

Writing Work as Social Practice:
Examining Instructional Conversations within a Reading Recovery® Lesson

by

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ABSTRACT

One of the most remarkable things about talk is that most individuals develop verbal proficiency without a need for systematic, explicit instruction. Indeed, language—developed through everyday social interactions and continually practiced within ordinary settings—is a commonplace occurrence. Yet its very pervasiveness often means that its complexities and significance as a teaching tool can be easily overlooked. In this study, the Researcher deliberately focused her attention towards determining some of the extraordinary ways Reading Recovery teachers plied the rather ordinary tool of their trade—their “teacher-talk”—to help their students’ maintain an active stance throughout a learning task.

Framed by Social Constructivist theories of learning, this project employed a descriptive case study approach to investigate the types of social and verbal interactions that occurred as four Reading Recovery teachers worked with their respective students to devise and record a brief message during the 10-12 minute writing section of a Reading Recovery lesson. Data was collected over a period of two months and each teacher was observed working with the same student on two separate occasions. The conversations that transpired were audiotaped and transcribed and the cognitive and affective dimensions of the teachers’ communications were specifically examined. Findings indicate that effective teaching interactions more often arose when the teachers continually endeavored to understand the meanings behind their students’ words and actions. When teachers considered their students’ perspectives, when they gave them cognitive space to think, speak, and act, and when they designed literacy activities that centered on children’s demonstrated understandings, they ensured their students’ continued motivation thereby fostering cognitive development. Specific suggestions are provided for educators

interested in developing their own communicative competence and implications for further research are included.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most remarkable things about talk is that most individuals develop verbal proficiency without a need for systematic, explicit instruction. While oral language development is regarded as a naturally occurring process (see Holdaway, 2000), Bertram (2002) suggests that attention to the child's *ways of interaction* and regular opportunities to engage in conversations are necessary for "optimum development in communication" (p. 1) to occur. Though Brown (1977) stresses that there are *no fixed set of rules* one has to follow in order to talk to a child, he, too, suggests that there needs to be a sensitivity to the child's use of language, an appreciation for his or her developing views and, of course, authentic contexts that promote purposeful interactions.

Background

Within current understandings of literacy learning as a social practice, recognized are the importance of such things as collaboration, scaffolding, and talk. Within this study the Researcher set out to explore the ways that teachers and students, as conversational partners within a Reading Recovery setting, worked to develop the literacy understandings of the child while attending to the social-affective dimensions of learning. Social Constructivist theories prioritize the role of *talk* "as a tool for transmitting specific knowledge for learning how to construct problem-solving activities" (Dorn, 1996, p. 16). As a vehicle for promoting many types of learning, the mediated conversation that occurs between a novice learner and an expert partner "weave[s] an oral language framework" (Kelly, Klein, & Pinnell, 1996, p. 2) that bolsters a beginning learner's dynamic attempts to resolve a task with motivation, desire, and an increased sense of purposefulness. Under this view, both language development and cognitive growth are consequently stimulated by these joint discursive practices (Vaags-Nyhof, 2004). Vygotsky

(1978) further emphasizes how children develop complex understandings through their social interactions with more experienced individuals. One of the central premises behind his theory of Social Constructivism centers on the learner's *zone of proximal development (zpd)* (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Referring to an activity's degree of complexity, the zpd encompasses the *ideal* level at which a child can successfully work out the task "with appropriate support" (p. 109). Thus, any undertaking that the child can independently accomplish is not within his zpd. Likewise, any tasks that are too cognitively complex (perhaps developmentally out of the child's range of understanding) are also inappropriate for promoting the learner's understandings. There needs to be a "happy medium where the task is neither so complicated that all the child is likely to experience in relation to it is a sense of failure and frustration, nor too simplistic so that an atmosphere of boredom and disengagement prevails" (Paterson, 2009, p. 2). How can a child successfully contend with this cognitive gap so that *just enough* of a challenge remains as to incite continued interest and therefore ongoing engagement to persist in the learning activity?

Wood, Wood, and Middleton (1978) indicate that effective teaching involves "continually confronting the child with problems of *controlled complexity*" (p. 132)— setting learning targets that lie slightly outside of the learner's existing level of facility but that are not so far removed that the child would be completely incapable of grasping the lesson's essential purpose. A second premise of Vygotsky's theory of learning, then, concerns the techniques that a more practiced other employs to *confrontationally* support the cognitive development of the novice learner, within her/his zpd, as they jointly carry out a task. Initially a term coined by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), the teaching strategy of *scaffolding* is described as a collaborative practice "that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his [or her] unassisted efforts" (p. 90). As the child is

supported to focus on only those aspects of the task that are within her/his cognitive reach, the teacher or parent evaluates the effectiveness of the child's efforts "not for the purpose of rejecting the learner's attempts" (Palincsar, 1986, p. 74), but so that the level of task difficulty can be continuously fine-tuned to make corresponding adjustments to the level of instructional support. Successful scaffolding, however, involves more than helping the child to achieve "some end state" (Stone, 1998, p. 345). In addition to learning appropriate strategies that can be applied to complete similar tasks, what the child effectively gains are more flexible understandings of the processes involved in a successful completion of an activity. Furthermore, as the child enjoys the inherent rewards associated with his or her "figuring out," she/he begins to espouse a more positive attitude for learning in general.

