Z. Maori Tongan N.Z. European
Squonk	26	N.Z. European N.Z. Maori Samoan Welsh
Marilyn	16 (New entrant to Year 2 students)	N.Z. European
Maree	25	N.Z. Maori N.Z. European South African Indian Chinese
Amy	26	N.Z. European N.Z. Maori
Kathleen	15	Cook Island Samoan Pacific Island N.Z. Maori

Five of the participating teachers held Associate Principalship positions and three Bachelor of Education degrees. All except Kathleen did their pre-service teacher training in New Zealand (table 3.3). The average number of students in each teacher's class at the time of the interview was twenty, although two classes had twenty six students and one twenty five students. While three classes had fifteen students, it was acknowledged that further enrolments were anticipated. Marilyn was the only teacher to represent a semi-rural school with a composite class of Year 1 and Year 2 students. Kathleen also had no European students in her class, although the bilingual class at the same decile one school included several non-Maori students (table 3.2).

Although the participants had taught, on average, for twenty years, their teaching experiences varied. Ngamihi, for example, had taught for three years since her training as an adult student and was the only teacher not trained in Reading Recovery (table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Participants' profiles: Qualifications and positions held in respective schools.

Teacher	Position held	Qualifications	Specialist training
Ngamihi	Scale A	B Ed	Bilingual education
Jane	Associate Principal	B Ed	Reading recovery
Squonk	Associate Principal	T T Cert	Reading recovery
Marilyn	Associate Principal	Dip Tchng	Reading recovery
Maree	Scale A	B Ed	Reading recovery
Amy	Associate Principal	Dip Tchng	Reading recovery
Kathleen	Associate Principal	Cert Tchng (Liverpool)	Reading recovery

Maree and Jane were the only teachers to have taught beyond a Year 4 level. No teachers could recall undertaking any specific courses during their pre-service training on the discourse of new entrant classrooms, oral language development in children, oral language assessment or teacher talk. Three teachers recalled some pre-service instruction on voice production in the classroom and also detailed the prescribed professional development they had undertaken in the past three years, which included: *Hei Awhiawhi Tamariki ki te Panui Puka Puka* or HPP (Ministry of Education, 2001) and Talk to Learn (Special Education Service, 2000). The New Zealand Ministry of Education's Early Literacy and Numeracy Programmes (ELP, ENP; 2004) had also been undertaken and the three teachers believed the strategies suggested in the respective programmes had also been helpful in promoting oral language.

Phase three: Meaning making and meaning taking

The narrative and interview responses of each teacher were transcribed from the spoken to the written word. The particular task of the researcher to make and take meaning from the participants' narrations was discussed with each teacher. Although there could be no single toolbox of methods to scaffold and construct an interpretive framework, from the outset it was envisaged that the interpretive methods employed would be influenced by the narrative of each participant. Nevertheless, the task of addressing the research questions remained uppermost in the meaning-making process. As McCracken (1988) noted, it can be the analysis of the data collected that is the most demanding and yet often the least examined task of the qualitative research process.

The steps undertaken by the researcher to elicit understanding and meaning from the interview transcript involved reading each transcript then listening to the audio recording. A simultaneous re-reading of the transcript while listening to the audio recording followed and was repeated an average of ten times with each interview. The process involved reading, re-reading and listening. In the follow-up phase of meaning making, notes were used to indicate themes, patterns, what responses had not been given, and other issues, and from those a list of points for review was made (*appendices seven & eight*).

At first, the sequences and unity of related talk were considered, then the phenomena, the themes and the structures of each teacher's experience. Second, the uniqueness, omissions and similarities within and between the transcripts were examined in order to picture how the phenomenon being presented cohered and converged. Third, how the transcribed narratives related to oral language, including the programmes used to assess and promote it in new entrant classrooms, predominated the meaning making. Fourth, the final reflective phase was designed to allow each teacher to choose what they wished to review from the first interview. It was anticipated that those phenomena selected would facilitate reflection and a review of their beliefs about spoken language. Finally, the narratives would be viewed from different perspectives by taking each teacher's multiple perceptions and connecting them with their narrative, 'walking through the day' and their in-class artefacts. Flick (1998) notes that looking at similar data from differing perspectives is a form of triangulation that helps clarify the various ways that phenomena are perceived.

Validity and reliability

It could be argued that the use of the terms 'validity' and 'reliability' is inappropriate in qualitative research because they have their origins in quantitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1985), cited in Scott and Usher (2003, p150), suggest that credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability would be more appropriate criteria to use in a qualitatively different social world. For the purposes of this project, the term 'reliability' is captured to ensure that the data collected represents the actual interview situation, while 'validity' is about how accurate and appropriate the data is. *Validity is traditionally considered more important than reliability* (Gipps, 1994, p76). The validity of the data collected was checked and rechecked by the participants. The use of a skilled transcriptionist also enhanced accuracy, and by using the technique of audio and written replay simultaneously, the ability to check on the accuracy of the transcriptions was considered appropriately robust. When using a phenomenological approach, checks on researcher reliability are challenging because intuition and reflection, which are part of that approach, are very person specific. In an attempt to link the teachers' ideas with their concepts, judgements and understanding, triangulation procedures were used, primarily to assist in the validation of the researcher's interpretations. This involved linking each teacher's key themes with their 'walk through the day' narrative. In addition, the researcher's observations and a record of each teacher's classroom artefacts and classroom layout were used in the triangulation procedure to assist in the validation of interpretations.

Phases one, two and three: Chapter summary

The methodologies were selected and dictated by the research questions posed. In part one, the research methodologies were briefly discussed, including the case study, phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews. In part two, the various procedures were also briefly outlined and included data transcription, the role of the interviewer and a profile of the participants. Part three included a synopsis of the steps undertaken to take meaning from the teachers' responses and narratives. Issues of validity and reliability, which included triangulation procedures, were also discussed. This chapter also sought to highlight the importance accorded to the teachers' voices, which the frameworks selected aimed to capture.

CHAPTER FOUR

Talking with teachers

Results: Phase One

The first interview

This results chapter summarises some of the narrative and initial responses given by Amy, Jane, Kathleen, Maree, Marilyn, Ngamihi and Squonk. It also outlines some of the beliefs about the parameters of oral language and its assessment and development held by each teacher. The themes, patterns and issues that emerged and the similarity of beliefs expressed between and within each of the interviews are also discussed. At the commencement of the first interview, each teacher was requested to narratively 'walk through their day'. Their narrative recount later provided a reference point from which each teacher's subsequent interview responses, classroom artefacts and classroom geography or layout could be related.

How teachers develop beliefs about oral language

Kagan (1992) referred to beliefs as tacit and often unconsciously held assumptions. In an attempt to find out about what beliefs, assumptions or thoughts seven teachers held about oral language, it was considered appropriate to begin by asking each teacher to recount where or from whom they believed they had learnt a great deal about oral language development, classroom discourse and the general practice and principles of teaching.

The teachers spoke of their beliefs and assumptions about teaching in general as having been shaped as far back as childhood. They believed that the teachers they had had as children had played a significant role, as had their parents and colleagues. These formative experiences the teachers believed still continue to influence the way they do things each day in the classroom. However, one teacher described how her beliefs about oral language were not fixed but have continued to evolve and adapt over time. Because of this, Squonk did not attribute the acquisition of her current beliefs to any specific people or times: *“Lots of people I have watched teaching and borrowed mannerisms if you like, or ways of doing things... then I've used them and changed them to my way of doing things.”*

On the other hand, Ngamihi, who is relatively new to the profession, felt that her pre-service training strongly influenced her beliefs about teaching and oral language. The influence of one tutor teacher was significant: *“[A] teacher I had on section did what made sense to me and I thought okay, this is how I would like it to be for me too.”*

Amy also recalled a strong collegial influence on her beliefs, in general, and on oral language, in particular.

“Kath had an amazing way of speaking to people. Speaking to the children and valuing the children's work and the way they did things [she had a] nice way of approaching the children...she also got the children to speak to you...”

Other cultural influences were recalled by Marilyn. She described how a former associate principal at her last school had challenged her professional assumptions.

“She made me look at where the children are at and what we can do to make it better. She gave me lots of ideas and I’d think... Oh...I’ll try that...the children at that school had the oral language of three-year-olds ...and we had to do lots of experiences... to get them talking.”

Many beliefs about oral language and teaching appeared to have emanated from people the teachers had liked and respected. They included their parents, colleagues and their former teachers. These individuals whom the teachers believed had the greatest influence on their professional practice and beliefs about oral language also appeared to have affirmed or enhanced each teacher’s self-efficacy. While the people the teachers described had *mana* (acknowledged authority and standing), the teachers believed that these same individuals had also affirmed their teaching practice. While Kathleen talked about the people she had learnt from, she emphasised that: *“If somebody feels good about me, I’ll feel good and there are lots of children like that. They’ve got to feel good about themselves.”*

Teachers’ beliefs about oral language in new entrant classrooms: Where do teachers start?

Prior to school entry, many children attend early childhood facilities within their proposed school’s catchment area. Generally, however, there is no transfer of information between any of the facilities and the school about specific children, unless

they present with special educational needs.

Amy had few expectations about what children should be able to do at the time of school entry. She believed a child: “...*should be able to share information with another child, and be able to talk to the teacher...it’s probably all they need to do when they arrive at school.*”

Kathleen discussed how she too has few expectations about what skills and abilities children should present with on enrolment. However, while Kathleen had core beliefs about oral language, she believed that her day-to-day practice was reshaped and influenced regularly by the ongoing dictates of her class and varied from week to week. “*Depends on your class ...we [teachers] have a great effect on their oral language development...*”

It is acknowledged that the beliefs a teacher articulates on a particular day may not be consistent with their classroom practice on subsequent days. Furthermore, if each teacher’s beliefs were exemplified in their classroom practice, it is not evident in the literature if such experiences and classroom practices would also cause a review or change of beliefs.

Beliefs about the role of the teacher

Kathleen highlighted how a teacher’s talk is an important part of oral language in the classroom and how its role and influence is important and far reaching. Ngamihi also spoke about the importance of teacher talk and how a teacher’s classroom

utterances need to be positively framed. Overall, the teachers believed that teacher talk can be used as a classroom tool. Squonk talked about “*being able to use your words*”, and Marilyn also talked about how, with teacher talk, it is: “*Really important to model how the language should be spoken [and]... to listen to what they are saying. I think sometimes as teachers we talk too much and the children switch off and then you wonder why they don't know what to do next.*”

The role of the teacher and classroom discourse in setting the nature of classroom communications to manage classroom behaviours and develop children's thinking was also acknowledged. Squonk gave an account of her varying behaviours and how she asks many questions throughout the day that require the children to answer. She also discussed how she is the focus of attention in the classroom and directs that focus by using different vocal strategies including pace, volume and intonational contours to manage classroom behaviours and shape children's thoughts. Ngamihi also referred to a teacher's use of 'non-verbal' forms of communication and described how she uses gesture. She believes that gesture enables her to elicit different communicative responses from students that, in turn, affect their learning. She also referred to a teacher role that children can adopt when the older children in the bilingual classrooms teach the younger children. Those communicative roles give children practice and experience in conversational interactions and assist children to understand social relationships or *tuakana-teina* (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Ngamihi also believes that she has a role to teach and to learn, which Bishop and Glynn (1999) refer to as *ako* or reciprocal learning.

Further beliefs that oral language is part of everyday classroom management and that it has the potential to significantly shape and influence classroom dynamics were expressed. One teacher highlighted spoken language and the talk of the class as something that you: *“Need to...cope in a classroom”* [and] *“oral language...should be part of everyday classroom management.”* [It is very important] *“for talking to children...bringing out the best in them...”*

The role of teacher talk in the language of the classroom was also revisited by Amy and Marilyn, who talked about how teachers structure and communicate their instructions. They noted that, for language development, the number of instructions a teacher gives at any one time is important; so too is getting children to participate. Both Amy and Squonk talked about how they believed they probably talk too much in class. Squonk made the light-hearted comment that: *“If somebody put a tape recorder on...I would get to the end of the day...play it back and think...why doesn’t that woman shut up.”*

Yet another light-hearted comment relating to teacher talk was made by Marilyn, who pointed out that what you think you mean as a classroom teacher can be, and often is, variously, humorously and even disastrously interpreted by children.

Beliefs about the function and purpose of oral language

The multifarious functions and purposes of oral language were highlighted. By and large, the teachers contended that oral language is primarily about talking, making and maintaining eye contact, being positive, making sense, sharing opinions, giving

reasons, modelling verbal responses, asking and answering questions, being a good listener, being honest and being confident enough, “... *to take risks with your talking*” (Amy) and having a go at expressing your wants and thoughts to others. There was a general assumption that discourse is the same as oral language. Jane noted: “*To me...the whole umbrella thing...your receptive language, and all the different aspects of spoken language...listening it’s all part of... oral language to me. What’s in a word really?*”

The teachers made several assumptions about oral language. One, that it underpins literacy and is part of reading. Two, that oral language is part of a ‘literacy curriculum.’ Three, that there are close links between the syntactic development that occurs in spoken language, written language and reading. As Amy pointed out:

“If they can’t string a sentence together orally, they won’t be able to write it and they certainly won’t be able to read it. ... we are getting more and more children coming in who can’t string a proper sentence together;... it just makes the task of writing and reading so much harder...”

Repeatedly, the teachers spoke about oral language development, ‘talking in class,’ as primarily a reading and literacy goal, although no clear or consistent pattern emerged that indicated how the teachers develop children’s oral language. Amy, however, spoke about oral language as something that needs to be taught:

“If their sentences are thrown out of order, the way they

...speak is thrown out of order...the structuring of sentences, how we speak, how we talk to each other needs to be taught. More so now than it did in the past."

The teachers also believed that in order to achieve literacy, a five-year-old needs to be able to turn-take, accept any roles assigned by the class teacher, understand and use the specific linguistic forms that the classroom dictates (stand in line/follow the leader) and demonstrate an ability to follow class instructions successfully.

Concerns expressed about the development of oral language

Jane, Maree, Kathleen, Amy and Squonk believed that children now have fewer opportunities to practise their talking and hold conversations outside the classroom:

"Children are sitting in front of computer screens...a video screen...TV, they're not sitting down at the kitchen table any more holding a conversation...and these skills we're having to teach them more and more."

The teachers also described how some children take time to adjust and "tune into" the language of the classroom. They voiced concerns about the noticeable changes in the language abilities of children generally within the past ten years. Furthermore, they suggested that the language used within children's homes in recent years has also become more restricted. Jane, Ngamihi and Kathleen noted that the expressive language abilities of children in their decile one schools have become increasingly limited. They made reference to the preponderance of expletives, commands,

exclamations and admonitions that characterise the language children are exposed to in their out-of-school environments. Amy, in turn, talked about children who are not given opportunities to practise their talking and are encouraged in their out-of-school environments to 'watch' rather than 'do'. She believed this growing passivity is working counter to language advancement. Kathleen encapsulated the various beliefs expressed when she stated that:

"Our Maori children have very limited language. Their structure is very poor because many of them are not spoken to a lot at home, so for some of them we are the first people to actually listen to them...this isn't all the children, but many of the children are used to having instructions barked at them."

Concerns about children's spoken language abilities were also expressed by Maree, who teaches at a decile ten school. *"We're just finding there's a lot of language that's missing ...A lot of children coming in with language difficulties."*

Beliefs were also expressed that a teacher's day is becoming "overfull" because of expectations of policy makers that more and more can be crammed into a child's school day. They spoke about how this affects the opportunities for 'talking in class'. Amy, Squonk, Maree, Jane, Marilyn and Ngamihi all expressed their concerns about "an overfilled curriculum". This 'overfilling', they believed, has impacted on their time and ability to foster oral language development. The teachers spoke repeatedly and sometimes critically of the curriculum as a barrier to learning: "They [the Ministry

of Education] *just keep adding more and more, and don't take anything away,*" was a frequent comment. A burgeoning curriculum framework coupled with external pressures and attendant expectations were presented as barriers to teaching and oral language learning in the new entrant classroom. *"It robs us of time to develop things that are important to the children."*

Beliefs about the parameters of oral language in the classroom

There was a general belief that spoken language happens all the time in a classroom and often incidentally. Children bring the language they have already acquired with them when they enter the classroom. On the one hand, teachers believe it's not something that is taught in a systematic way, like reading, yet on the other hand, it is inextricably part of reading. Jane noted: *"Everyone is engaged in some form of literacy development, whether it's oral language or reading to me...doing activities...or reading in the reading corner."*

The teachers believed that oral language plays an important role in building relationships because children need to feel safe and confident enough to share their thoughts and feelings with others. Oral language was considered an important tool for developing social relationships with others and along with and linked to self-respect, self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for others. That ability to respect and listen to others as well as the teacher was believed to be crucially important. Squonk also believed oral language is: *"...important for talking to the children...bringing out the best in them... Some days are very talkative days and some are just listening days."*

Oral language was seen to include talking and listening as well as the spoken language of the classroom and is considered the medium through which things are explained to children. Although the literature indicates that how children make and take meaning from the 'class teacher' is an important part of learning, this did not feature in the teachers' responses during the interviews.

Ngamihi believed that teachers need to accept the *kefe* or basket of knowledge that children bring with them to school and teachers need to wait until the children are ready to open their *kefe*. A teacher should not underestimate what children can learn and "*should not use baby talk*", because children have the ability to understand quite complex ideas. The importance of not using a diminutive approach or condescending mannerisms when communicating with five-year-old children was also noted by Jane, and others, as was the belief that teachers need to accept and recognise the importance of children's responses and communications: "[Realising] *that whatever they say isn't wrong because it's their ideas and it's accepted that they are encouraged to speak*" (Jane). Or: "*Just keep it positive...They do react really well to positive things...everything they have to say is really important ... [teachers]... listening skills, go hand in hand*" (Ngamihi).

What is oral language for?

In all the interviews, the dominant and recurring belief expressed was that oral language helps literacy and/or reading. Reading and/or literacy was considered the prime classroom role and its development the primary role of the new entrant classroom and teacher. It was considered: "*That is what the new entrant classroom*

is for – to set the foundations of reading, writing and numeracy.”

That reading is the prime focus of the new entrant classroom was also voiced by Ngamihi: “*It [reading] is huge and dominates everything.*” Kathleen also noted that her class focus is: “*Primarily on literacy and very early numeracy, although... [of the two] literacy takes the greater focus.*”

Like others, Squonk spoke about the importance of reading in the new entrant classroom and how her beliefs about oral language and the role of the new entrant teacher mirrored her personal beliefs, which appeared strongly aligned to the holistic principles expressed in *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education 1996b). She believed the principles of children’s wellbeing and belonging are key defining elements that influence her decision making and, in turn, her classroom climate. Squonk viewed oral language as a vehicle for social interaction, for wellbeing and belonging and, while she believed literacy is important: “*The main focus for the class, the main thing is I want them to be happy here at school... I want to introduce them to experience the joy of school [and see it as] a special place.*”

The functional role of oral language in the new entrant classroom, including the need for children to be able to express themselves, to talk and to share their ideas in front of others, was discussed. The teachers reiterated how children need to be able to listen and ask, to listen and ask again, to construct questions relevant to what they have heard and to respond to each other and the teacher when called upon. While listening to and following instructions was considered important by Amy and Maree,

an acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of oral language throughout the day also emerged. *“It’s a five-year-old classroom we always talk...there’s not a silent time in our class.”* As Maree noted: *“It needs to be part of our daily programme especially at this level.”*

The teachers believed that their own oral language or classroom talk has an important role to play in the classroom. They also emphasised that it is most important for a teacher to be able to understand what a child is saying. Likewise, they believed it is important for children to be able to interact with their peers as well as understand what is being said in the classroom by teachers and children. The teachers spoke about the need for teachers to model clear speech. Kathleen spoke about how she had used the Makaton Language Programme (Walker, 1972) to enhance children’s understanding. She believed that Makaton had helped the children give structure and meaning to their spoken language: *“...it’s been a great help in children’s understanding – it’s a prop.”*

Jane spoke also about how language enables children to hear and comprehend what their teacher says and does and to respond appropriately. She also believed that the language structures required in written language are more exact than those of oral language, so a good oral language base is important. Furthermore, she argued that the demands on meaning making that written language requires are more exacting than those required for oral language. *“If the children are not hearing us as their teachers speak clearly... then it’s just another mixed-up message that they are getting from us, especially as we want to put them into book language*

which is so exact.”

The teachers believed that the function of oral language is to assist reading and/or literacy. As children move from early childhood into the compulsory sector, there is an expectation that oral language will be subsumed into the curriculum. There is not an expectation that children will be taught oral language or encouraged to participate in opportunities to co-construct meaning. Nevertheless, there is an expectation that children will be taught to read and write.

Is oral language important?

Why, how and for what purposes the teachers believed oral language was used in the classroom was a pivotal research question. The teachers believed that oral language is an essential component of reading and literacy. Literacy development, which included reading and written language, was regarded by the teachers to be their key classroom task, while the goal set for each child was an acknowledged skill achievement in reading, written language and numeracy. This view, the teachers believed, is backed by the expectations of children, their parents, the school, government and community. Such a view is also in accordance with the Ministry of Education’s National Education Priorities (2002b): *Schools will place priority on improving student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 1 to 4* (p3).

Literacy and reading, rather than English, appeared to be viewed as the core curriculum area. The core curriculum area English and *English in the New*

Zealand Curriculum (1994a) were not mentioned during the initial interviews, although the *Essential Skill Area: Communication* (1994b) was mentioned by one participant. The teachers believed that if reading, written language and numeracy are developed age appropriately, then oral language will continue to develop invisibly and exponentially. They spoke about how their common pre-service training experience had been geared towards a curriculum content focus, on reading and mathematics, rather than focusing on the process of how to deliver subject areas or use strategies to develop essential communication skills. The teachers believed that pre-service training focused on what to teach or products, rather than on how to teach or processes. This, they believed, was particularly pertinent to oral language and classroom discourse and links with Bourdieu's (1986) work. He takes a critical sociological standpoint and looks at what affects what we do and think, the processes we use and what we think we are thinking.

Although none of the teachers spoke about curriculum reduction per se, Jane believed that the purpose of oral language is to assist children to access the curriculum before they develop the necessary 'literacy skills' to be able to do so independently: "[The children] *don't come with reading skills so oral language is huge in every curriculum area, quite frankly, whether it is shared reading or guided reading or poems or whatever.*"

Jane also stated that oral language provides a foundation for literacy given the role it plays in developing phonological and grammatical sensitivity. "*Oral language is necessary to understand book language so a child can succeed at school. You*

can't read if you don't have a sound oral language base..."

In other words, the teachers believed that the syntactic abilities of children need to be developed sufficiently in their spoken language to enable them to use syntax to help them predict meaning and text in the reading process. It was also believed that the importance of oral language and its component parts of grammar, semantics and phonological awareness are important for "literacy" (Jane). Jane, Maree and Amy also believed that children need to develop oral language so that they can pick up the rhyme in words and hear sounds "in words". They believed that sound awareness developed through oral language also helps develop phonemic awareness, and with phonemic awareness skills, children will be able to read more easily. This linked again to the teachers' beliefs that exactness and clarity of a child's speech and children's oral language transmission systems are important for reading.

The teachers believed that oral language has a social role. The purpose of oral language was believed to be to interact socially with others. The intelligibility of a child's speech and their language transmission abilities were considered important, as was a child's use of language in social situations. For example, the importance of a child responding to the teacher when requested to do so, and to say and do what is expected in the way that is "appropriate" was picked up on as a function of oral language by both Jane and Squonk.

"They have to realise they have to give answers." "It's that expectation that you will speak when you are spoken to...and that if I am going to say hello to you,

you will say hello to me...it's those social things."

Although a child may know what they mean, they are often unaware that others do not. Maree acknowledged those pragmatic aspects of a child's language development when she indicated the links between the structures and use of language:

"These children are quite good at verbalising [giving answers]; they've still got a lot to learn about sequencing ideas, and that leads on to writing too and asking a good question...you know what you want to say but how are you going to say it so that the other person understands ...that's a big focus for five-year-olds."

The social role of conversation and spoken language and how language serves as an anchor in social contexts was revisited by Squonk: *"...looking at people and showing that you are interested and nodding wisely and those sorts of social things..."*

Squonk believed it is important for children to have quiet times in the class for thinking and reflection, and how knowing when not to talk or *"not talking"* also forms an important part of communicative competence. She believed children need to know when to listen and when to talk. Several teachers, including Maree, spoke about the importance of giving children the strategies to enhance their own oral language development. She noted that, if asked, any child in her room would say: *"When I listen I put my hands on my lap, think of questions to ask and keep still"* and that *"...listening*

should go on throughout the whole day.”

How do teachers assess children’s oral language?

Different forms of assessment were identified by the teachers during the first interview, including, formal, formative and summative assessment methods. Maree spoke about assessing children’s oral language development against *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1994a) and *The Essential Skill Area: Communication* (Ministry of Education, 1994b). She also described the use of formative and summative assessment methods to assess and promote oral language:

“This last term our essential skill was also communication skills and I have those up on my board here and I’m ready to put up the next lot because I’ve got some indicators in kid language... we are practising our communication skills and we just hone in on it every day...”

Marilyn and others believed that the observations a classroom teacher undertakes throughout the day are important assessment tools, especially for new entrant children: *“It’s just sitting back and watching [each child in the classroom] really...it helps to roam the room with your eyes.”*

Jane explained that she not only roams the room with her eyes, but constantly assesses the students’ level of academic engagement and the strategies they employ

to undertake task compliance and academic engagement.

“Looking round the room you can see those that are actively engaged in what you’ve said and can go from perhaps one step to the next step without seeking reassurance. You know then that they understand what to do and often you can hear some of those children saying to the others ‘no, that’s not right, you have to ...’ And you think oh yes, she’s got it or he’s got it. So it’s just sitting back and watching ...”

Kathleen highlighted the importance of making assessments ongoing and demonstrated that it is equally important to note what children understand as well as what they do not understand:

“[I find that if I want to check understanding] ... I ask them what did I say? The first time I am saying it not many will actually remember what I have said or be able to say it correctly...[sometimes I think] maybe I have got to downsize what I have said.”

There was a general theme in the interview responses that assessments should be purposeful. Jane believed that assessment is the first step in the planning process when promoting or facilitating oral language. She illustrated how she frames up the following questions in her mind when undertaking formative assessments: *“Are they speaking in sentences and do they have structure to their sentences? Do they*

know what they are saying? Does their sentence make sense? Do they use intonation in their voice?"

The teachers talked about a battery of formal oral language assessments their schools use. Two teachers referred to the unwelcome effects of assessing children's language and questioned whether the long-term effects of formal assessments outweigh any short-term advantage. They said that they do the assessments: *"Because they are a school thing and required for ERO and recording purposes and the results are put in the children's file [but] who are they [assessments] really for?"*

Marilyn, on the other hand, described some of the ways she undertakes the assessment of children's language. She believed that assessment provides an important starting point for programming in new entrant classrooms:

"I've actually been doing... [assessments in my five-year check]... One month in [and] I've got a series of activities that I do with them just to assess them, just as a starting point ... I decided ... that the oral language was probably the most important thing because if they can't talk in full sentences or explain things or whatever, then how can I expect them to read and write and things like that. So, I actually do three oral language tests on them. I do the AVA [Auditory Vocal Association Test] and I do the Record of Oral Language [and] I also do the School Entry Assessment 'Retell' [and] 'Tell Me', as well.... The first

few times that I did it, I thought, "Why is this taking so long" but I get a lot out of it. Just their sentence structure, just the range within this class. I had one child who was able to add all the detail and expression and everything like that, whereas another child it was single labels that went with each page of the book, so it was quite interesting and that actually runs with his language in the classroom... I... found that one test on its own wasn't enough but...the three gave me a picture of where the child was at orally, plus ...[my] observations in...class..."

Marilyn believed that teachers can make important links between criterion referenced, formative, observational data, and classroom planning to form a continuous assessment and programming cycle. Kathleen also described how a teacher assistant is employed at her school to undertake an assessment of the children's oral language and then remediate in a small out-of-class group on the basis of the assessment data:

"We ... have the JOST ... I sort of went through the test with [the teacher aide] ... she's tested the children and now she's taking groups out for oral language to extend on from the identified needs from the JOST test."

Jane indicated that she takes the data from oral language assessments to use not for out-of-class programmes, but to incorporate into her class planning:

“For JOST, our results are recorded and... put onto the school database ... it was interesting to see how many children just didn’t know, couldn’t name many animals and I already knew that the “hes” and “shes” were mixed up, but it was amazing how many of our... children ... like who were born in New Zealand from English-speaking families, still have that misunderstanding about hes and shes so I use a lot of the ideas of the grammatical structure...”

Amy explained that, while oral language assessments can be useful for planning and programming, the realities of the classroom often overtake: *“The JOST shows you what parts of speech they’re not using and allows teachers the opportunity to... target that within the classroom, as much as you can within the restraints of having a full classroom load.”*

What are oral language assessments for? Some assessments were acknowledged to be obligatory and some were believed to be undertaken too late to serve a useful purpose.

“The School Entry Assessment, by the time we get it done, I almost know the results of it, particularly the Tell Me; ...the only person I could score 0 for would be for a little boy I’ve got now because he doesn’t speak... It

doesn't tell me anything. It's not a test I like but I've got to do it... Concepts About Print are interesting but it's not telling me anything I don't already know ...My own little new entrant assessment thing that I try to do within the first four weeks... tells me more. By the time I get the release time to do the School Entry Assessment, I already know all that stuff."

One teacher also acknowledged that as her class size increases then her assessments decrease.

Kathleen and Ngamihi both contended that teachers need to know what a child can do, although Ngamihi also believed that a teacher needs to know what a child is capable of knowing. The importance and associated difficulty of assessing a child's oral language in other than a one-to-one situation was signalled by Ngamihi, who believed in the importance of building a rapport with each child, as well as observing them in group communicative situations:

"It is very hard to gauge the understanding of anything, other than [through] one-to-one conferencing ...once they feel comfortable with me...I can really get an understanding...the required tests only show you a little bit really. It only shows you what they know at the time not what they are capable of...sometimes one-to-one

conferencing doesn't actually work with some children, sometimes it's their contribution to the group conversation whether it be maths, reading or anything, [it's] what they contribute [that is important]... ”

The teachers, including Kathleen, spoke about the links with speech-language therapists (SLT) for ongoing assessment, advice and guidance and support because: “[In] a classroom of twenty six you’ve not got one speech-language problem, you’ve probably got about five.”

Currently in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education SLT work under a communication contract with one percent of the compulsory school population, predominantly aged between five and eight years of age, who present with severe disorders of voice, fluency, language or phonology. The teachers appeared to have varying beliefs as to how they should best address children’s presenting communication needs given that, theoretically, one in one hundred school-age children will likely be seen by an SLT. For example, several teachers remarked that if a child in their class stuttered they would give that child more thinking and wait time to respond. Alternatively, if a child had a husky voice, the teachers said they would get the child “*to calm down*”, “*take a deep breath and count to ten*” or, as one teacher suggested, “*try singing*”. Only Kathleen spoke of the importance of monitoring children’s hearing status and the links between oral language development and hearing acuity.

How teachers facilitate oral language in the classroom

The reported use of visual prompts, modelling, rehearsal and corrective feedback as techniques to facilitate oral language development were signalled.

Jane noted that:

“If the children cannot speak in a sentence... you have to model and show children what is expected [and] if it's not they've got to correct it and they've got to practise it. ...It's all done through modelling, practising, correcting and showing them through stories on the board or through book language.”

The teachers also spoke about using their own talk to assist children towards understanding and Marilyn pointed out that if a child does not follow instructions then, *“Don't give too many. Narrow it down ...make it successful.”*

Should any child in the class use immature language structures then the teachers said they would draw attention to the structure being used and model the correct structure for the child. Ngamihi illustrated the following modelling and corrective feedback strategy at the interview: *“...okay we don't say 'me went town' we say 'I went to town'.”*

Other specific techniques and strategies that were discussed to facilitate spoken language included use of wait time. The teachers spoke about how they believed *“wait time”* had improved the children's oral language and responses in class. They

described the techniques as “*very effective*”.

Further references to teacher talk indicated a strong belief in the influence a teacher can have on a child’s oral language development. Several believed that the teacher has a responsibility to be a role model and to enunciate clearly and use correct grammar in the classroom. Furthermore, Squonk considered that a teacher’s use of pitch and volume is important:

*“If it’s a monotone when you are down on the mat ...
doing reading, they are so bored by the end of the day.
I have to model good language and of course using
our best resource, which is us really...”*

The importance of monitoring students’ oral responses was considered a helpful tool to use when teaching and also important for assessment purposes. Likewise, using and understanding students’ non-verbal cues during communication was believed by the teachers interviewed to facilitate oral language development. For example, if students started becoming disinterested and restless in a session, the teachers highlighted the need to adapt their lesson plans, their teacher talk and teaching techniques to make their communication more effective. Kathleen also revisited the oral language programmes available but spoke about how she prefers to use an eclectic approach to promote oral language: “*I’ve used little bits of Talk to Learn...we’ve built a programme to suit the needs of our children.*” She also indicated that what might work at the beginning of the year may not work at the end of the year with the same children because children’s needs change. Others advocated the use of resources like *First Steps* to be used as a programme as well as an

assessment tool to support their promotion of oral language. However, the interviews also indicated that both scheduled and unscheduled in-class activities and programmes could not detract from or negate the role and importance of teacher talk. Teacher talk was identified by all the participants as being a significant factor in the development of children's oral language. In table 4.1, the activities, sets of skills, approaches and programmes believed by the teachers to facilitate the development of oral language are depicted.

Table 4.1

Some of the activities, sets of skills and programmes new entrant teachers use to develop oral language.

<p>Scheduled and unscheduled in-class activities and/or sets of skills that teachers believe promote oral language development*</p>	<p>Scheduled programmes that teachers believe promote oral language development*</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morning/news talks/sharing time ▪ Class discussions ▪ Co-operative activities (including <i>tuakana teina</i>) ▪ Incidental home-school liaison between teacher and parents ▪ Incidental social skill activities ▪ Free play ▪ Real-life experiences and activities ▪ Listening to tape-recorded stories ▪ Drama ▪ Poetry/nursery rhymes ▪ Puppetry ▪ Energisers <p>*(Ranked in order of times mentioned in the interviews)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literacy programmes (including Jolly Phonics and Joy Allcock's Spelling Programme) ▪ ENP (Early Numeracy Programme/ Project) ▪ First Steps (although designed as a resource book, the teachers spoke of using it as a programme) ▪ Talk to Learn ▪ Social skills programmes (not named) ▪ Barrier games programmes (not named) ▪ Makaton ▪ HPP (A Helping Hand Toward Literacy <i>Hei Awhiawhi Tamariki ki te Panui Pukapuka</i>) ▪ PMP (Perceptual Motor Programme) ▪ Six Thinking Hats

The use of morning talks and discussion groups, including the utilisation of co-operative learning techniques like donut news, think-pair-share and buzz groups,

was also believed to promote oral language and discourse. Amy, Squonk and Kathleen advocated for children to share their life events with others to promote listening and communication skills. Amy noted that: *"The children need to have an opportunity to talk about what happened yesterday and what happened when they got home...an opportunity to share."*

The teachers believed, and by implication regretted, that it is not possible to spend time with individual children in a busy classroom, although the need for and importance of spending time with individual children was acknowledged. Squonk stated that she believed it is especially important to promote talking through one-to-one teacher-pupil dialogue. Another teacher stated: *"I would not have a chance to speak to all the children in my room on a 1-1 basis each day and sometimes not really at all in a busy week."*

The importance of 'talking in class' and talking with individual children, as well as allowing children time to talk and co-construct or make stories together, was mentioned by Kathleen: *"They will go off and do interactive play and in interactive play they are talking and it may not be the best sort of language but it is allowing the children to speak."*

Listening to taped stories and their role in the promotion of spoken language was noted: *"Listening to tapes of people reading stories, especially someone other than the teacher."* As well, Jane believed that drama and poetry promotes oral language development. *"I make sure that... [I use] lots and lots of book language,*

lots and lots of reading to the children.”

Amy considered that although the modelling of appropriate language structures to children by class teachers was important, programmes like the Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP) were also particularly effective in promoting oral language development.

“It has made, for some of my children, a major difference to their day. ... PMP also involves the use of positional terms like, over and under and through. They also get the opportunity to discuss that while they are in the PMP programme so it’s also an oral language programme. I believe it has come back into the classroom where these children are much more focused...”

Squonk also outlined how she uses her voice and teacher talk as a resource to model pitch, volume, pace and intonation. She said she believed that a teacher’s vocal resources can promote children’s understanding and also lead to the effective management of classroom behaviours: *“I think one of the most important things that someone said to me was...you don’t always have to use that volume up there, if you bring your voice down here to the classroom level... it does work.”*

The role of teacher talk was also elaborated on by Marilyn, who stated how she believed that teachers need to monitor their own talk carefully and illustrated how children can and often do take literal rather than figurative meanings from a teacher’s

idiomatic language.

“If I said [oh I’ve lost my marbles back at my old school] they would’ve just smiled and probably not understood what I meant... Whereas this boy [at my new school, had] taken in ‘lost her marbles’ when I explained it to him he thought it was hilarious...”

Here’s another example, [we were doing the sound ‘t’] and we put tigers up on the wall... There’s Tom and he’s tickling the tiger ...and then the children... say ...well, actually you’ve got your Bengali Jungle Tiger... and you’ve got your Sabre Toothed Tiger...and I said we only want the sound of “t”...I have to be ready for them to come out with quite advanced ideas...I’ve got to watch my teacher talk.”

While Marilyn teaches at a decile nine school, children from other schools were believed to have differing oral language needs. Kathleen also believed that teachers need to adapt their talk to the language level of the class:

“I would certainly talk a lot differently to a five-year-old from a decile ten school than I do to my children [decile one]..., I like to bring in the interesting language and to extend, but you can’t give them too much... If you start talking in big long words they don’t work. I probably found

that out when I first started teaching...you temper [your teacher talk] to suit your children.”

Kathleen and Amy advocated the need for children to practise their conversational skills. They both believed that, like reading, we learn to talk by talking. Kathleen acknowledged that oral language can be developed through practice and promoted especially through liaison with children’s families. She spoke of the need to ensure that children in her class and their extended families feel affirmed and supported when they enter the classroom:

“As soon as the 8:30 bell rings, you’re greeting them, you’re chatting to them, trying to build up relationships with parents who come and drop them off, particularly parents who maybe have not have had very good experiences themselves at school, a little bit hesitant to come in. Our Pacific Island Mums are very hesitant to let their children go.”

Amy also detailed how, at her school, programmes for parents are run to promote literacy and oral language development:

“We have sessions with our parents once a term, we talk about how they can assist at home and we’ve talked about how they could talk about things that the children can share with the class the next day, so it’s enabling the child, empowering the child, giving them something

to talk about when they come to school.”

Jane and Ngamihi spoke about how they believed that if a teacher is to develop a child's oral language then a child's transmission errors and their grammar also need to be corrected by the class teacher “*at the correctable moment,*” especially in the class setting. For example: “*No that does not...now let's try that again, we'll say the sentence like this...*”

The purpose of this corrective feedback, they believed, ensures that correct communication patterns can be established in context. Children need to listen to instructions in the classroom just as teachers need to listen to different language structures and sounds. One teacher said she believed it is important for teachers as well as children to be able to listen and identify blends and digraphs in words and understand their importance for language, reading and literacy. Jane believed that with experience and “*professional intuition*”, teachers develop an ability to anticipate children's communicative needs. “*You have to be one step ahead of the child the whole way.*”

In order to meet children's language needs appropriately, several teachers advocated using resources outside the classroom. Ngamihi, in particular, spoke about visiting a children's zoo and how she believed that such activities promote children's oral language development effectively. Although strategies to promote oral language were discussed, several teachers expressed regret at having had little training in how to develop children's oral language because it was not covered in their pre-

service training. They conceded that most of their teaching techniques or teacher talk had been learnt from other teachers. Ngamihi said that she believed watching and learning from other teachers had been pivotal, “go[ing] *into other classrooms, see[ing] what other teachers are doing.*”

Although Jane and Marilyn were the only participants who had been part of the Ministry of Education’s Literacy Contract, they believed it had “*helped*” their classroom practice:

“[It] was excellent ...made us think about what we wanted children to be doing in oral language activities...we also honed in on letting the children know what was expected...we did news telling, puppet work, retelling of stories...we were learning to retell stories and you know things like that are good for us [teachers] as well.”

Formal teaching strategies were identified as those that were planned for in the class setting, while the informal strategies happened incidentally throughout the class day. Other formal and informal teaching strategies that the teachers considered to be effective in facilitating students’ oral language development have been summarised (table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Teaching practices that the teachers believe promote oral language and classroom discourse.

<u>FORMAL</u>	<u>INFORMAL</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training in listening techniques ▪ Dedicated quiet times ▪ Co-operative learning ▪ Peer tutoring ▪ Specific and measurable learning outcomes for oral language, e.g. I look at the person who is speaking ▪ Dedicated talking times ▪ Practise asking and answering questions ▪ Co-construction of stories ▪ Re-tell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher/pupil 1-1 talk ▪ Self-monitoring ▪ Teacher modelling ▪ Use 'wait time' ▪ Facilitate role rehearsal ▪ Corrective feedback ▪ Visual prompts to assist understanding ▪ Story reading ▪ Adapting teacher talk ▪ Free play ▪ Allow time for talking ▪ Asking and answering questions ▪ Meaningful experiences ▪ Nurture and develop each student's self-esteem ▪ A class teacher's unscheduled verbal communication with a member of a child's family ▪ "Table talk" ▪ Read mood of class and adapt practice as required

Triangulation of narratives and responses

There appeared to be several themes that related to and linked with the description of the day and with the teacher's work plan book, responses to interview questions

and artefacts in the classroom. When the narrative 'walking through the day' was viewed alongside the interview, the only discernable difference between the interview and the narrative was that much of what the teachers perceived they did during the day they did not link to oral language. In other words, the teachers did not always express specific links between the multifarious events of the day and their students' oral language development or the discourse of the classroom. For example, when asked to walk through the day, Ngamihi described how she is in the room by 8:30 a.m. because the children:

"Have got a lot to say", [they go] in and out of each others classrooms... They like ours because we have the toys and the dress-up boxes...9 o'clock is karakia [prayers or incantations] ... I always start the day with a waiata [song]...I only do news once or twice a week because some of the stories that come out can be quite horrific..."

During the last part of the afternoon, Ngamihi spoke about allowing the children the freedom to: *"Play dress-ups and play with the puppets...because you haven't got them anymore when it gets to the end of the day."*

Ngamihi appeared to view "karakia" and "play [ing] dress-ups" as activities that occur during the day, although not as activities that promote children's oral language development. From a researcher's perspective, the teachers appeared to be engaged in many more oral language tasks and activities than they had formally acknowledged during the structured interview questions. Squonk's narrative illustrates

the case in point.

“I’m always here as soon as the bell goes... we gather together for quite an extended welcoming session...one of the most important things for five-year-olds is getting the sense of this is our place...where you belong and where we can talk together, so we spend quite a lot of time in the morning doing things like saying good morning and welcome and singing...and ordinary old things like feeding the fish and putting up the day and watering the potatoes...often talking through the timetable...then we have quite an extended gathering liturgy...difficult to get through some days because they just want to talk and we’ve got to talk...”

Squonk described the role of language in building a class sense of community and its formative role in pastoral care, particularly in an integrated school:

“[At the end of the day] we have a gathering together to tidy up for the day...thinking about those things that happened today that we weren’t happy with, maybe when we were sad, maybe when we know we didn’t do our best work, or maybe when we didn’t help a friend and we should have...I’ll add in I wasn’t very happy today when ... was mean to someone ...but wasn’t it lovely when...”

On closer examination, the links between the teachers' responses to 'walk through the day', their classroom artefacts, classroom texts, classroom layout and resources such as class leader lists, learning intentions on board, work book, children's paintings and location of resources were noted. This allowed for the teachers' more formal responses during the semi-structured question time to be viewed with their narrative and classroom artefacts. To cite two examples: Squonk referred to teacher talk, the importance of talking and listening and the importance of talk for the development of social skills in her narrative as she 'walked through her day', as well as in her 'formal responses'. The visual reinforcement for Squonk's responses and narrative were provided by the classroom artefacts (teaching table, talk tables, fish tank, potato plants, the timelines for the day), teacher work plan (social skills focus), the class rules display (one person talks at a time and we look at the person who is speaking) and class procedures board (class leader for the day). Maree also demonstrated links between her 'walking through the day' narrative with subsequent interview responses and her classroom geography. The layout of her classroom and her classroom geography (task stations for use in literacy session), physical resources (word cards), visual language displays (the school reunion), 'thinking hats' (for problem solving), whiteboard data (learning intentions) and class 'record of attendance' (containing ongoing records of children's oral language and morning talks) visually reinforced her narrative and interview responses. An example of the process used to triangulate the narratives, interview responses, classroom geography and artefacts is outlined below.

Table 4.3

An example of how three teachers' narrative themes, interview responses, classroom geography and artefacts were related.

Teacher	Interview Themes	Walk Through the Day (Abridged from each teacher's narrative)	Classroom Geography & Resources
	The role of oral language: Oral language is about...	Each teacher used a narrative format to 'walk through their day' and talk about how a typical day would unfold	
Squonk Decile 5 School	Talking/enjoying school Reading Listening Regulating behaviour Learning and following rules Social skills	"Always there when the children arrive – chat to the children before school and talk to the mothers. Most important children get a sense of place – setting things right for the day ... Welcoming/songs/feeding the fish/watering the potatoes. Household tasks, e.g. choosing leader for the day. Listening to stories that children are just bursting to tell you. Going through class timetable daily...Extended gathering liturgy... Then we move to maths – ENP – followed by physical education including folk dancing with another teacher...After break – reading with a big focus on alphabet work. I always begin by reading to them – just the sound and enjoyment of getting a story read to you is important... then we move to reading instruction. We move from reading to story writing ...where I write the story... then they go off and write their own story... Sometimes we don't write stories until the afternoon because we haven't had time to do it in reading....After lunch I always read another story to calm them down. The afternoon is a mixture of singing and religious education and lots of music listening and a bit of printing. We usually have another story reading session last thing in the afternoon to calm everybody down. Then a time to give closure to the day."	Class altar Fish tank Potato plants Rotating class leader list Class timetable Teaching table Work tables Task boards Alphabet charts Art work Wet area Book displays Mat area Childrens' personal remnants on display Group seating arrangements
Jane Decile 1 School	The development of literacy Asking and answering questions Making sense Listening Phonemic awareness Clarity of speech Responding appropriately to others	"...roll and administration and we get the chit-chat out of the way We go into oral language. We are talking about report writing, reasons, opinions and why things happen. Then we do modelling of a story. We do questions so they realise they have to give answers. They talk about their story, go off to their tables, draw a picture of what is going to be their story and write about it...they can use their word cards...their sounds. It takes about 45 minutes...don't believe the children have to waffle waffle ...I'm looking at facts and ideas...then we move to handwriting. All the children are independent learners in handwriting. ...Then on to fitness before play. After play we do an hour and a half on reading...We start off with sounds from the Joy Allcock programme then on to a poem and activities related to our letter of the week and then incorporate some of the ideas from HPP then I read one on one with each child...I have children going out during that time to the Talk to Learn programme...in the morning everyone is engaged in some form of literacy development. After lunch we have math, ...then on to topic, te reo, winter sports."	Books from National Library Word charts Sound charts Word cards Art Work Mat area Paintings Samples of work Sets of tables with 5-6 chairs at each table

Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed and described some beliefs articulated at the initial interview by Squonk, Ngamihi, Marilyn, Jane, Kathleen, Maree and Amy about the purpose of oral language in their classrooms. There was an acknowledgement that oral language happens all the time in the classroom and that it's what you use to explain things to children. The teacher's role in the classroom talk was discussed by several teachers and, although the role of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994a), was not discussed, the lack of opportunities to talk to individual children was. Oral language was seen to assist in the development of self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence and respect for others. The assessments, classroom programmes and classroom strategies employed to facilitate oral language development were discussed. The particular strategies of wait time, intonational contouring, modelling, rehearsal and corrective feedback were found to be effective. The teachers also highlighted the role of oral language in the development of literacy and outlined its social, regulatory and classroom management role. Although concerns were expressed about the limited oral language abilities of children at school entry, the concept of using language as a tool for meaning making and meaning taking was not directly stated. Listening, following instructions and being able to share ideas with others were considered important. Although no systematic ways to develop oral language within the class setting were noted, formative and summative assessment methods were described and the use and relevance of formal assessments was questioned by the teachers. All teachers believed in the need to place an emphasis on oral language for its part in reading, literacy and social skills development. Reading and literacy development were considered to be the primary

roles of new entrant teachers. The expectation that children will be taught oral language or encouraged to use their oral language skills to co-construct meaning did not feature in the interviews, although the expectation that children will learn to read and write did.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflection and Review

Results phase two

The second interview

This chapter presents a synopsis of the data collected during the second interview. The question: on reflection or review, what changes to the assessment, teaching techniques or classroom programmes are considered by teachers in order to further enhance a student's oral language, is also addressed. During the interview, some changes to the assessment of five-year-old students' oral language, as well as changes to classroom teaching techniques and classroom programmes, were discussed by the teachers. Each interview focus was largely determined by what phenomena the teachers chose to address after reading their first transcript. At the outset, it was anticipated that each transcript would provide a material basis and subsequent impetus for each teacher's reflection or review, which might lead them to affirm, challenge or modify their earlier documented beliefs about oral language.

Reviewing and reflecting

At the final interview, Maree, Amy, Squonk, Kathleen, Marilyn, Ngamihi and Jane communicated, shared and described their reflective experiences. All acknowledged that their consciousness about the importance of spoken language and discourse had been raised. They spoke of a heightened awareness of oral language and 'talking in class' that had been variously reawakened or stimulated. Several believed

they had not discovered oral language but had instead reviewed and revisited it. They acknowledged that too often: “[Just] *too many other things get in the way* [of oral language]” (Ngamihi).

Each teacher viewed and interpreted her transcript from her own meaning-making perspectives. As they reflected on their beliefs, they also became positioned to review their actions and consider and trial new opportunities to enhance each student’s oral language development.

Several teachers believed they had gained a heightened pedagogical awareness of classroom events and realised how oral language and discourse link to all curricula areas in the classroom. The role of oral language in the classroom they acknowledged had “...*not [previously] been consciously considered.*”

They spoke about transferring their thoughts, beliefs, hunches and ideas into practice and trialling new strategies. Ngamihi said: “*Just to reflect on oral language because you... take it as a matter of course ...It’s good...just to say ‘...oh yes I can fit it in this way and that way’.*”

The strategies trialled, they believed, had translated into a greater communication skills focus in their classrooms. For example, Maree detailed changes she had made as a result of her reflection on action.

“Think I am more aware of their needs ... The children are getting better at asking more relevant questions of

each other... I'm noticing and I think that's partly due to modelling and also just to maturity... They can devise a much more relevant question to ask me or someone else about something they're sharing."

The teachers talked openly about how the transcript reviews had provided a framework for reflection about their assumptions. Was it because they had heard themselves speak or because they had read their own transcripts? They talked about feeling unnerved and challenged by the experience of bringing their beliefs to a conscious level. One teacher spoke about how disconcerting it had been "...hearing my own voice" in the transcribed narrative. Was this reflection on reflection or something different? Participants appeared to ponder whether they really saw and heard their beliefs in the transcription and compact disc or did they now have contrary beliefs to what they had stated at the interview. The experience of reading a transcript of their own conversational speech rather than in a written language genre unnerved some initially because: "*It didn't read right*" (Amy). "*Not how I would have written about my beliefs*" (Squonk).

The teachers talked about asking questions of themselves when they reviewed their beliefs and reflected on their transcripts. "*Why? Why do I do this? Why do I use these strategies?*"

The teachers read their own transcript and later spoke about being confronted by their own talk in written form as a new and unique cognitive experience. On reflection,

a key point was made by Squonk about the crystallisation of her beliefs:

“I thought. Yes I did... ‘I do talk like that; I do say things like that’... funny a lot of the things I’d said in there, I know I say a lot... things about children and obviously my beliefs in how children work and how they are. I say it a lot. I really do believe it and it wasn’t until I saw it written down there and remembered having said it in lots of different places at different times, I thought, ‘that’s probably my philosophy on whatever.’ But if somebody had said, ‘what is your philosophy on teaching or whatever?’ ...wouldn’t have been able to put it into words. I enjoyed doing it.”

There appeared to be different forms of reflection and review undertaken by the participants. Thinking about what could be done to improve oral language and enhance classroom discourse seemed the most prevalent reflective technique described, although retrospective reflection that involved thinking about how something had gone in class was also strongly evident in the narratives. The participants spoke about how they considered participating in the research project personally interesting and rewarding. While chatting informally after the interview, several participants spoke about how they had appreciated *“Having someone listen”*. They also implied that the interview and subsequent reflective experience had been a personally empowering and affirming experience.

Thinking, trialling and making choices

Marilyn spoke about how she had reviewed her thoughts on oral language and successfully introduced barrier language games as part of a 'Fire Wise' study. She talked about trialling different ideas and making choices about how she might implement, refine or discard those ideas. She described how her ideas had been successful in encouraging the children to express their thoughts and feelings more coherently. Kathleen also spoke about how as she reviewed her transcript, a domino effect had occurred that triggered other thoughts about oral language:

"It's like the unspoken one, ... the focus seems to be on the reading ... the reading and writing are going to be so much more difficult so we probably expect that just to be there [oral language]. I think a lot of teachers expect it to be there on entry and it's not and it's getting even worse..."

Amy discussed how the transcripts had caused her to reconsider her classroom practices. She talked about how she had reflected on a colleague's teaching techniques who had advocated and demonstrated in her practice the advantages and importance of building a rapport with children. Amy believed she would now focus more on creating a classroom environment that allowed children to speak openly. The recurring theme that children's spoken language is less well developed than previously evident was summed up by Kathleen as follows: *"As little as five years ago... and I know you can say it's the parents' job but they don't seem to have time and maybe we have to alter our programme, go down a bit lower."* These beliefs

and concerns about the presenting and changing developmental patterns of children's language at age five continued to be voiced by all the teachers.

Reflection and review: Assessments

The dominant assessment methods undertaken for oral language in the new entrant room include classroom observation and formal assessments using mainly criterion-referenced tests. In tandem with those assessments are the formative assessments that take place in the course of teaching, and summative assessments that take place at the end of a unit of work and also seek to provide information on how much students have learned. These assessments already mentioned in phase one were again mentioned. However, in phase two, the addition of ipsative assessments whereby the children were encouraged to evaluate their performance against their previous performance was noteworthy. Some teachers stated that they believed students should be encouraged to evaluate their own performance against a previous performance or oral language attempt. In tandem with the reported use of ipsative assessments was the point made that oral language needs to be constantly reassessed because it is constantly developing. The utilisation of ongoing assessments to meet children's changing oral language needs was discussed. There were indications too that the teachers had reviewed their beliefs, not only about the assessment of oral language, but also about the parameters of oral language in their classrooms. □□All seven teachers talked about how they had begun to review closely the oral language of their students. As they described the strategies and programming focus they had and were developing, they invariably described the classroom assessments they had undertaken. During the second phase, they talked

about assessing and teaching the processes of language through its products, for example how formal barrier games had been used to improve students' listening skills and strengthen their abilities to give and follow instructions. Another teacher spoke about how her students had been encouraged to evaluate their utterances against those they had made previously. In her classroom, formative and summative assessment models had been operating but, in phase two, ipsative assessment tools were introduced. Jane, for example, introduced a self-assessment and self-monitoring tool to the children with the dual purpose of assisting them to improve their own oral language and make them independent language learners.

“Since having done it [reflection and review], it's also made me go back and look at my own teaching of oral language [and look at] oral language, discourse, verbal interaction between children, so I've brought ideas that come into your head when you are talking, back into the classroom. I'm more specific on what I'm requiring from the class. No half-made sentences, which I was always fixing up before but even more so now, so I've had to come back in and say 'let's try that again' and I think because I look at the oral language, written language and reading as all very integral as to what's happening in child development. Our big focus this term is on 'does my reading make sense'.”

While none of the participants discussed the use of ipsative assessments during the initial interviews, there appeared to be a move that indicated that as the teachers

had chosen to move from a testing culture to an assessment culture, they were becoming better able to support their classroom teaching and children's learning.

Jane exemplified this when she talked about oral language, reading and written language and the particular integrative role she believed oral language plays:

“Your reading cannot make sense if your oral language doesn't make sense and your written language will not make sense if your oral language doesn't make sense and your reading doesn't make sense. So I have used ... 'does it make sense' as the centre of the web to integrate everything around into that very important task, because I'm sure children when they're speaking, unless they have very very good listening skills, they don't really listen to what they're saying and so then if they're not listening to what they're saying, they're also not saying 'well, does that really make sense?' and nine times out of ten it's because they're so used to saying it in that way without realising that structure doesn't allow you to say it like that.”

Jane further illustrated the move from a testing to an assessment culture when she detailed how she had promoted children's metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities by developing their abilities to self-correct, self-regulate and self-implement strategies to change and monitor their own oral language.

“Does it make grammatical sense? I don’t think grammatical sense and the grammatical structure is being taught specifically in the classroom, maybe teachers generally just let it go over the top without the corrections, because a child doesn’t know the difference.”

Jane was also asked if she believed there were links between what she had previously said and the self-correction process in reading.

“...very very definitely and that’s the other focus that I have brought in with that, is our learning intention... ‘does my reading make sense, does my oral language make sense, does my written language make sense’ and through modelling by me, they are now starting to say ‘no’ so then our success criteria goes ‘well, ... what do I have to do to fix it up’... making sure that they are going back to read it again and self-correcting and know if it does make sense’.”

Maree talked about reviewing where the children have come from as the baseline for the assessment process in comparison with where they are now. At the same time, she spoke of self-reviewing her own expectations:

“I just made a note here, just focusing in on my planning and making sure that I’m moving children on to the next

level and not standing still... and expecting more from them I think.”

Reference was also made to monitoring children’s oral language progress in terms of interpersonal listening and listening to texts in class and, as in phase one, the identification of specific students for targeted language assistance with a teacher assistant was noted. Further references to the out-of-school influences that impact significantly on children’s oral language development were again expressed.

“The TV doesn’t tell them what is grammatically correct.

A lot of the parents from this area would not speak in grammatically correct English. So they’re not hearing it, they’re not listening and then it goes back to ‘it doesn’t make sense’.”

Reflection and review: Teaching strategies

Maree indicated that in order to facilitate oral language development and discourse in the classroom, she has developed clear expectations about the level of oral language she accepts from children. Although she intends to give critical thinking skills more emphasis in future oral language situations, both Maree and Marilyn spoke about how they also intend to emphasise class learning intentions or classroom aims for oral language in the future and believe that: “[You] *get from children what you expect.*”

“[Through using]... learning intentions... the children know what is expected from an activity, be it oral or

whatever. I think that when the children know what's expected, it helps ... their learning."

Marilyn also trialled new strategies during the reflective assignment phase:

"News telling I think now is becoming more specific rather than just [a] wander around the circle and that relates back to the learning intentions. The children know what we expect as far as presenting the oral news or ideas."

Recurring references to the role and importance of reading was evidenced, as was the belief that oral language competence develops through an interaction of writing, talking, reading and experiences. Kathleen and Squonk also talked about the lifelong importance of "self-talk" and the importance of oral language for building self-esteem and self-belief. The concept of 'self-talk' and its links with oral language was also picked up on by Jane. A specific mantrum, "*I can succeed*", is now encouraged in Jane's class to promote self-determination and positive self-talk.

Amy was the only teacher who chose to reflect on the role of questioning in her class and on her classroom teaching techniques. She concluded:

*"Really just developing my skills a little bit more,
and...that's what you have to do as a teacher anyway."*

In contrast to Amy, Marilyn reviewed her teaching in general rather than specific questioning or teaching strategies. She reflected on her use of 'wait time' after having

spoken enthusiastically during the first interview about its positive effects. She demonstrated clear evidence of reflection and its relationship to future practice when she spoke about how she had refined her “*wait time*” to “*think time*” and extended its use by introducing the concept to her students. The children had practised and engaged in ‘think time’ with their peers at a student-to-student level and Marilyn described the very positive effect it had had on the children’s language, thinking, learning and behaviour. Following reflection, Marilyn described how now when she asks for responses from students, she takes care to ensure that she employs a strategic use of ‘wait time’ or ‘think time’ so the children have more time to think and elaborate on ideas before a response is required. She also spoke of her resolve to continue to encourage and direct the children in her class into more speaking activities.

“Reading the comments that I made..., I felt ... I still need to give the children more time to think and elaborate on ideas before I jump in with another question or an add-on to what they’re saying... I’m trying to give them more think time.”

Throughout the reflective assignment in phase two, the teachers believed their awareness of children’s oral language had been reawakened and heightened. Squonk spoke about how she had decided to focus on the children’s sequencing of ideas and on the oral language structures that children use and don’t use. She spoke about making oral language “*a learning focus area*”. Likewise, in phase one, Maree had spoken about how children sequence their ideas, and later in phase two, she spoke of her intention to extend the sequencing of ideas to concentrate on the links

between speaking, storytelling and written language:

"What happened first and then next ...we are sequencing ideas for writing but I think we need to sequence ideas now for speaking as well... children need to practise their story-telling too."

Both Jane and Maree advocated re-enforcing the learning links between writing and speaking. Jane also reflected on the phenomenon of oral language and on her role as the facilitator and promoter of oral language development in the classroom. Other teachers likened their 'reflection' to a similar phenomenon they had experienced previously when ideas had come into their head when they were talking.

At the first interview, Squonk demonstrated a strong belief in the social role of language, and at the second she had reviewed how she has continued to develop and encourage children's pragmatic language, as well as nurture the use of language at the social, psychological and cognitive levels, utilising specific teaching strategies. She talked about the most important thing for children being:

"...that they are going to tell their story not listen to it. I'm starting to say 'talk to a friend beside you, talk about what you've read or what were doing' and then instead of saying 'right Maggie what did you talk about?' I'll say, 'oh Maggie you were talking to Catherine, what did Catherine tell you?'...it's difficult for them because they don't always listen ...our communication rule is to speak,

“speak nicely and what sort of words do you use.”

Following reflection, Squonk also introduced and facilitated a technique of what could be coined as ‘negation’ as an oral language teaching strategy. It emphasised the social, behavioural and cognitive roles of oral language.

“We actually practised not speaking nicely today just for fun, and it was so funny...and I said to them ‘what did it make you feel like when someone talked to you like that?’ and they said ‘we don’t like it, it hurts our feelings,’ and I said ‘...all right now change your mind, change the way of thinking and think of something nice to say to people.’ As soon as they turned to say something nice to somebody, their voices dropped, and their tone...became softer and gentler and they could see it happening. It was fun...it’s a good link with social skills...”

In phase two, the interviews indicated that the teachers had recaptured experiences, thought about and evaluated them. They had all reflected about the talk of the classroom and reviewed not only the students’ talk, but also the phenomena and role of their own ‘talking in class’. The transcripts suggested that oral language was now beginning to be reviewed as a process to improve teaching and learning in new entrant classrooms.

Marilyn reflected on the word ‘discourse’ from a perspective that was meaningful for her. It could be speculated that it also linked with her ongoing implementation and

extension of 'wait time' or 'think time' to improve discussion and encourage the flow of ideas from the children.

"The question about whether teachers, ... know the difference between oral language, [and] discourse and I started thinking about that ... and what the difference was between oral language programme and discourse in the classroom. And went away and got the dictionary and got myself sorted out on that one.....conversation for discourse, and oral language is more structured. And that was when I decided I needed to give the children more time to develop discussion and ideas without me interrupting too soon, which is what's happening with this Fire Wise unit, and I thought that my task board, the things that I have on the task board, allow the children to have that conversation when they're doing things related to their learning with reading and maths and things like that. And of course the chatter at the tables."

Marilyn and Amy also related oral language to the math curriculum and acknowledged the role of talk in the development of mathematical concepts. Marilyn described how her review had also affected her view of "*children's chatter*". She now viewed it not only as a tool for the children to use, but also as a useful tool for teachers to monitor children's understanding in maths and other contexts. The role and importance of the discourse between students was also reviewed by Amy, who demonstrated an

extension of her earlier comments about social skills and links to the reading and topic-related studies.

“The children are really enjoying the opportunity to speak to each other, and on a one-to-one basis they’re enjoying that opportunity.”

While Kathleen affirmed her current practices, she also described changes in classroom teaching strategies. She had reviewed the importance and role of oral language and signalled a renewed emphasis on her own listening skills. Her focus on assisting the children to follow classroom instructions independently and successfully, she believed, also transfers to many situations within and beyond the classroom. Kathleen noted as well that her review had also prompted her to re-emphasise the maxim *“keeping on the topic”*.

For the students in Kathleen’s class, the higher-order language skill of oral topic maintenance presented as a challenge.

“When I ask the children questions, they’re very comfortable to talk, but what they talk about is often on a wild tangent, they don’t answer the question...so trying to keep the children on topic and being able to answer questions is something...I need to try and get them to do better.”

Collectively, the teachers had reflected on what particular expectations they had about oral language. They also reviewed the teaching techniques they employed to realise

their expectations. Following their reviews, a greater range of teaching techniques emerged. One technique included questioning. However, the teachers did not appear to always use questions to assess the children's understanding of spoken communications; rather, questioning appeared to be viewed as a method of teaching comprehension, primarily for reading and written language purposes. Maree, however, now considered children's abilities in spoken language to be dynamic, and believed that spoken language continues to develop and change in tandem with other abilities. The teachers all acknowledged that class programmes require ongoing modification to meet students' ever-changing needs.

The transcripts in the second interview illustrated a focus shift. The teachers openly acknowledged that they had thought about and looked again at the talk that was occurring in their classroom. As a result, oral language emerged as a process that needs to be promoted as an all-inclusive classroom tool. This was in contrast to the first interview, when there was an underlying assumption that oral language will, on the whole, develop incidentally. For example, when asked to 'walk through the day', a high degree of classroom discourse was described in the narrative, yet not articulated or perceived as 'oral language'. 'Group work' and 'mat time' were not promoted as activities that facilitate oral language development. However, following reflection, the concept of oral language, its parameters and the responsibilities for its development in the class setting had broadened and were viewed by the teachers in a more holistic and all-encompassing way. Apart from the teachers hearing and reading their own transcript, the process of review was prompted only by the advance questions provided at the follow-up meeting, together with some written suggestions

for review and reflection (*appendices seven & eight*).

This greater awareness of oral language, together with more varied teaching strategies and programmes to promote oral language, became more evident as the interviews progressed (table 5.1). For example, the adoption of barrier games to improve direction giving, meaning making and listening skills, together with an increased focus on co-operative learning tasks, were particularly noteworthy. Some teachers mentioned the strategies that are detailed in the list below (table 5.1) during the initial interview, while others introduced them as additional teaching strategies or changes they had adopted during the second phase. On listing the strategies, it became apparent by phase two that teaching strategies were more child and process related rather than teacher or product focused. Likewise, the teacher focus had shifted from modelling as a prime strategy for language development to include a greater range of techniques that acknowledged the responsibilities of the learners as well as those of the teachers in oral language development. All the teachers acknowledged that, as a result of the reflective assignment, they had become: “*More aware of oral language.*”

Table 5.1

A comparative list of teaching strategies identified during phases one and two

<p><u>PHASE ONE TEACHERS</u> *Including :Phase one students Before ‘reflection’ The teachers believed they assisted oral language development in the classroom by:</p>	<p><u>PHASE TWO TEACHERS</u> After ‘reflection’ After the reflective assignment, the teachers believed they assisted oral language development by :</p>	<p><u>PHASE TWO STUDENTS</u> After ‘teacher reflection’ After the reflective assignment, the teachers acknowledged how students were given responsibility for their own learning by:</p>
Ensuring their programmes of work met students’ needs	Ensuring programmes were enjoyable for the students	
Using their teacher talk, e.g. repeating instructions	Recognising a need for teachers to self-review their own talking in class	
Modelling the appropriate language structures	Modelling appropriate language structures	Using oral exemplars
Using wait time	Using wait time/think time	Using wait time, which was acknowledged and referred to by the children as think time
Discussing their teaching practice with other professionals, e.g. other teachers and speech-language therapists	Discussing teaching practice with others and recognising the importance of trialling new teaching programmes and strategies	
	Using dedicated talking times in the class setting	Self-regulation of when to talk and when to listen
	Permitting the children to talk to each other when working at their tables	Being allowed time to talk to others in class
	Listening carefully to what the children are saying and how they are saying it	Listening to what other students are saying. Listening and responding and listening and repeating to others
	Writing learning outcomes in child-friendly language	Using learning intentions and advance organisers
	Adapting the number of steps in verbal instructions to students’ level of understanding	Learning to give instructions to other students
	Reducing the frequency and number of classroom instructions	
<p>* N.B. In phase one and before the reflective phase, the teaching strategies cited did not include reference to student strategies. This was in marked contrast to phase two.</p>	Undertaking ongoing informal, formative, summative and ipsative assessments of the children’s oral language	Undertaking self-assessment of oral language – “Does it make sense?”
	Acknowledge that every child’s oral language needs are developing and changing	
	Improving questioning techniques	Learning the difference between asking and telling
	Using oral traditions, e.g. story-telling	Co-constructing stories orally
	Using role play	Using role play

Programmes to develop oral language

During phase two, Jane spoke about how her review of the overall curriculum had impacted on her classroom programming. She had reflected on the range of oral language possibilities between and within each curriculum area in her classroom and contemplated solutions. For example, *“The discourse between children, that time when children can create, they can play, they can make, is taken away because of what we have to try and fit in...it has to come back to child-centred learning.”*

In view of the teacher’s reference to child-centred learning, it was surprising that no references were made to the *Te Whaariki* curriculum document, in which making, playing and creating are regarded as central to a child’s development. The compulsory school curriculum, by comparison, with its growing number of ‘additional requirements’ continued to be viewed with frustration and professional concern. Amy and Squonk believed:

“We’ve overloaded our curriculum. I think we overload our kids’ days and when I think of how many times I’m saying, ‘sorry we can’t talk about that now’ or ‘can we talk about it later, we’ve got to get this finished’ and then with [The Minister of Education]...telling us last night that we have got another hour of PE... forget about putting this extra stuff in” (Squonk).

The teachers voiced their concerns and frustrations not only for the needs of the children, but also for the implications that the ‘overfull curriculum’ has for them as

classroom practitioners. There was an implied belief that the wellbeing of all in the new entrant classroom, including the teacher, had been placed 'at risk'.

"I think we are expected to teach too many subjects. We have a very stretched timeframe trying to get through the day and get to theme and those sorts of things that you are running. I think we need to keep things at the basics [at new entrant level] ...science and social studies and health, music art and PE and numeracy and literacy" (Amy).

Does *Te Whaariki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, have a place in the new entrant classroom? Jane talked about the need for child-centred learning and questioned the range and relevance of some aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* and its design and relevance for new entrant learners. In particular, she outlined how she has had to:

"Struggle with areas like social studies where things are set out that are not in the children's realm of understanding...[especially when] children do not know about life in their own environment."

Jane believed that:

"...if that was looked at and... made child specific to areas – walking around this area – if we could do lots of things... involved with the area that the children live in... the language comes in because it's something they can

understand about and then they can go home and they can talk to their parents about it, because they've enjoyed it , they know where it is, they [the parents] know exactly...what the teacher is talking about...It has to come back to child-centred learning ..."

Squonk recalled how she had revisited *The Essential Skills of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1994b) and *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1994a) in the lead-up to an Education Review team visit. She said: "*I really must make a conscious effort to do a lot more retelling stories... they are pretty good at retelling what's happened to them...but it's story retelling that I would like to do a session on this term.*"

Such story retelling as a strategy rather than a programme would inevitably involve attending skills, interpersonal listening, visualisation and memory skills, listening to texts and interpersonal speaking. While Squonk's students had developed the ability to listen to texts and engage in interpersonal speaking, the skill of interpersonal listening will likely remain for them a pivotal prerequisite skill for retelling. Squonk's narrative and responses illustrated how she addressed the interpersonal listening development of the students in class through social skills development, retelling conversations, responding to varying intonational contours, and the giving and accepting of compliments.

Reflection and review: In retrospect

Phase two gave each teacher an opportunity to reflect on their earlier thoughts and beliefs about oral language. Differing forms of reflection appeared to be undertaken by each teacher as they elicited their professional memories. The reflection undertaken by the participants tended to demonstrate a focus on teaching strategies rather than a focus on particular programmes to improve students' oral language. The thematic studies that were undertaken at the time of the interviews provided a platform that heightened the teachers' awareness of strategies and opportunities that can enhance oral language development. However, for one teacher, the imminent arrival of the ERO team precipitated a further review of the curricula and the role of oral language.

Chapter summary

This chapter sought to determine what changes to the assessment, teaching techniques and classroom programmes had occurred between the first and second interviews. The teachers stated that they had reviewed, clarified, expanded and reconsidered their beliefs about oral language development and 'talking in class' because it had been given a focus and brought to their attention. This resulted in a number of significant changes being undertaken by the teachers to their existing classroom teaching strategies and also involved a greater classroom communication skills focus. The move from a testing culture to an assessment culture was particularly noteworthy as the teachers identified how they could better support their classroom teaching and children's learning. Likewise, the introduction of strategies to empower children to assume more responsibility for their own oral language learning (e.g.

'think time') was noteworthy. So too was the opportunity for the teachers to review their beliefs about oral language from their written transcript and audio file on compact disc. That opportunity was positively acknowledged by the teachers and appeared to add a further dimension to the reflective assignment, as did the 'concretising' of their temporal thoughts in written form.

The reflective phase demonstrated a focus shift and heightened awareness of the parameters and purpose of oral language and how it undergoes continuous development in new entrant classrooms. The teachers openly acknowledged, with what could be interpreted as a sense of relief, that it is "okay" for children to talk in class and that "*children's chatter*" and teacher talk all have important roles to play in the development of children's oral language. The techniques of "*think time*" and negation were also significant developments and demonstrated a teaching strategy rather than a programme focus. The teachers implied too that the overfull curriculum had impacted on their classroom programming "... *because there simply aren't enough hours in a day.*" The forms of reflection or review undertaken by each teacher were meaningful and person specific. Overall, this phase demonstrated that the teachers had thought about oral language, reviewed their expectations, trialled strategies and made professional choices about what oral language meant to them in the context of their classroom. From the responses given in this project, it would appear that it is useful to provide supportive frameworks for teachers when they review or reflect on their work. Such support could be promoted in an ongoing way through the mentoring, critical friend, performance appraisal or supervisory processes.

CHAPTER SIX

Talking in Class

Discussion and Conclusion

In chapters four and five, a selection of narratives and responses were presented that detailed the teachers' beliefs about oral language, both before and after reflection and review. In this chapter, the research questions and main themes are noted and then reviewed from the perspective of their implications for teaching, the strengths and limitations of the project, and future directions that invite further investigation and reporting.

Beliefs about oral language

The transcripts suggested that teachers partly attribute the determination of their beliefs to the influence of others. From the outset, it was not intended to make links between the teachers' beliefs and the learning theories that each teacher supported. However, several theories presented with strong parallels to each teacher's beliefs. For example, the view that spoken language is shaped through direct social modelling, indirect modelling, prompts and target-specific feedback was a dominant theme in phase one and represented a strong behaviourist influence (Roth & Worthington, 2001). In contrast, a humanistic view that children are 'switched on' to learning was discussed in relation to reading, written language and literacy, but not oral language.

However, the humanistic social aspects of language development, for example cooperative learning, and the co-constructivist and social constructivist teaching techniques of the *tuakana teina* approach to promote language learning were also acknowledged (Bishop & Glynn, 1999 & Brown & Thomson, 2000). By comparison, only one teacher in the project professed to hold beliefs about language development that were aligned to a Piagetian–constructivist discovery learning approach. That same teacher also spoke about using “*Edward de Bono’s six thinking hats approach*” as a strategy to develop oral language. Viewed overall in phase one, there was less evidence of beliefs about oral language that accommodated the supportive links between environments that Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory would support. For example, there appeared to be no spoken acknowledgement of the language/s that each student is familiar with in their home setting. However, the interconnectedness between children, their families and their communities was more evident in the beliefs expressed in phase two, although there were few environments like the visit to the zoo that were consciously utilised by the teachers to shape and enhance spoken language. The teachers said they believed that the curriculum and its lack of relevance for five-year-olds was getting in the way of forming an interconnectedness with the children’s real world. One teacher maintained beliefs similar to those of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and asserted that the curriculum must be relevant to the needs of students and that children need to experience an environment where family and community have acknowledged importance. While the teachers believed in the importance of providing a relevant context for language learning, there appeared to be few examples discussed, apart from the thematic studies like ‘Fire Wise’ and a zoo visit.

The *Te Whaariki* curriculum appears to have many significant links with the teachers' beliefs and also links the child and family with the wider world. The current essential skills within *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* did not appear to feature strongly in the beliefs expressed. However, at the time of writing, *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* is under review (Ministry of Education, 2005) and is likely to be replaced by 'key competencies' including thinking, meaning making, relating to others, managing self and participating and contributing. It is acknowledged that the development of these key competencies will form a link with early childhood and continue into adulthood in an alignment that is consistent with the frameworks of Bronfenbrenner (1979). Such changes, if implemented, may address teachers' concerns. However, this review also highlights how national educational policies 'coat-tail' along behind contemporary practice, although as Murphy (1999) cautions, not all educational changes can be addressed solely by the production of new curriculum statements.

Jane, Marilyn, Maree, Kathleen, Ngamihi, Amy and Squonk all viewed oral language as something that happened all the time in a classroom and considered it as something that could be planned for like formal oral language, or could also be incidental as in 'free play'. They had an espoused belief that oral language "*is always there*". During the initial interviews, the researcher inferred from the teachers' responses that oral language is often taken for granted because it is assumed that children will generally have some skills in listening and speaking when they arrive at school, thus teachers do not think of oral language as something that needs to be taught in a systematic way like reading. However, in so much as the teachers view

oral language as a component part of reading and literacy, oral language did not appear to be either 'taught', specifically referred to or targeted in the reading process. References to the integration of the processes involved in the development of oral language, namely hearing and vocalisation, sensory integration, concept formation, symbolic understanding, the directive and integrative functions of language, or how language is internalised as a vehicle for thought, were not made during the interviews. Likewise, there was lack of reference to the form and content of children's language, including the deeper structural components of language like grammar and semantics, that Bloom & Lahey (1978) and Cooper, Moodley and Reynell (1978) refer to. References, however, were frequently made by the teachers to the uses of oral language for social purposes and reading, as detailed in the publication by the Education Department of Western Australia (1994). Such reduced reference to the structures of oral language may have implications for pre-service training and professional development. For example, to teach numeracy, it is acknowledged that an understanding of subtraction and addition is required by the teacher. Likewise, it could be argued that to teach oral language, an understanding of what Bloom and Lahey (1978) describe as the structure, form and use of oral language should also be required.

The teachers discussed the important role that oral language development has to play in building relationships and as a vehicle for social interaction and for wellbeing and belonging. They also acknowledged the importance of language development in the areas of discourse and pragmatics (Crystal, 1987 & Gee, 1996). On reflection, the teachers continued to believe that oral language is important for social

relationships, although any belief that oral language has a role in meeting the cognitive and cultural needs of students was not expressed (Long, 2000). The social relationship theme broadened in phase two to include the need for children to feel secure and safe enough in their classroom to verbally share their thoughts and feelings with others. Oral language was seen as a useful vehicle for developing social relationships that require confidence, self-esteem and acceptance of others (Hymes, 1971). Teasley (1995) also notes that as children enter the larger world, their language skills play a very important role in their social and cognitive development. Social relationships and their facilitation by and through oral language are referred to by Nuthall (1996) when he talks about a vocabulary and a culture of shared understandings between teacher and students. He concludes that:

Whether a student learns or not reflects the student's understanding of classroom tasks, management of social relationships, and the extent to which the student shares the cultural understandings and background knowledge of the teacher and other students (p213).

The considerable agency of the teacher, the importance of teacher talk and teacher listening in the development of children's oral language, classroom discourse and classroom management were also highlighted and link with the writings of Tayler (1992). The teachers also indicated that, in class, they choose patterns of discourse and teacher talk that best suit their particular students. They stated that they believed it is their responsibility to model and furnish students with "appropriate" forms of oral language. In tandem with the findings of Bartram & Walton (2002), the criteria for

dealing with a child's errors appeared to be primarily on the basis that 'it sounds wrong to the teacher', rather than 'is it affecting communication' or 'would the child react badly to this correction'. The transcripts also revealed that beliefs held by each teacher about what 'proper' language is varied and appeared to be deeply held, which concurs with the findings of Woods (1996). Language was not considered by the teachers in this project to be constantly evolving. Maybe there are other viewpoints? For example, is New Zealand English and the language of children's homes becoming more hybridised through the media and sociocultural influences, while the classroom practitioners' 'teacherese' is not adapting or acknowledging those outside influences (Walqui, 2005)?

In this project, the influences that an overfilled curriculum likely has in the evolution of the teachers' beliefs concur with the findings of Arksey and Knight (1999). The teachers spoke about the effects of an "*overfull curriculum*" on their teaching and "*talking time*" with the class and individual children and made the point that there is a mismatch between what they would like to achieve with their children and what is realistic on any given day. However, it was clearly evident in the discussions that reading time was the one fixed and non-negotiable time slot in the class day. Although the teachers exhibited considerable knowledge about the teaching of reading, their training and expertise in the Reading Recovery methods for early reading achievement was also evident. Had their specialised training and knowledge impacted on their beliefs? Although oral language, like reading, is part of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, the English curriculum was not referred to by the teachers. However, literacy and reading were referred to as though they were curriculum areas. Reading is given

paramount focus in the new entrant classrooms. With the strong focus on reading, the implications for oral language as a meaning-making tool, in particular, and classroom teaching and discourse, in general, are significant. If, in contrast to the work of Cazden (2003), Halliday (1993), Vygotsky (1962) and Wells (2001), oral language is not acknowledged by new entrant teachers to have a pivotal role in children's learning or a role in the development of thought outside a literacy paradigm, then fundamental questions about learning and teaching would appear to present. Dockrell and Lindsay (1998) argue that almost every educational skill presupposes the use of language. While references were made to communicative exchanges in the classroom, few references were made by the teachers to the classroom management of those communicative exchanges and their fundamental role in learning, teaching, behaviour and thinking. If the responses given by the teachers could be generalised, then this gap or lack of reference has implications for teaching, learning and language development, and particularly so if, as Rosetti (1996) notes, children's early communication skills are regarded as the best predictor of future cognitive skills and school performance.

Although there were no indications in the first interviews that oral language was viewed as a learning tool, by 'phase two' the teachers' interview responses indicated that oral language is an often neglected area. The need for children to use oral language for thinking and to make or take meaning, and the cognitive role of oral language for meaning making and its role as a pivotal component of the educational process, had begun to emerge in 'phase two'. As oral language was not spoken of as being pivotal for learning and memory or general thinking abilities, the teachers' beliefs

continued to differ from those of Barnes, Britten and Rosen (1971), Bruner (1990), Cazden (1988) and Vygotsky (1962). Again, the teachers viewed oral language primarily as a basis for literacy. Notably, reading and written language and their responses were in accordance with the findings of Jones (1996) that teachers do not appear to view English as a unique learning and curriculum area. While the teachers talked about engaging learners through written text, no-one talked about engaging learners or stimulating thought through oral language.

The importance of listening in the school environment featured strongly. Its importance has also been highlighted by several researchers, including Cooper and Simonds (2003), who estimate that we spend over seventy percent of our waking time engaging in some form of communication, of which nearly fifty percent is listening and thirty percent talking. Much less time is spent reading and writing. The ability of a child to listen, and by implication comprehend, was signalled as important, although the factual, sociocultural or procedural background knowledge that the teachers have of listening contexts, or knowledge of the language system, such as the syntactic, semantic or phonological domains, did not feature in the transcripts. Oral language was considered the medium through which things were explained to children, a medium of instruction that teachers use and a precursor to literacy. However, how children make and take meaning from their teacher's talk and peer explanations was an emergent feature in 'phase two' and exemplified by class rehearsal of phrases such as "*Does it make sense?*"

The contexts in which we communicate were briefly referred to in both phases one

and two. However, the importance of ecological frameworks and the importance of the cultural heritage that the students bring with them when they start school were noted by two teachers. Their reference did not refer to what the children were not able to do, but instead acknowledged a celebration of the richness of different cultures as acknowledged in the *Early Childhood Curriculum: Te Whaariki*. In contrast, there was a greater emphasis placed by all the teachers on the significantly reduced opportunities that children currently have to develop and practise oral language at home and at school.

The teachers hypothesised that the out-of-school environments of a growing number of children are impacting on their abilities to communicate and, by implication, their learning is affected. Too often, children are placed in spectator situations where they are viewing and hearing talking, for example watching television, rather than actively engaging in interactive moments with people that occur when children are 'doing', talking and playing. Some of the concerns expressed by the teachers also feature in Gleason's work. As Gleason (2005) points out, there is no evidence to suggest that children acquire spoken language from watching television. However as Alston and St James-Roberts (cited in National Literacy Trust, 2005 p 15) also note, watching television reduces the time children have to socialise and play and in many homes where television produces a background noise, then adults get distracted from talking and listening to their children. While the language of the media (or, to coin a word, 'mediaese') may be modelled to children, children's language development in its formative stages requires more than 'mediaese' and 'teacherese'; it requires ongoing and frequent, sustained, one-to-one conversations with a significant adult. While

Brown (1977) suggested that there are no set rules for a mother to follow on how to talk to a child that can even approach what they unconsciously know, the key is always that the adult has to seek to communicate. By implication, teachers also need to seek to communicate with learners.

However, the differences between the language registers of the teacher, 'teacherese', and the language registers of the home, including 'motherese', or the register adaptations children are required to make as they transition to the compulsory sector were not discussed in depth by the teachers. Ngamihi, Kathleen, Amy and Jane all stated that the language learning and the language registers in students' homes differed from the language learning that occurs at school, both in form and use, and that the opportunities that children have to engage in face-to-face sustained conversations with adults is reduced. They contended that in many out-of-school environments, children are exposed to restricted language registers. They indicated that directives and expletives, exclamations and commands are predominant in the out-of-school language that many of their students are accustomed to. The teachers' beliefs concur with those in the United Kingdom, where experienced teachers reportedly concur with anecdotal reports that five-year-old children are less verbally advanced than at any time in recent history (National Literacy Trust, 2005).

The teachers also spoke about the limited dyadic conversations that occur between a teacher and individual children in the new entrant classroom and how they consider that these may be insufficient to hasten the oral language development of some students. This links with Dickinson and Sprague's (2001) work, which indicates that

teachers have few dyadic communications with individual children. While the teachers voiced their concerns about the reduction in the level of oral language abilities of students who now enrol at age five, they also indicated that they too have limited time to engage in meaningful conversations with their students. Furthermore, they suggested that five-year-olds have few opportunities to practise their talking or regularly engage in dyadic discourse with a significant adult. Likewise, there are limited opportunities for children to engage in conversational exchanges, especially where models of “*appropriate language structure*” in meaningful contexts are provided. They suggested that this has implications for teaching and may indicate that the programmes and/or curricula in new entrant rooms may need to be reviewed. This aligns with a discussion paper that states: *Experienced teachers are now reporting that where they used to note children arriving in their class with communication difficulties, they now highlight the ones without any problems as they are in the minority* (National Literacy Trust, 2005, p18).

Combined with a concern that children are having fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations with others was the concern that children are having fewer meaningful real-life experiences, as detailed in a newspaper article ‘Cotton wool children can’t hop, skip or jump – but they know their three R’s’ (N.Z. Sunday Star Times, 17 July, 2005). One teacher in this project spoke about the discussions she has with parents of pre-entry students where she promotes climbing trees and baking cakes as examples of important and fun things that children can experience before they “*start school*”. By focusing particularly on “*academic skills*” like name writing, she believed that children are denied many fun and learning opportunities that have

the potential to develop myriad other skills, including oral language. This links with Mercer's (2000) standpoint that if adults are engaged in joint activity with children, a child can be enabled to develop their language in ways that they would be unable to do alone. This was exemplified in a "Feed the Mind" New Zealand nationwide television advertising strategy that aimed to motivate parents to take a more active role in their children's development.

The teachers in this project presented from the outset as enthusiastic, dedicated professionals. As the links between home and school were discussed further, the teachers from decile one schools pointed out that they considered that limited attainment in 'literacy' is neither inevitable nor immutable. This viewpoint was not consistent with the study in which teachers expressed the belief that if a child was in a low-decile school, then they were likely to make limited progress (Phillips, McNaughton, MacDonald, 2000). However, while that assumption was not consistent with the beliefs expressed in this project, neither were the questions posed similar. Furthermore, the researcher inferred from each teacher's comments that not only had the teachers already made a difference to the reading and literacy levels of each child in their class, but also that they continued to want to make a difference.

Oral language was viewed by the participants from a traditional teacher-centred perspective, with the aim being for students to produce formally correct sentences, and speaking did not appear to be given as much time as reading and writing. While some degree of deficit theorising, or looking at what children could not do, was evident in the interviews, children were viewed more as empty vessels waiting to be filled

with reading and written language and not as learners destined to make little progress because they attend a low-decile school. However, there appeared to be a greater emphasis placed by teachers on what the children were not, rather than were, achieving. The teachers' views run counter to an holistic viewpoint whereby the teaching of English is seen to achieve most when the considerable informal knowledge and competence of students, whatever their background, is acknowledged, used and extended (Curriculum Corporation, 1994; Nunan, 1988).

Reading and literacy appeared throughout the project as the key components of a literacy curriculum umbrella under which oral language is positioned. In contrast to Halliday's (1985) viewpoint, the teachers viewed reading, writing and speaking as alternative ways of "*doing literacy*". Talk, in comparison with reading, was not signalled by the teachers as having a significant effect on children's knowledge and understanding, which links with Des-Fountain and Howe's work (1992). This has implications for oral language, and in particular for meaning making, teaching and learning, including numeracy, which is also 'oracy' dependent in new entrant classrooms.

Oral language was largely assumed by the teachers to be either part of a literacy curriculum or viewed as a conduit to reading. Throughout the interviews, the use of the word 'literacy' appeared to imply a global inclusion of spoken, written, gestural and visual texts. As a group the teachers held similar opinions, and shared semantic understandings, about oral language, discourse, reading and literacy that differ from the current policy frameworks. Their responses lead to the suggestion that 'literacy'

has a broad-based meaning for new entrant teachers and where, for example, terms like 'emotional literacy' are now made with reference to other curriculum areas (Tasker, 2001). Such a paradigm shift in 'literacies' may have implications for children's learning and oral language development, as well as teachers' professional development and pre-service training, and particularly if...*children undergo quite profound changes in their understanding by engaging in joint conversations with other people* (Edwards & Mercer, 1987, p19).

The teachers did not appear to view literacy as including conversations between people. However, Snow, Tabors and Dickinson (2001) note that the ability to narrate well and to use other forms of extended discourse is also an important precursor to literacy. Although, in terms of semantic frameworks, the word 'discourse' appeared to gain each teacher's attention and interest, it also appeared to be the word that prompted reflection about the nature and purpose of class talk. While the word 'discourse' emerged in discussions, only passing reference was made to conversational development. Specific facets of conversation like initiating a conversation, turn taking to maintain a conversation, monitoring of a partner's understanding, message accuracy and topic relevance were given much less emphasis from the teachers than listening and the development of 'listener skills'. However, listener skills, including eye contact, phatics, facing the speaker, looking away to non-verbally indicate that a conversation should be stopped, or yawning to indicate boredom, and intonational contours for emphasis, were all briefly referred to, as was reference to the importance of a child possessing an intelligible oral language transmission system in the class setting. Like listening, speech intelligibility

was considered a necessary classroom skill. While the specific transmission areas of phonetics and phonology were not discussed, one teacher spoke of the role of phonological awareness and its relationship and importance to reading. Similarly, the structure of language and the importance of grammar and syntax in oral language were discussed, although morphology was not. Likewise, the word 'semantics' did not feature in the interviews, although 'vocabulary', 'discourse', 'topic maintenance' and the importance of 'coherent utterances' did. While the social use of language was discussed, the interface of children's social and psychological development that Crystal (1987) and Gleason (2005) speak about was only briefly referred to. Similarly, the psychological and cognitive role that oral language has to play in learning and in meaning making and meaning taking was not discussed within the framework of oral language and did not link to the works of Bruner (1990), Cazden (1988), Halliday (1993) or Vygotsky (1962).

While one teacher in the project said she believed that nineteen percent of her students have disordered or delayed speech and language development, all expressed a belief that childrens' language abilities are underdeveloped when compared with children five to ten years ago. A lack of verbal communicative abilities among today's students has also been recognised in the United States in several reports (US Department of Labor, 1995; Vangelisti & Daly, 1989). Within the literature, definitions regarding the prevalence criteria for speech and language delay and disorder vary, but all are higher than the one percent of five-year-olds in New Zealand with communication difficulties who currently qualify for assistance from the Ministry of Education. No teachers appeared aware that, under current protocols, the Ministry

of Education: Special Education is not contracted to provide speech-language therapists to meet the needs of learners with mild to high communication needs in the compulsory sector.

The importance of spoken communication, transmission abilities and speech intelligibility was highlighted by Gierut (1998) and Harasty and Reed (1994), who also indicated that about ten to fifteen percent of all children entering school are unable to make themselves understood. Furthermore, if children with mild communication disorders were also included in the equation, then Harasty and Reed (1994) found the prevalence of children with communication disorders increased to thirty-seven percent of students within Sydney schools. However, in this project, one teacher spoke of the need for children's hearing to be assessed and monitored and highlighted the link between hearing, oral language development and learning. In New Zealand, *Te Puni Kokiri* (2000) reported that thirteen percent of new entrant Maori children and seven percent of non-Maori failed hearing screening tests in 1997/98. Such evidence has particular implications for the health/education interface, early intervention services, policy development, learning and teaching. Furthermore, much research within the areas of literacy, reading and phonological awareness does not acknowledge the past or present hearing status of the research participants. This fact has significant implications not only for meaning making and meaning taking, but also for 'literacy', particularly when oral language is viewed as part of a literacy curriculum. From an audiological and speech pathology perspective, Flexor (1999) notes:

A minimal or slight hearing impairment (greater than

15 dB HL) may not be problematic for a linguistically mature person ...but a minimal hearing impairment can sabotage the overall development of an infant or young child who is in the process of learning language and acquiring knowledge (Downs, 1988, Davis, 1999; cited in Flexor, p20).

The teachers expressed beliefs that children need to prepare for school and present with the appropriate skills. Four teachers detailed special preparations they had made for children with very high communication needs. The teachers involved in the transitions spoke about how there had been a consultative-collaborative approach used that had facilitated advance organisation of their classroom planning to which early childhood teachers, parents and speech-language therapists had contributed. With particular assistance from the speech-language therapists, the teachers had successfully enabled their classrooms and programmes to be adapted for the incoming student. The transitions and subsequent learning successes of the children were considered "*highly successful*". This links to the findings of Wartmann (1997) and more recently Mercado (2001):

What teachers know about the lives of children outside of school affects their pedagogical practices...having the means to construct knowledge about the differences among learners may be more important and less problematic than having information on learners in pre-packaged forms (Mercado, 2001 p690).

McCartney (1999) also suggests that teachers become more skilled in identifying children with language difficulties and are more able to link their interventions to the curriculum when they work collaboratively with speech-language therapists. This evidence further supports the need for a current stocktake of the definitions, the prevalence and the incidence of learners with hearing and communication difficulties in new entrant classrooms. Given that the teachers in this project were unsure of the languages spoken in the children's homes, it would also be helpful to have data on the languages spoken in the homes of five-year-old students. Such information would also help the teacher acknowledge a child's cultural heritage and partnerships, as well as meet each student's oral language needs more effectively, as suggested by the Ministry of Education (1996a).

Overall, *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* was seen by the teachers in this project to be "overfull" and impacting negatively on their opportunities to maximise classroom discourse and oral language development. The teachers made a connection between the number of policy edicts promulgated and the correspondingly less time available for quality teaching and time to "simply talk" to the children. The teachers' ability to make professional judgements about the needs of the learners was considered to have been eroded by an overfull and prescriptive curriculum that stipulates what has to be done and when. New policies are seen as bolt-ons to existing policies and the teachers described being "overwhelmed" by such additions. This was also found in the United States, where *The National Curriculum* was also considered to be affecting what classroom teachers believed and practised (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

In phase one of this project, there was a greater emphasis on the products of oral language learning, the 'what of learning', rather than the processes, or 'the how', of oral language learning. In phase two, a shift in emphasis was noted towards 'how' oral language can be developed (e.g. wait time, self-monitoring, role rehearsal), although the 'how' appeared to be more connected to the *Te Whaariki Curriculum* document than the *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1994a) document, particularly in the areas of relationships and empowerment.

Had the advance questions asked at the second meeting contributed to or influenced this change or was it the process of self-review and reflection that had brought about the change? Perhaps there were other factors at work? It was also noted that the teachers did not discuss the connections, as Cazden (1988) did, between the curriculum and its prime transmitter, oral language, or between how a child learns language, learns through language and then learns about language (Halliday 1993). As the teachers suggested, there is a need for in-service training and a curriculum review that would inevitably include an evaluation of how or if the *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1994a) currently meets the oral language needs of new entrant learners.

The assessment of oral language

In any form of assessment, comparisons are made (Ministry of Education, 1994a). The teachers involved in this project considered that assessments should be purposeful and spoke of tensions and regret at having to undertake assessments primarily to satisfy policy edicts. Such assessments, they contended, yield little

additional information about a child's oral language or its stage of development. Each teacher expressed a particular preference for undertaking assessments that could be more appropriately matched to the changing needs of the class and the child. For example, one teacher cited a child's ability to share information with others and be able to communicate with the teacher as her benchmark for oral language at school entry. Other assessments compared a child's presenting abilities with the New Zealand *Essential Skill Area: Communication* (1994b) and used that for planning. Speech Pathology Australia (2004), by way of example, state that, by the age of five years, a child should typically be able to: understand opposites ("*high/low*"); use sentences of about six words with correct grammar; talk about events that are happening, have happened or might happen; explain why something happens ("*Mum's car stopped because the petrol ran out*"); explain the function of objects ("*This scrunchie keeps my hair away*"); follow a three-step direction ("*Stand up, get your shoes on and wait by the door*"); express ideas about how they feel; become interested in writing, numbers and reading things; and speak clearly enough to be understood by anyone. Such specific attainments were not discussed during the interviews; instead, evidence of 'ad hoc' individual class teacher criteria was presented that did not always appear to be related to the multicultural, multilingual and multimodal environments of the children in the class. Likewise, no-one spoke about continuing to undertake oral language assessments through ongoing observations of real dialogues in real contexts. A clear understanding about how language develops and how children learn through language needs to be targeted and promoted through professional development. Such development would be more explicit and relevant if a current prevalence-incidence study was undertaken within

the New Zealand context to define and ascertain the frequency of mild, moderate, high and severe hearing and communication disorders in new entrant children. Information on their language and cultural backgrounds is also important. Data would then be available to conduct an in-depth evidence-based review of oral language and its development in new entrant classrooms.

In phase two, the teachers undertook ongoing observations of oral language that was occurring in the classroom as part of their day-to-day teaching practice. Although formal assessments were used, they spoke about the importance of using more than one assessment tool. While it was considered important to ascertain what a child was not accomplishing in oral language, there was less emphasis placed on what each child was accomplishing in areas of oral language. What the children could not, or were not, achieving appeared to predominate. Of the formal assessments used to assess what children can and cannot do, the JOST (Special Education Service, 1998) was favoured. The teachers spoke of using the discrete language indicators in the JOST to support an in-class, and in one case an out-of-class, development focus. Some teachers maintained that in-depth information about a child's oral language could only adequately be 'scoped' in a one-to-one situation. Nevertheless, by phase two, there were indications that the teachers had begun to move from "*testing*" oral language towards a more continuous ongoing assessment process. All seven teachers believed that they had little formal training or expert knowledge about oral language, its structure, its development or its use. In contrast, it was clearly evident that they had been given formal training in and had expert knowledge of reading.

The promotion of oral language in the classroom

The teachers spoke of using a range of teaching strategies to promote oral language development that included the use of visual prompts, modelling, rehearsal, corrective feedback, story-telling and wait and think time. Other language facilitation techniques such as expansion, self-talk, commenting or parallel talk, redundancy, repetition of key words, shaping, semantic priming, paraphrasing, slowing down teacher rate of talk, reinforcement, prompting, sentence completion, question modification, yes/no questions with add-ons, to name a few, were not mentioned. The lack of mention of a wide range of language facilitation techniques support the comments made by the teachers that they have had little formal training in oral language, its structures, development or use. This would appear to signal that if we are to facilitate and promote oral language in new entrant rooms, teachers need to know about the wide range of techniques that can promote oral language and how those various techniques can be utilised for meaning making, learning and classroom management.

The *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* document calls for respect for the backgrounds of all students, ...*which is responsive to the wide diversity of perspectives and linguistic backgrounds in New Zealand* (1994, p13). Finch (2005) talks about a “*linguistic legitimacy*” whereby the backgrounds of all students are respected. That “*linguistic legitimacy*” appeared to be under-acknowledged by the teachers when they focused on giving students corrective feedback on their classroom utterances. An exception to that focus was illustrated by the teacher with specialist training in bilingual education. She noted how supportive links between environments can be developed using ecological frameworks and how it is possible to integrate

the cultural norms of *whanaungatanga*, *awhina* and *tuakana teina* to promote students' oral language. This presented in accordance with the work undertaken by Hohepa, Hingaroa Smith, Tuhiwai Smith and McNaughton (1992), which underscores the importance of developing a learning community with sociocultural norms that seek to support cultural identity and social development, as is closely aligned with *Te Whaariki: Early Childhood Curriculum*. The benefit of understanding each child's social and cultural background and the role that such understanding plays has implications for children's language, its development and usage.

Reflection and review

The role of reflection in a continuous improvement cycle was encapsulated in Jane's comments:

"I'm a reflective teacher ...I think you really have to stop, take task, look at yourself, look at where you are at ... everything can be improved on, no matter what you are doing, no matter how good you think you are doing or how successful things are. You have to be prepared to realise there is always room for improvement."

The teachers described reflection on action as they reflected on their thoughts about oral language and their teaching practices in the classroom. Reflection in action was also engaged in as they reflected on what they were doing while they were doing it. This was followed by reflection for action, which appeared to occur as the teachers' reflection led to re-engagement (Schon, 1987). Similarly, there were links with van Manen's (1977) progression of reflective practice and Kemmis's (1985)

view of reflection of taking stock of something that has happened in the classroom.

Reflection and review: Assessment

When reflecting on assessment, the teachers reiterated that *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* for five-year-olds is overfull and frequently not relevant. They spoke of being “saturated” and “overrun” by a curriculum that has stymied their professional judgement. They implied that their assessment and programming decisions based on the presenting strengths and needs of the new entrant students had been eclipsed by perceived policy dictates. The required use of “tests” for the sole purpose of adhering to “official requirements” was also seen as time consuming and redundant.

During phase two, all teachers had reviewed and made changes to their assessment practices. Several stated that the assessment of oral language had been “given extra thought.” They also acknowledged that the discussions had helped them to consider and introduce a wider range of methods for evaluating each student’s oral language which is in accordance with the writings of Gipps, (1994). The changes ranged from introducing an initial assessment platform of observation to a move from formal, formative and summative assessments described in the first interview to ipsative assessments in the second (Gipps, 1994). A greater awareness and review of the effectiveness of learning activities and of teaching programmes, strategies and processes had also been contemplated and undertaken. As the teachers moved from a testing culture to an assessment culture, they appeared to be better positioned to support their own teaching and the children’s learning.

Reflection and review: Strategies and programmes

A heightened awareness of the role of oral language was prevalent during phase two of the project yet was underpinned by a sense of regret by all the teachers that there is no time to talk with individual children. *It is not...formal programmes in oral language that are required at this level, but more opportunities for one-to-one conversation...* (Clay, 1984, p19).

However, how oral language and discourse interlink all areas of the curriculum, and the benefits to students and teachers when there is a greater communication skills focus, became more evident in phase two. The children were encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own oral language, including developing the skills of self-assessment that some teachers indicated had untapped potential. Allowing the children time to talk was also emphasised. Specific techniques and programmes like wait time/think time, barrier games, negation, a review of questioning techniques and a greater tolerance and understanding of “*table talk*” (giving children an opportunity to talk together at their work tables) were evident following reflection, as was the increased use of co-operative learning tasks. Two teachers also developed a modelled self-instruction approach in response to their class needs, which utilised self-talk to modify behaviour, learning and oral communication. Their approach had strong similarities to the cognitive behaviour modification programme developed by Meichenbaum (1977) and reviewed by Robinson, Smith, Miller & Brownell (1999), whereby children were modelled the appropriate language skills to use for self-talk so they could assume responsibility for self-monitoring.

In summary:

The interview transcripts demonstrated a matching fit with recent literature which suggests that teacher beliefs and value systems guide the implementation of specific instructional strategies in the classroom (Braithwaite, 1999). The teachers had reviewed and reflected on how much they talked and what about, how they gave instructions and explanations, how much time they allocated to teacher talk and how they responded to children's utterances. As the teachers self-reviewed their transcripts, they gained a greater understanding of their own belief systems. Each teacher indicated that as they focused and reflected on oral language they also reviewed their programmes and practices "*for literacy*". They had begun to review their perceptions and make observations and changes to their assumptions, which demonstrated a disposition to act in ways that were described by Raths (2001).

Implications for teaching

The findings indicate that, on a big picture level, there are policy and curriculum issues that are perceived by classroom practitioners to be affecting the development, role and purpose of children's oral language in new entrant classrooms. During both phases one and two of the project, the teachers considered that oral language was a component of the literacy framework and that its prime usefulness was to develop and improve reading. There appear to be strong links between these beliefs and an erosion of the cross-curricular function of oral language for meaning making and meaning taking. That erosion links to Haworth's (2001) observations that oral language is usually viewed as a subordinate of literacy.

In planning for better learning outcomes, the Ministry of Education (2002) stated that: *Special emphasis will be placed on students whose further education ...may be at risk through under-achievement in literacy and/or numeracy* (p3).

The interviews conducted in this project provide information that special emphasis is not always afforded children who are communicatively underachieving. While the teachers acknowledged the communication needs of their students, no teachers in this project spoke about seeking advice or support for children who did not speak, who had jumbled or slurred speech, unstructured word order, word finding difficulties, limited spoken language or difficulty comprehending spoken language or following class instructions. Similarly, children who presented with difficulties in comprehending spoken language were not considered by the teachers to be atypical. Then, too, if a child had disordered expressive language abilities and poor receptive language or comprehension skills, the teachers did not mention that guidance or advice from a speech-language therapist could be considered. If oral language is believed to be part of the 'literacy curriculum', then it would appear that children with underdeveloped, delayed, disordered or impaired speech and language or poor hearing are 'at risk' of not having their communication needs identified and therefore 'at risk' of underachievement in literacy and/or numeracy. However, do we also need to ask how will they make sense of their world?

Coupled with issues of achievement are the values, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of individual classroom practitioners that are, in turn, influenced by policy and societal variables. As the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English

Language (Department of Education & Science, 1988, p8) states: *As the shapes of literacy multiply, so our dependency on language increases.*

With this increasing dependency on language, there is a need for classroom practitioners to have specific knowledge, experience and training in all facets of language, especially in the comparatively neglected areas of spoken language and classroom discourse. The role of oral language is primarily for learning, memory and thinking (Bruner, 1990; Cazden, 1988; Halliday, 1993; Vygotsky, 1962). However, the connections between the curriculum and its prime transmitter, oral language, or how a child learns language, learns through language and then learns about language were not articulated in the interviews. Neither were strong beliefs articulated that talk is the medium through which conceptual and linguistic understandings are constructed (Jones, 1996).

Limitations and strengths of the project

The purpose of this project has been to document and consider the beliefs about oral language that seven teachers discussed. While this project makes no claim to be a definitive study, there are undeniably areas that could have been explored further, additional literature that could have been included, other questions that could have been asked and other interpretations that could have been made. Oral language is complex. Undertaking research into what beliefs a teacher articulates about oral language is doubly complex. The specific challenges that were presented in this project were compounded by the lack of research literature in the area of teacher-espoused beliefs about oral language, coupled with 'wide' research questions.

It is also acknowledged that my background experiences as a speech-language therapist both within the health and education sectors and those as a teacher in the pre-compulsory, compulsory and post-compulsory sectors of education have all probably played a role in influencing and shaping my beliefs. As I attempted to synthesise the data collected in this project, I too became the author of another narrative, influenced by the interviews with each teacher. As I made decisions about what question to ask, or not ask, and took meaning from the responses given, very probably my own inherent underlying beliefs about the under-acknowledged role of oral language in new entrant classrooms were intertwined in my decision-making process. Maybe, too, the research questions were also shaped and influenced by my professional background and beliefs, which, in turn, may have affected the responses given. My first draft contained a large reflective 'soliloquised' account that acted as a professional journal and, with hindsight, gave me a medium to explore the manner in which my own perspective on the world had shaped my beliefs and, in turn, influenced the selection and analyses of the teachers' responses. Seale (1999) acknowledges that such a series of responses and processes form part of the qualitative research journey.

As the particular topic combination and focus of this project has not received research attention, the small sample size could also be viewed as limiting. However, this project purports only to reflect what teachers in one area of New Zealand believed and/or chose to share on a particular day. The sample size is small and restricted to a provincial centre; therefore, the views expressed can only be presumed to be representative of the participating teachers. Nevertheless, given the skills and

experience of the teachers, I would contend that these case studies suggest more general implications within the New Zealand context.

Although the semi-structured interview enabled a focus to be made on specific areas of oral language, it was the narrative 'walking through the day' that yielded the richest source of data. Furthermore, in the first semi-structured interview, the questions were not provided in advance, which resulted in a richer tapestry of thoughts, opinions, assumptions and beliefs than in the second interview. In the second interview, the questions were provided in advance and I had an idea that the teachers had thoughtfully pre-prepared their responses and were trying to 'help me' by providing answers that they thought I required. For that reason, I felt the need to say frequently: "*There are no right or wrong answers; it is what you believe at this moment in time that is important...*" Perhaps this would have been prevented if there had been an independent interviewer?

On subsequent re-readings of the narratives and interview responses, I hypothesised that as teachers read their first transcript they believed that some of the personal beliefs they had articulated might not 'fit' with current thinking; therefore, the reflective responses became more measured and circumspect at the second interview. I also questioned if the teachers and researcher shared individually and collectively the same semantic frameworks. For example, did we all share common understandings of the words 'reading', 'discourse', 'oral language'? The responses given would strongly suggest we did not; therefore, it could be contended that some interpretations given to the responses have been compromised. Could this have been

counteracted? In a word, probably. Had the research design included a section with written sentence completion tasks such as Literacy is..., Discourse is ..., then an individual and collective comparative link within and between each teacher's spoken and written semantic frameworks could have been strengthened. This would have further illustrated fundamental points of difference, not only for our beliefs, but also for our shared communicative understandings. This indicates that such semantic frameworks, or what Gleason (2005, p416) describes as *semantic knowledge*, should be considered when formulating professional development programmes.

A further limitation of this project was the absence of any visual recording of teacher-children and classroom interactions. Self-reviewed video recordings by each teacher of their teacher talk, classroom discourse and communicative interactions might have facilitated teacher self-review and reflection at another level, although the steps undertaken in this project would be important prerequisite primers for such recordings. It could also be argued that as the teachers' practices were not observed, the link between each teacher's beliefs and practices was not established empirically.

Likewise, it could be argued that even though you believe something, it does not have to be true or necessarily form a persistent part of your belief system. However, the aim of this project was to establish what beliefs teachers had about oral language and not to judge the validity or truthfulness of those beliefs. Phenomenologists might argue that the beliefs held on one particular day are as temporal as oral language and cannot be validated or invalidated. Although attempts at triangulation were made, it was not to 'verify' or validate each teacher's beliefs, but rather to make connective

links between the concrete and temporal representations made by the researcher. Possibly, if there had been careful reference to each teacher's stated beliefs, versus their statements, versus their comments, then a more in-depth understanding of the teachers' beliefs by the researcher may have resulted.

It is important to acknowledge that the capacity to reflect is developed to different stages in different people (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). Although Kagan (1992) and Woods (1996) postulated that beliefs about teaching are core beliefs and are resistant to change, there were indications in this project that when teachers controlled a review of their own practice, they also decided what teaching strategy changes they implemented in their class. While some changes and affirmations to existing beliefs occurred during the project, significantly more changes took place at the in-class oral language assessment and teaching strategies level. There was also evidence based on each teacher's perceptions and self-report that they were seeking to engage in more systematic processes of observing students' spoken communications and then making considered changes similar to those referred to by Tice (2005). However, on the basis of the responses given in this project, it could be hypothesised that changes to a teacher's beliefs are most likely to occur after interventions have been implemented and their efficacy or non-efficacy demonstrated on a practical level. Furthermore, a follow-up interview with each teacher six months after phase two of this project would probably have yielded further information about the retentions, changes and affirmations to each teacher's beliefs over time.

On review, it was the research aims and questions that drove the focus of this project,

as did the qualitative methodology. The superiority of qualitative research for eliciting teachers' beliefs is attested to by a number of authors (Hammadou, 1993; Kagan, 1990). Although it might be assumed that the phenomena that represented each teacher's personal thoughts and beliefs were temporal, it was the transcription that reconfigured and concretised the temporality of their thoughts and words. Because the data was qualitative, there were necessarily elements of selectivity about what was included in the write-up.

In order to link the elements of selectivity, Denzin (1997) offered a possible solution, namely that triangulation can enable the application and combination of research methodologies when studying the same phenomenon. Several research methodologies were chosen in this project, and triangulation between the stories told, the artefacts held and the teaching practices described aimed to ensure that a self-checking mechanism was in place for the researcher. The strengths of the study lie with each teacher and the beliefs they chose to share about the development of children's oral language. Their beliefs give us an important insight into teaching and learning in new entrant classrooms.

The aims of this project have been achieved: the beliefs new entrant teachers have about oral language and its development have been recorded, together with the changes to the assessment, teaching techniques and classroom programmes that the teachers articulated. The teachers' beliefs signal directions for future study and highlight the need to take cognisance of the meaning that oral language has for teachers.

Future directions: Research

Just as talk is part of teaching and learning, this project has aimed to be part of a continuum that adds to previous and future studies about 'talking in class'. Based on the interviews and narratives, further studies along a continuum of spoken language and the role of 'talk' in meaning making and learning is indicated. The five project directions that invite further investigation and reporting have all emanated from the teachers' responses. For clarity of review, each direction has been enumerated, detailed and briefly discussed.

- Firstly, that a project to define and stocktake the prevalence, incidence and severity of hearing, fluency, voice and speech and language delay or disorder amongst New Zealand new entrant learners is indicated.

While such information would provide a road-map to address the presenting needs, the teachers also suggested that they had not been furnished with a theoretical framework or understanding of oral language, its development or potential for meaning making and learning. As a group, they considered that professional development would assist practising and pre-service teachers to gain a greater understanding of oral language and the role of talk in the classroom, including ways that would encourage children to develop and learn with it and about it. The teachers' considerations also support the need to gather further information that may indicate what differences can or cannot be made when the roles of oral language in new entrant rooms are actively promoted.

- Secondly, research to determine the effects on students' achievement and behaviour when teachers undertake in-class professional development that targets the various ways students can develop communicative competence and learn with oral language. Such professional development might include the modelling, rehearsal and targeted practice of a wide range of teaching strategies to promote oral language and facilitate learning.

The teachers believed that there are few opportunities for children to practise their talking and a lack of time for teachers to engage in communicative exchanges with students or to talk to individual children. This was coupled with a lack of information about the nature and frequency of dyadic and polyadic conversations that currently occur in new entrant classrooms. These concerns, together with a perceived belief in the decline of spoken language skills amongst new entrant children, warrant further study. For that reason, it is suggested that the effects of the following interventions could provide information that would indicate if talking can or cannot make a difference when it is promoted for its role in realising and expressing meaning.

- Thirdly, that a study is undertaken to detail the effects on new entrants' language development, learning and behaviour when a teacher assistant is specially trained and is available to assist the class teacher throughout the day to highlight talking as a pedagogical activity.

The beliefs expressed about oral language provided little evidence of the use of ecological frameworks to support language development. However, when links were

established between the early childhood facilities, the new entrant teacher and families for a common purpose, the teachers believed that the transition to school and the effects on a child's learning were noteworthy. Further investigation into the management of student transitions to the compulsory sector might also assist meaning making and oral language development.

- Fourthly, a pilot programme to establish ongoing and regular communicative links between new entrant teachers, prospective students, families and early childhood personnel both three months prior to and three months post school entry. In particular, the monitoring and recording of the effects on classroom and home talk and each child's language development, learning and behaviour prior to and following this programme would also have the potential to yield important information.

- Fifthly, a replication of this project within another geographic area would be useful, particularly if the in-class video recordings of classroom talk for purpose of supported self-review by each participating teacher were included. In addition, a follow-up interview with each teacher six months after the completion of phase two to document what changes and affirmations to each teacher's beliefs had occurred over time might also yield rich information.

In summary :

The responses given by the teachers in this project indicated that when teachers are given professional recognition, an opportunity to express their beliefs, have them

transcribed, read, listen, review and/or reflect on them, modifications to classroom practice can occur. The modifications to classroom practice appear to be undertaken when supportive frameworks are in place that affirm a teacher's abilities to undertake that review and reflection. Furthermore, it could be hypothesised that if teachers were able to self-review videos of their classroom practice through supported self-review, they may choose to corroborate their classroom practices with their beliefs about oral language. The teachers in this project demonstrated ably that with supported opportunities and professional recognition, there is a framework of significant and unrealised potential to further adapt classroom teaching to the oral communicative needs of learners.

Talking in Class

Oral language plays a pivotal role throughout life. If we are to assist children's oral language development in the future, I would contend that we should begin by seeking first to understand and acknowledge the classroom practitioner's oral language and literacy paradigms.

This project supports the notion that there is a probable relationship between the beliefs a teacher holds about spoken language and how they describe and undertake their classroom practice. Likewise, there is evidence to support a hypothesis that changes to teachers' beliefs most likely occur after teaching strategies or programmes have been implemented successfully in their classrooms, rather than vice versa.

The highly skilled and dedicated teachers who participated in this project shared

their beliefs and highlighted the potential that our individual beliefs and paradigm shifts have to impact on what happens in a classroom, including the development of children's spoken language and in-class talk. Teachers remain central to the communications that take place in a classroom. Children's engagement for learning happens in, with and through dialogue and depends on each teacher's knowledge and beliefs about oral language, its development and role. Oral language and 'class talk' has the potential to enable learning, particularly when teachers monitor and manage classroom talk and encourage children to develop and learn with it and about it.

The teachers highlighted a paradigm shift towards literacy and a privileging of reading and writing. As they perceived 'Literacy', rather than 'English', as a curriculum area, they also highlighted a paradigm shift that appears to have narrowed, rather than broadened, the meaning-making, learning, behavioural and communication potential of five-year-old learners. In contrast, while engaging learners through visual texts is actively promoted in new entrant classrooms, engaging learners through oral language is not.

The cross-curricular function of oral language for learning and meaning remains underdeveloped, as does its potential to engage five-year-olds in classroom communications, meaning making and learning. While differing communication technologies may characterise this millennium, there are strong indicators to suggest that oral language will likely remain a defining and essential foundation stone for our humanity, for our living and our learning.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. & Piazza, J. (1996). Changing beliefs: Teaching and learning mathematics in constructivist preservice classrooms. *Action in Teacher Education*, 18 (2), 51-62.
- Arksey, H. & Knight, P. (1999). *Approaches to interviewing. Interviewing for social scientists: An introductory resource with examples*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bailey, K., Bergthold, B., Braunstein, B., Fleishman, N. J., Holbrook, M. P., Tuman, J., Waissbluth, T. (1996). The language learner's autobiography: Examining the apprenticeship of observation. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp 1-29). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barnes, D. (1992). The role of talk in learning. In K. Norman (Ed), *Thinking voices: The work of the national oracy project* (pp 123-128). London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Barnes, D., Britten, J. & Rosen, H. (1971). *Language, the learner and the school*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Bartram, M & Walton, R. (2002). *Correction*: Thomson Learning: Heinle.
- Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon.

- Bell, J., Bush, T. & Fox, A. (1984). *Conducting small-scale investigations in educational management*. London: Harper & Row.
- Bishop, R. & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Blanton, W. E. & Moorman, G. B. (1987). *The effects of knowledge on the instructional behaviour of classroom reading teachers* (No. 7). Boone, NC. Appalachian State University Center on Excellence in Teacher Education.
- Bloom, L. & Lahey, M. (1978). *Language development and language disorders*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Boud, D., Keogh, R. & Walker, D. (1985). Promoting reflection in learning: A model. In D. Boud, R. Keogh & D. Walker (Eds), *Reflection: Turning experience into learning* (pp 18-40). London: Kogan Page.
- Bouma, G. D. (1996). *The research process* (3rd ed). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.
- Braithwaite, R. J. (1999, 22-25 September). *Does it matter what I think? An exploration of teachers' constructions of literacy and their classrooms practices*. Paper presented at the European Conference in Educational Research, Lahti, Finland.

- Bratlinger, E. (1996). Influence of preservice teachers' beliefs about pupil achievement on attitudes toward inclusion. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 19* (1), 17-33.
- Brock, A. (2003, 11-13 September). *Eliciting early years educators' thinking: Ascertaining professional practical knowledge, interests and concerns*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association, Edinburgh.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brophy, J. E. & Good, T. L. (1974). *Teacher-student relationships: Causes and consequences*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Brown, D. & Thomson, C. (2000). *Co-operative learning in New Zealand schools*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Brown, R. (1977). Introduction. In, C. E. Snow & C. A. Ferguson (Eds.), *Talking to children: language input and acquisition*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruner, J. & Haste, H. (1987). *Making sense: The child's construction of the world*. London: Methuen.

- Burns, S. & Bulman, C. (2000). *Reflective practice in nursing* (2nd ed). Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Cazden, C. B. (1988a). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Cazden, C. B. (1988). Interactions between Maori children and Pakeha teachers: Observations of an American visitor. *Auckland Reading Association, Auckland, New Zealand*.
- Cazden, C. B. (1990, 2003). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd & 3rd ed). Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In A. Lieblich & R. Josselson (Eds), *The narrative study of lives* Vol 3 (pp 1-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Christie, F. (2004). The study of language and subject English. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 15-29.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clark, C. M. & Petersen, P. L. (1986). Teachers' thought processes. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed), *Handbook of research on teaching*. (pp 255-296). New York: Macmillan.

- Clay, M. M. (1972). *Reading the patterning of complex behaviour*. Auckland NZ: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (1983). *Biks and gutches-learning to inflect English words*. Auckland NZ: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (1984). *Engaging with the school system: A study of interactions in new entrant classrooms*. University of Auckland, NZ: Department of Education.
- Clay, M. M. (1985). Engaging with the school system: A study of interactions in new entrant classrooms. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 20 (1), 20-38.
- Clay, M. M., Gill, M., Glynn, T., McNaughton, T. & Salmon, K. (1983). *Record of oral language* (2nd ed). Auckland.NZ: Heinemann.
- Cooney, A. (1999). Reflective practice: Reflection demystified: Answering some common questions. *British Journal of Nursing*, 8 (22), 1530-1534.
- Cooper, J., Moodley, M. & Reynell, J. (1978). *Helping language development: A developmental programme for children with early language handicaps*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Cooper, P. & Simonds, C. (2003). *Communication for the classroom teacher* (7th ed). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Copeland, P., Birmingham, C. & Lewin, B. (1993). The reflective practitioner in teaching towards a research agenda. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9 (4), 247-259.

- Crystal, D. (1987). Concepts of language development: A realistic perspective. In W. Yule & M. Rutter (Eds), *Language development and disorders* (pp 42-53). London: Mac Keith Press.
- Crystal, D., Fletcher, P. & Garman, M. (1989). *Grammatical analysis of reading disability: Studies in disorders of communication* (2nd ed). London: Cole and Whurr.
- Cullen, J. (2004). Personal communication. Palmerston North, NZ.
- Cullen, J., & Nolan, P. (2004). An integrative curriculum approach to road safety education. *Set: Research information for teachers*, 2, 3-7.
- Curriculum Corporation. (1994). *A statement on English for Australian schools*. Melbourne: Australian Education Council, Curriculum Corporation.
- Deford, M. (1985). Validating the construct of theoretical orientation in reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 351-367.
- Delamont, S. (1995). Teachers as artists. In L. W. Anderson (Ed.), *International encyclopaedia of teaching and teacher education* (2nd ed) (pp 6-8). New York: Pergamon.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). Triangulation in educational research. In J. P. Keeves (Ed), *Educational research, methodology, and measurement: An international handbook* (2nd ed) (pp 318-322). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Department of Education & Science, U. K. (1988). *Report of the committee of inquiry into the teaching of English language*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery

Office, U.K.

- Des-Fountain, D. & Howe, A. (1992). Pupils working together on understanding. In K. Norman (Ed), *Thinking voices: The work of the national oracy project* (pp 129 -147). London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think. A restatement of the relations of reflective thinking to the educative process* (2nd revised ed). Boston : Heath.
- Dicker, L.A. & Monda-Amaya, L. (1997). Using problem solving and effective teaching frameworks to promote reflective thinking in preservice special educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 20 (1), 22-36.
- Dickinson, D. & Sprague, K. (2001). In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds), *Handbook of early literacy research* (pp. 263-280). NY: Guildford.
- Dockrell, J, & Lindsay, G. (1998). The ways in which speech and language difficulties impact on children's access to the curriculum. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 14, 117-133.
- Duffy, G. & Anderson, M. (1984). Teachers theoretical orientations and the real classroom. *Reading Psychology*, 5 (1-2), 97-104.
- Dunn, L. M. & Dunn, L. M. (1997). PPVT-III: Peabody picture vocabulary test (3rd ed). Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Education Department: Western Australia (1994). *Oral language: Resource book*. Melbourne: Longman.

- Edwards, D., & Mercer, N. (1987). *Common knowledge: The development of understanding in the classroom*. New York: Routledge.
- Elley, W. B. (2004). Effective reading programmes in the junior school: How some schools produce high literacy levels at year 3. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, 1, 12-15.
- Fang, Z. (1995). On paradigm shift in reading/literary research. *Reading Psychology*, 16 (2), 215 -260.
- Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, 38, 47-65.
- Finch, B. (2005). Personal communication. Massey University.
- Flanders, N. (1970). *Analysing teacher behaviour*. London: Addison Wesley.
- Flexor, C. (1999). *Facilitating hearing and listening in young children* (2nd ed). San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group.
- Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research: Theory, method and applications*. London: Sage.
- Fraenkel, J. R. & Wallen, N. E. (1996). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (3rd ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York : Teachers College Press.

- Gee, J. (1996). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. London: Routledge.
- Gee, J. (2004). *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Gentile, L. (2001). *The identification and comparison of language structures used by Reading Recovery and Descubriendo La Lectura children who did not discontinue in twenty weeks*. Paper presented at the Third North American Leadership Academy, Washington, DC.
- Gierut, J. (1998). Treatment efficacy: Functional phonological disorders in children. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 41*, (pp85-100).
- Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, Vol 28 (2)*, 235 -261.
- Gipps, C. (1994) *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Gleason, J. Berko (2005). *The development of language* (6th ed). Boston: Pearson / Allyn and Bacon.
- Goode, W. & Hatt, P. (1952). *Methods in social research*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Goodenough, W. (1963). *Cooperation in change*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

- Goodson, I. F. (1995). *The making of curriculum: collected essays*. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Grudgeon, E., Hubbard, L., Smith, C. & Dawes, L. (2001). *Teaching speaking and listening in the primary school* (2nd ed). London: David Fulton.
- Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum: Product or praxis?* Sussex: Falmer Press.
- Gubrium, J. & Holstein, J. (1998). Narrative practice and the coherence of personal stories. *Sociological Quarterly*, 39, 163-187.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1993). Towards a language based theory of learning. *Linguistics and Education*, 5 (2), 93 -116.
- Hammadou, J. (1993). Inquiry in language teacher education. In G. Guntermann (Ed), *Developing language teachers for a changing world* (pp 76 -103). Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group.
- Harasty, J. & Reed, V. (1994). The prevalence of speech and language impairment in two Sydney metropolitan schools. *Australian Journal of Human Communication Disorders*, 22 (1) 1-23.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times*. London: Cassell.
- Harste, J., Woodward, V. & Bourke, C. (1984). *Language stories and literacy*

lessons. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann Educational Books.

Hatton, N., Smith, D. & Hatton, N. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11 (1), 33-49.

Haworth, A. (2001). The repositioning of oracy: A millennium project. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 31, 11-23.

Hedges, H. (2002). *Subject content knowledge in early childhood curriculum and pedagogy*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Heron, J. (1985). The role of reflection in a co-operative inquiry. In David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, David Walker (Eds). *In reflection: Turning experience into learning (pp 18-40)* London: Kogan Page.

Hohepa, M., Smith, H., Smith, T. & McNaughton, S. (1992). Te kohanga reo hei tikanga ako i te reo Maori: te kohanga reo as a context for language learning. *Educational Psychology*, 112 (3&4), 333-346.

Holes, G. (1998). Teacher as rain dancer. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68 (3), 413-421.

Howe, A. (1997). *Making talk work*. Sheffield: National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE).

Hymes, D. (1971). Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In R. Huxley & E. Ingram (Eds), *Language acquisition: Models and methods (pp 3 -28)*.

New York: Academic Press.

- Jackson, P. W. (1986). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Johnson, D. & Kress, G. (2003). Globalisation, literacy and society: Redesigning pedagogy and assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 10 (1) 76-82.
- Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10 (4), 439-452.
- Jones, P. (1996). *Talking to learn*. Newtown, NSW, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Jordan, T. & Stanovich, P. (2003). Teachers' personal epistemological beliefs about students with disabilities as indicators of effective teaching practices. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs*, 3 (1) 56-62.
- Justice, P. W. (2004). *Relevant linguistics: An introduction to the structure and use of English for teachers* (2nd ed). Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Kagan, D. M. (1990). Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Interferences concerning the Goldilocks principle. *Review of Educational Research*, 60, 419 - 469.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher beliefs. *Educational Psychologist*, 27 (1), 65-90.
- Katz, L. & Raths, J. (1985). Dispositions as goals for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 1 (4), 301-307.

- Kelchtermans, G. (1993). *Teachers and their career story: A biographical perspective on professional development*. London: Falmer Press.
- Kemmis, S. (1985). *Action research and the politics of reflection in reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Kennedy, M. M. (1997). *Defining an ideal teacher program*. Washington, DC: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.
- Kougl, K. (1997). *Communicating in the classroom*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. CA: Sage Publications.
- Lashley, T. (1980). Preservice teacher beliefs about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 31 (4), 38-41.
- Learning Media. (2005). *Teaching talk to focus on oral language in the classroom*, from <http://www.learningmedia.co.nz>, retrieved on 15 July, 2005.
- Lieblich, A., Mashiach-Tuval, R. & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Little, W., Fowler, H.W., Coulson, J, (1973). *The shorter Oxford English dictionary* (3rd ed Vol 1&2).

- Long, M. (2000). *The psychology of education*. London: Routledge and Falmer.
- Longberger, R. (1992). *The belief systems and instructional choices of preservice teachers*. Pittsburg, Kans: College Reading Association.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Loughran, J. J. (1996). *Developing reflective practice: learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. London: Falmer Press.
- MacLure, M. (1992). The first five years: the development of talk in the pre-school period. In K. Norman (Ed), *Thinking voices: The work of the national oracy project* (pp 16-26). London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Massey University (2002). *Massey University Human Ethics Committee Guidelines*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University.
- McCartney, E. (1999). *Speech / language therapists and teachers working together: a systems approach to collaboration*. London: Whurr Publishers.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. London: Sage Publications.
- McLean, S. V. (1991). *The human encounter: Teachers and children living together in pre-schools*. London: Falmer Press.
- McNaughton, S. (2002). *Meeting of minds*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Meichenbaum, D. (1977). *Cognitive behaviour modification: An integrative approach*. New York: Plenum.

- Mercado, C. I. (2001). The learner, race, ethnicity, and linguistic difference. In V. Richardson (Ed), *The handbook of research on teaching* (4thed) (pp 668-694). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Mercer, N. (2000). *Words & minds: How we use language to think together*. London. Routledge.
- Metge, J. (1984). *Learning and teaching: He tikanga Maori*. Wellington NZ: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1989). *Hauraki Early Language Programme*. Wellington NZ: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1994a). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1994b). *The essential learning areas of the New Zealand curriculum framework*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1996a). *Exploring language: A handbook for teachers*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1996b). *Te Whaariki: He whaariki maturanga mo nga mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1997). *School entry assessment: A guide for teachers*. (SEA): Wellington NZ: Learning Media.

- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (1999). *Literacy experts group: Report made to the Secretary for Education*. Wellington NZ: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2001). Hei awhiawhi tamariki ki te panui puka puka (HPP). A helping hand towards literacy [Videotape]. Wellington NZ: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2002a). *Oral language: A professional development module for schools*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2002b). *Planning for better student outcomes*. Wellington NZ: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand. (2003a). *Effective literacy practice in years 1 to 4*. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2003b). *Sound sense: Phonics and phonological awareness*. Ready To Read: Teacher Support Material. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2004). Curriculum update: He korero marautanga: Literacy and Numeracy: Towards more effective teaching practice. Wellington NZ: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2005). *Key Competencies. The New Zealand Curriculum / Marautanga Project*. Wellington NZ: Crown.
- Moon, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in learning and professional development: theory and practice*. London: Kogan Page.

- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Munby, H. (1982). The place of teachers' beliefs in research on teacher thinking and decision making and alternative methodology. *Instructional Science*, 11, 201-225.
- Murphy, B. (1999). Social interaction and language use in Irish infant classrooms in the context of the revised Irish Primary School Curriculum. *Literacy*, 38 (3), 149 -155.
- Murray, M. (2003). Narrative psychology and narrative analysis. In P.M.Camic, J.E.Rhodes & L.Yardley (Eds), *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp 95-112). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- National Literacy Trust, (2005). Why do many young children lack basic language skills? (*A discussion paper prepared by the National Literacy Trust's Talk To Your Baby campaign*). National Literacy Trust, London.
- Nisbett, R. E. & Ross, L. (1980). *Human interferences: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgement*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centered curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nuthall, G. (1996). *What role does ability play in classroom learning?* Paper presented at the N.Z. Association for Research in Education, Nelson NZ.

- O'Neill, J. (1974). *Making sense together: An introduction to wild sociology*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pajares, M. (1992). Teacher beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62 (3), 307-332.
- Palacios, J., Gonzalez, M. & Moreno, M. (1992). Stimulating the child in the zone of proximal development: The role of parent's ideas. In I. Sigel, A. McGillicuddy-deLise & J. Goodnow (Eds), *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children* (2nd ed) (pp 71-94). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Paris, A. H. & Paris, S. G. (2003). Assessing narrative comprehension in young children. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 38 (1), 36 -76.
- Phelan, A. M. & McLaughlin, H. J. (1995). Educational discourses, the nature of the child, and the practice of new teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46, 165-183.
- Phillips, G., McNaughton, S., & MacDonald, S. (2000). *Picking up the Pace: Effective literacy interventions for accelerated progress over the transition into decile 1 schools* (Final Report to the Ministry of Education on the Professional Development - Early Childhood Primary Links via Literacy Project). Auckland: The Child Literacy Foundation, Woolf Fisher Research Centre, Ministry of Education.
- Putnam, R. T. & Borko, H. (1997). Teacher learning implications of new views of cognition. In B. Biddle, T.L. Good & T. I. Goodson (Eds), *International*

- handbook of teachers and teaching* (Vol 2) (pp 1223-1296). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Raths, J. (2001). Teachers' beliefs and teaching beliefs. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 3 (1), 1-11.
- Robinson, R., Smith, S., Miller, D., Brownell, M. (1999). Cognitive behaviour modification of hyper-activity-impulsivity and aggression. A meta analysis of school based studies. *Journal of Educational Psychology* (91), 195-203.
- Roehler, L. & Duffy, G. (1991). Teachers' instructional action. In R. Barr (Ed), *Handbook of reading research*, (pp 861-884). New York: Longman.
- Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes and values*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosetti, L.M. (1996) *Communication intervention: Birth to three*. London: Singular.
- Roth, F. & Worthington.C. (2001). *Treatment resource manual for speech-language pathology* (2nd ed). Albany, NY: Singular/Thomson Learning.
- Rowe, M. B. (1986). Wait time: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37, 43-50.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, L. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data*. London: Sage Publications.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schon, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-

Bass.

Schulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: knowledge growth in teaching.

Educational Researcher, 15, 4 -14.

Schwandt, T. A. (1996). Farewell to criteriology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2, 58 -72.

Scott, D. & Usher, R. (2003). *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. London: Continuum.

Seale, C. (1999). *The quality of quantitative research*. London: Sage.

Shames, G. H. & Wiig, E. H. (1982). *Human communication disorders: An introduction*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Shavelson, R.J., Cadwell, J. & Izu, T. (1977). Teachers' sensitivity to the reliability of information in making pedagogical decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 14, 83- 97.

Shotter, J. (1993). *Conversational realities: Constructing life through language*. London: Sage Publications.

Sinclair, J. & Coulthard, R. (1975). *Towards an analysis of discourse: The English used by teachers and pupils*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Smiley, L. & Goldstein, P. A. (1998). *Language delays and disorders: From research to practice*. San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group.

Smith, J. & Elley, W. (1997). *How children learn to write*. Auckland: Addison Wesley Longman.

- Snow, C. E. & Ferguson, C. A. (1977). *Talking to children: Language input and acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Snow, C.E., Tabors, P. & Dickinson, D. (2001). Language development in the pre-school years. In D.K. Dickinson & P Tabors (Eds) *Beginning literacy with language: Young children learning at home and at school (pp1-26)*. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes.
- Special Education Service (1998). *Junior oral screening test*. Wellington NZ: Special Education Service.
- Special Education Service (1999). *Communicate to participate*. Wellington NZ: Special Education Service.
- Special Education Service (2000). *Talk to learn*. Wellington NZ : Group Special Education, Ministry of Education.
- Speech Pathology Australia. (2005). *Learning to speak and listen- what to expect in the first five years: Fact sheet from <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au>* , retrieved on 15 March, 2005.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The unique case and bibliography. The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage.
- Stubbs, M. (1976). Keeping in touch: some functions of teacher talk. In *Language, schools and classrooms* (2nd ed) (p 105). London: Methuen.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Language schools and classrooms* (2nd ed). London: Methuen.

- Stubbs, M. (1995). *Discourse analysis. The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Oxford.UK: Blackwell.
- Tasker, G. (2001). *Students' experience in an HIV/AIDS sexuality programme: What they learnt and the implications for teaching and learning in health education*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Victoria University, Wellington NZ.
- Taylor, C. (1992). Teacher-child communication in pre-primary and the first primary year: an ecological perspective. In J. Cullen & J. Williamson (Eds) (pp 27-30) *The early years: policy research and practice*. Perth WA: Meerlinga Young Children's Foundation.
- Teasley, S. (1995). The role of talk in children's peer collaborations. *Developmental Psychology*, 31, 207-220.
- Te Puni Kokiri. (2000). *Progress toward closing social and economic gaps between Maori and non Maori: A report to the Minister of Maori Affairs*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Maori Development.
- Tice, J. (2005). *Reflective teaching: Exploring our own classroom practice*. London: BBC World Service.
- Tomlinson, P. (1999). Conscious reflection and implicit learning in teacher preparation: Recent light on an old issue. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25 (3), 407- 424.
- United States Department of Labor (1995). *Fastest growing careers*. Chevy Chase MD: US Government Printing Office.
- Van Manen, J. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical.

Curriculum Inquiry, 6, 205-208.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York. State University of New York Press.

Vangelisti, A. L. & Daly, J. A. (1989). Correlates of speaking skills in the United States: A national Assessment. *Communication Education*, 38, 123 -143.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Thinking in speech. In R. W. Riber & A. Carton (Ed.), *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky, Volume 1: Problems of General Psychology*. New York: Plenum.

Walker, M. (1972). Makaton: Makaton Charitable Trust, UK.

Walqui, A. (2005). *Personal response to audience question*. Paper presented at 'Teaching Talk': Learning Media Conference, May 2005, Wellington, NZ.

Walsh, K., McAllister, M. & Morgan, A. (2002). Using reflective practice processes to identify practice change issues in an aged care service. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 2 (4), 230-236.

Ward, R. & Dix, S. (2004). Highlighting children's awareness of their texts through talk. *Set: Research Information for Teachers: 1*, 7 -11.

Wartmann, S. (2000). The transition from kindergarten to school for children with special needs. *Set: Research Information for Teachers: 1*, 11 -15.

Webster, A. & McConnell, C. (1987). *Special needs in ordinary schools*. London:

Cassell.

Wells, G. (1996). Using the tool kit of discourse in the activity of learning and teaching.

Mind Culture and Activity, 3 (2), 74 -101.

Wells, G. (2001). The case for dialogic inquiry. In G. Wells (Ed), *Action talk and text:*

Learning and teaching through inquiry (pp 171 -194). New York: Teachers

College Press.

Whitehead, M. (1994). Teaching talk. In K. Norman (Ed), *Thinking voices: The work*

of the national oracy project (pp 203-214). London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Widdowson, H. G. (1983). *Learning purpose and language use*. Oxford: Oxford

University Press.

Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research methods in education*. (7thed): Dally & Bacon.

Wiig, E. H. & Semel, E. (1984). *Language assessment and intervention for the*

learning disabled (2nd ed). Columbus, OH. Charles Merrill.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching: Beliefs, decision*

making and classroom practice. Cambridge: Press Syndicate: Cambridge

University Press.

Yost, D., Sentner, S. & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of

critical reflection: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher*

Education, Vol 51, 1, (pp 39-49).

Zeichner, K. & Liston, D. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Zeichner, K. & Tabachinck, B. (1981). Are the effects of university teacher education 'washed out' by school experiences? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 32 (3), 7-11.

TALKING IN CLASS:

The ideas, opinions and beliefs that teachers of five-year-old students hold about the nature, role and purpose of oral language development and the discourse of the classroom are explored.

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS:

This sheet aims to provide you with more specific information about the proposed thesis being undertaken for a Master of Education by Shona McDonald.

Project outline

This project is about listening to, and learning from, teachers. In particular, the project aims to find out about oral language in the way that a classroom teacher knows about oral language. There are no right or wrong answers. It is the opinions, thoughts and beliefs of each individual teacher that this project seeks to document. The way that each classroom teacher facilitates, develops and reflects on students' oral language and classroom discourse is also of particular interest.

Project procedures:

Schools in the Napier and surrounding areas will be contacted and an invitation extended to the teachers of five-year-old students to participate in the project. From the number of responses received five teachers will be selected based on geographical proximity to the researcher's home, school type and decile ranking. Teachers who agree to participate in the project will be asked to sign a formal consent form. No financial rewards are able to be provided to the participants by the researcher.

In order to ensure the anonymity of participants each teacher will be given a non identifying name. The data obtained at the interview will then be transcribed and coded under the participant's selected non identifying name. The match of participant's names to pseudonyms will be written on a master sheet and kept in a locked filing cabinet separate from the interview transcriptions and only accessible by the researcher. Following the completion of the project the supervisors or their nominees will retain the transcribed data and consent forms for five years in accordance with Massey University policy.

This project will involve three hours of each participating teacher's time. This will be made up of two face to face interviews; one of an hour and a half and the other of half an hour. The remaining time will involve the reading and review of the interview transcripts. All interviews will be undertaken at a time and venue convenient to the participating teacher. The researcher would also like permission to photograph or have access to a photograph of each participant's classroom. For ethical reasons no children may be included in the photograph. The opportunity to briefly discuss with each teacher their classroom layout from the photograph together with their long term and weekly plan would also be appreciated at the initial interview.

Initially the first interview will be transcribed and returned to each teacher at a brief meeting. The teacher will be asked at the brief meeting to retain and read the transcript and reflect on the transcribed responses. Two weeks after the return of the initial transcript the teacher will again be contacted. The purpose of the final interview will be to document, if on reflection there have been any changes to classroom practice considered or implemented by the teacher.

Throughout the interviews an audio recorder will be used and the recordings later transcribed. All the voice recordings and transcriptions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home and on computer accessible only to the researcher, and authorised typist.

Participant's rights

The anonymity and rights of each teacher who participates is considered paramount. Transcripts will only be discussed with the individual concerned and where necessary the supervisors and typist. (The typist will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and will be unaware of the identity of the participants, as each participant will be known to the typist only by their pseudonym)

All audio recordings will be transcribed and transcripts stored for the required time as directed by the University. Participants may request that they receive the audio recording or transcript of the interview at the

conclusion of the project. A summary of the project will be made available to all participants and the participants' schools once the project has been approved for release by the University. The employing school of each participant will not be named in the final report unless the school and participant agree or request in writing to any such identification.

Teachers who agree to participate may:

- Decline to participate
- Decline to answer any questions
- Ask any questions about the study
- Provide information on the understanding that their name will not be used for any reason by the researcher unless they give their written permission
- Be given access to any of their personal data or transcripts during the period of the study
- To receive a summary of the findings when the project is concluded and approved for release by the university
- Request the voice recording of the interview
- Contact the assigned supervisors whose names and details are provided below

Contact details

Supervisors:

Professor Joy Cullen is the assigned supervisor and is able to be contacted by you at the Department of Learning and Teaching, College of Education, Massey University, Private Bag, Palmerston North. Joy's phone number is 06 3569099 ext 8955 and her e-mail address; j.l.cullen@massey.ac.nz.

Brian Finch from the Department of Arts and Language Education, College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North is the assigned co-supervisor and is also available to be contacted by you. Brian's phone number is 06 3569099 ext 8717 and e-mail b.t.finch@massey.ac.nz.

Researcher:

Shona McDonald is currently employed as a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour with the Hastings West Learning and Behaviour Team. Should you wish to be provided with further information about this project please feel free to contact Shona at:

Work phone: [REDACTED]

Home phone: (answerphone)

Mobile

e-mail: [REDACTED]

This project has been reviewed, judged to be low risk and approved by formal peer review under delegated authority from Massey University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Ethics and Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, e mail humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz.

APPENDIX TWO:
LETTER TO SCHOOL

██████████
Taradale
Napier, N.Z.

May 2004

The Principal

Dear

TALKING IN CLASS : A RESEARCH THESIS

I am approaching your school to enquire if there is a member of staff who would be willing to participate in a research project being undertaken for an MEd thesis at Massey University, Palmerston North.

As teachers are aware, spoken language is the primary medium for teaching and classroom communications in junior classrooms. This project aims in a very limited way to endeavour to add to our current understanding about students' oral language development and the discourse of the classroom.

To qualify for participation in the project a teacher would need to currently teach five-year-old students. At no stage of the research will any other school personnel, students, or their families be involved. It is anticipated that the project will involve up to three hours of a volunteering teacher's time and include: two face to face meetings with the researcher, which includes the reading and reflection of personal interview transcripts.

Unless I hear to the contrary, I will take the liberty of telephoning you within the next few days to see if there is a teacher at your school who would be happy to participate in the project.

Yours sincerely

Shona McDonald

Enclosures: Copy of information sheet for participating teachers.

TALKING IN CLASS

The ideas, opinions and beliefs that teachers of five-year-old school students hold about the nature, role and purpose of oral language development and the discourse of the classroom are explored.

PRINCIPAL CONSENT

I confirm that I have had all the information concerning this project explained to my satisfaction.

.....School gives consent for a member of staff to participate in this project.

.....Principal

.....School

..... Date

RESEARCH PROJECT –

TALKING IN CLASS

Greetings Tena koe

Thank you for signalling your interest in this project.

As your Principal will have indicated I am currently looking for teachers who work with 5 year old students and who are also willing to participate in a research project. .

I believe that most teachers will enjoy the contact we have over this research project as it should provide an opportunity to reflect on the process of being a teacher, discussing it with someone else and also having those experiences and beliefs documented.

Those who participate in the research will be asked to sign a consent form. The consent form sets out assurances from me which are designed to protect the identity of those involved in this project, giving access to all the research materials that relate to you personally, and guaranteeing your right to say when and where it is convenient to meet. The procedures that have been set in place are designed to ensure that our working relationship is a positive experience. The research procedures will follow the ethical guidelines set out by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

If you are interested in being involved in this research I would welcome the opportunity to talk about it in more detail with you, and answer any questions you may have. Once you have decided that you would like to participate in the research then we can set about arranging the details of your participation. At this stage we would also discuss and sign the consent forms mentioned above.

A more detailed information sheet is also attached for your information and I will take the liberty of contacting you in the next few days if I have not heard from you. My contact numbers are:

Best regards

Shona McDonald

Attached: Information for participating teachers.

TALKING IN CLASS

The ideas, opinions and beliefs that teachers of five-year-old school students hold about the nature, role and purpose of oral language development and the discourse of the classroom are explored.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to:

1. Be interviewed for the purpose of the project.
2. Voice recordings of the interviews
3. The storage of this consent form and transcribed data collected at the interviews for a period of five years by the University.
4. The transcription of the taped interview being undertaken by a third party providing that person has fulfilled the criteria identified by the University Ethics Committee, which includes signing a confidentiality agreement

I am also aware that:

1. I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.
2. The audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project or returned to me.
3. I may request a copy of my interview transcript at any time.

The nature and purpose of the research has been explained to my satisfaction and I have received a copy of the information sheet regarding this project and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time about the project.

I wish /do not wish the audio recordings to be returned to me at the end of the project.

Signed _____ (Teacher/ Co- Researcher)

Date _____

Signed _____ (Shona Mc Donald/ Researcher)

Date _____

This consent form will be held for the designated period of five years in accordance with University Policy and copies will be held also by both signatories.

TALKING IN CLASS

(Copy for teacher and researcher)

I want to find out about oral language in New Entrant classrooms. I especially want to know about oral language in the way that you know it. It is the way you see things that are important. There are no right or wrong answers. It is your opinions, thoughts and beliefs that I am interested in. In other words I am asking if for the next fifty five minutes if you would be my teacher.

Please be assured that in no way are you obliged to give a comment or respond to a question if you don't want to.

INTRODUCTION

If we could start with just collating some background data and then look specifically at oral language.

- Would you like to choose the pseudonym that you would like to be known by for the purposes of this research? If yes what would it be?
- Location of your school
- Decile Rank
- School roll (approx.)

YOUR CLASS

- Please could we make a note of the languages spoken at home by the children in your class?
- To what ethnic groups do your students belong?
- How many students in your class?
- How many boys in your class?
- As a group what particular strengths does this class demonstrate?
- Have you specific focus areas for this class based on their identified strengths and needs?*[please could we detail]*

AS CLASSROOM TEACHER / PRACTITIONER/CO-RESEARCHER

- What is your ethnic heritage?
- Which cultures do you identify with?
- In which country did you receive your teacher training?
- How many years have you been teaching?
- In what areas of the New Zealand and what countries overseas have you taught?
- Please could you specify in which areas you have taught? E.g. Early childhood, compulsory (age range) post compulsory.

- Please could we detail your qualifications?
- What Professional Development have you been able to undertake in the past two years? Please could we record any courses you recall attending or on site training you've had that have focused on oral or spoken language in the classroom?

Now if we can move in more depth to your classroom.....

Please could we begin by looking at the photo of your room as that would help me understand and visualise more clearly when you are talking about your classroom.

1. As we look at your work plan (or timetable), please could you briefly walk me through your day.
2. From your experience do you think oral language is something that teachers' think of as part of their long term or weekly teaching plan?
3. Would you suggest that there are some particularly important aspects of oral language that teachers need to focus on?
4. Do you think teachers use words like "spoken language" and "oral language" "discourse" to mean the same thing ?
5. If you look back on your teaching career or earlier.....Who are the particular people; or maybe situations that have had a strong influence on the way you do things in the classroom? Does that apply to oral language too?
6. Would it be fair to say that those same people or situations have also affected the way you view or undertake oral language in the classroom?
7. It has been said that most of a teacher's day consists of talking or verbal interactions with students. Have you any thoughts about "teacher talk"?
8. In the classroom what are some of the best ways you have found to gauge a student's understanding of what you have said?
9. If I came to you as a beginning teacher and said "I'm not sure what I should be doing about oral language. What pointers or suggestions would you have for me?"
10. Some people are strong advocates for "morning talks", "listening games". What are your thoughts?
11. Can you think of occasions in class when oral language is not involved or not required?
12. Have you regular contact with the Early Childhood Centres in this area? What procedures do you have for finding out about a child's language abilities when they are starting school?
13. Do you think there is any necessity to assess a child's oral language development? If so, how and when would you suggest it should be undertaken?
14. Do you use any of the following assessments to detail a child's oral language development?
School Entry Assessment; Communicate to Participate, Record of Oral Language, Communication Sampling, Biks and Gutches, JOST (Junior Oral Screening Test).
Other.....
15. What do you believe most teachers do with the results of their assessments? How do they use the information in their programming?
16. I would appreciate your comments on the statement [that] "If students don't have sufficient linguis-

tic knowledge , or if teachers fail to adjust their teaching talk to a student's level of understanding then academic learning will be affected".

17. In your experience what oral language skills do you believe a child should bring to the school setting in order to cope with the New Entrant class setting? Can we record some of those skills?
18. Please could you tell me about any **changes** that you think should be implemented in the ways we go about developing the oral language of students in New Entrant rooms?
19. It has been said that students can and do influence teacher talk e.g. by fidgeting, calling out, interrupting , giving right or wrong answers , asking questions, misinterpreting, yawning, giggling, fidgeting, humming, coughing, farting, switching off, burping , touching others etc. What has been your experience?
20. What advice would you give to a provisionally registered teacher who came to you about four students in her room :
 - one student had disordered or underdeveloped oral or spoken language (e.g. me goed to town yesterday night)
 - another couldn't follow instructions (e.g. 1 step and 2 step)
 - another stuttered (e.g. said. llllll.....ccccan't do it)
 - a fourth student had a very husky voice and sometimes it would go all squeaky.
21. Would you suggest any particular training or professional development that could or should to be made available on how to develop children's oral language or improve the discourse within classrooms? How, when and where did you learn your skills?
22. In your experience what training in the monitoring or use of your own classroom talk did you receive? [By that I mean are teachers given instruction in how to: use wait time, give one step, two step instructions, use techniques like semantic priming, expansion, commenting, storytelling etc.]
23. It has been said that five-year-olds have to be able to understand teacher talk in order to learn. Do you believe that the spoken language used by the class teacher has an effect on the oral language development of students? Can you say something more about that?
24. Are there any particular strategies or teaching techniques that you have found **don't** work particularly well if a teacher wants to promote discourse or spoken language interactions in the classroom?
25. Could you say that your ethnic heritage and the cultures you identify with have influenced your views about oral language in the classroom?
26. Are there any aspects of what we have discussed today that you would like to comment on?
27. Maybe there are questions that you can think of that I should have asked you but haven't?

**APPENDIX SEVEN:
SUGGESTIONS FOR
REFLECTION**

FOLLOW UP MEETING

(15minutes)

Talking in Class

- Thank you again for meeting with me.
- I will leave the transcript of our first meeting with you over the next two weeks. Please could you read through the transcript and take time to think about your comments.
- Over the next two weeks it would be helpful if you could also give some thought to all the things that you do that relate to oral language in the classroom.
 - What things are you particularly happy about?
 - Are there any aspects you might need to give some thought to?
 - Are there any aspects you would like to change or improve on?
 - How could you that?
- Sometimes people like to make notes about their thoughts, programming etc. on the transcript papers and that too would be really helpful for next session.
- It might also be helpful to review your transcripts from the perspectives of:
 - 1) What did I say?
 - 2) What does it mean?
 - 3) How did I come to say that?
 - 4) How might I do things differently?
- Please be assured that it is your story and your comments that are important to this project.
- In addition to talking with you about any notes you have made I will leave a copy of some of the things that I would appreciate talking to you about when we next meet.

Date and time of completion

Pseudonym

FINAL MEETING :
TALKING IN CLASS:

1. After reading and thinking about your transcript is there anything in particular that you would like to share or talk about?
2. Please could you walk me through how you went about reviewing your transcript?
3. In the follow up meeting sheet I asked if you could give some thought to all the things that you do that relate to oral language in your classroom.
In particular:
 - What things that relate to oral language have been going really well in your class over the past two weeks? Why do you think that is?
 - Are there any particular aspects of oral language in your classroom that you have given special thought to over the past two weeks?
 - Are there any areas or aspects of oral language that you might consider doing differently?
 - How would you go about that?
4. Looking back...Are there any ways that the interview and then the reading of the transcript made you think about oral language? Have you any ideas about why that might be so?
5. Are there any suggestions you'd like to make about any of the questions I should have asked you but haven't or aspects of oral language that we didn't talk about?
6. On a scale 1-10 [one being the highest] how do you think as a profession we are currently meeting the oral language needs of the classroom? What are we doing really well? Do you think there is anything relating to oral language that we could develop, remove or improve on?
7. Are you aware of any constraints within your school that affect the way you implement programmes and practice in the classroom?
8. Would you like to record any thoughts, feelings or opinions you might have about our discussions and follow up?

Thank you again for your valued assistance and contribution to this project.

Date and time of completion

Pseudonym