Statement of the Problem

Situated within a Socio-Constructivist framework, the Reading Recovery® (Clay, 1993) programme provides a "cognitive apprenticeship setting" (Askew & Frasier, 1999, p. 45) for first grade children considered "at-risk" for not following expected Grade 1 learning trajectories, specifically when it comes to the ways in which they interact with conventional text-forms (i.e., decoding and encoding printed texts). As the teacher and child within a Reading Recovery lesson collaborate on the literacy tasks involved, the conversations that take place are intended to raise the child's level of awareness in regards to the particular issues s/he may be having with learning to read and write. A shared consciousness "is constructed as the child actively participates with an adult during meaning-making dialogues" (Dorn, 1996, p. 16). Because of the individualized nature of the instruction, the Reading Recovery teacher can focus his or her talk in such a way that "allows the child who does not know when his [or her] attempts are good and when they are

poor to be reinforced by the teacher immediately [after] he [or she] makes a response” (Clay, 1993, p. 8).

Through the learner’s instructional conversations with an observant teacher, it is expected that an enhanced “growth of the intellect” (Dorn, 1996, p. 16), as it relates to the child’s current understandings of the interplay between language and literacy learning, will be activated. Working within the child’s zpd, the Reading Recovery teacher’s sensitive scaffolding of instruction makes use of, and builds upon, these existing insights. Heightened levels of self-confidence and intensification of the child’s control of learning are expected results from this interaction. Feelings of autonomy increase as the learner, in continuous interaction with her/his teacher while working within her/his zpd, begins to internalize the teacher’s instructive discourse into a private prototype that supports her/his performance on various literacy tasks. What ensues is the child’s growing capacity to flexibly process a range of literacy activities with greater confidence as s/he gradually transfers the understandings gained in conjunction with the teacher (the inter-psychological plane), to within her/himself (the intra-psychological plane) (see also Lyons, 2003). It would thus stand to reason that a fundamental step in bringing about *any* sort of change in thinking patterns and learning approaches for many learners stems from this initial “growth of consciousness” (Dorn, p. 16).

Conceptualized as a “team approach” (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993, p. 5), the Reading Recovery programme involves a “network of education, communication, and collegiality [including the student, the Reading Recovery teacher, the classroom teacher, and the child’s family] designed to create a culture of learning that promotes literacy for high-risk children” (p. 2). The highly interactive framework of the Reading Recovery programme not only facilitates a child’s learning of “how to learn” but provides systematic opportunities for teachers

to learn more about “how to teach” with increased effectiveness. Alvermann (1990) portrays Reading Recovery as an inquiry-orientated model of learning in which the teacher’s instructive insights, as gained through frequent social interactions with other educators and students, continually guide her/his didactic efforts. During the initial training year, and subsequent continuing contact sessions in the second year and beyond, Reading Recovery teachers regularly meet as a cohort—a supportive “community of practice” led by an experienced teacher-leader—to observe each other work with individual children in “behind the glass” (Lyons et al., 1993) teaching sessions. The conversations that arise in response to these observations provide an affectively collaborative and communal forum for teachers to “hypothesize, predict, monitor, and draw conclusions that take into account the teaching, the child’s learning, and the context” (p. 12). According to Kucan (2007), this kind of metacognitive orientation towards teaching and learning enables educators to thoughtfully adapt their instructive approaches “to respond to the moment-by-moment shifts that characterize teaching in such a complex and ill-structured context as *discussion*” (p. 228, emphasis added). Just as the cognitively and emotionally supportive talk that occurs within the child’s Reading Recovery lesson is eventually internalized by the child into “subconscious thinking, that directs [her/his] cognitive behaviour” (p. 148), the same processes also apply to adult learning when teachers remain mindfully aware of their teaching practices as they consistently engage in reflective discussions with others.

Significance of the Study

Many teachers benefit from maintaining an attentive awareness of their students’ general styles of interaction and levels of engagement with a task. Indeed, they are often able to articulate how certain social behaviours positively (and, perhaps more so, negatively) influence the general learning environment of the classroom. While this attention to students’ behaviours,

their levels of understanding, and various learning styles is vitally important for meaningful lesson planning and teaching, it remains imperative that teachers also engage in an intentional self-reflection upon their own patterns of communication in order to better understand how their styles of interaction possibly affect students' approaches and attitudes towards learning.

Research conducted by Hayes and Matusov (2005), Johnston (2004), and Rowe (1998) supports the notion that teachers need to uphold a conscious mindfulness of their didactic conversational styles—how their particular patterns of talk set “boundaries for literate behaviour” (Rowe, p. 106) within the classroom setting. Examining the subtle ways in which teacher-talk “fills the gap between curricular plans and curricular experiences” (p. 106), as well as how “talk”, as a motivating tool, is used to help students adopt a more positive view of themselves as learners, is consequently the main purpose of this study.

While student-success in Reading Recovery “is related to the decisions teachers make and their ability to make powerful moves tailored to individual children” (Lyons et al., 1993, p. 16), this study is not necessarily about the Reading Recovery programme itself. Rather, it is interested in the ways in which young learners develop their literacy knowledge as they work in partnership with an attentive teacher on a shared story-writing task. Such understandings are important beyond a Reading Recovery context as they may also help educators in other settings to consider the qualities of the communicative interactions that take place in their classroom, and how these styles of discourse ultimately shape the general learning environment of the classroom. By placing deliberate attention towards determining the more discreet ways language is used to influence the participatory stance of others, a deeper appreciation for the ways that communication can be used as an effective instructional tool ultimately results.

Purpose

Reading Recovery teachers work with one child at a time in an intensive 30-minute lesson that centres around and builds upon the child's existing reading and writing strengths. As previously indicated, these teachers are specifically trained to sensitively attend to those "partially correct" (Clay, 1993) responses their young students make as they read and write. By investigating the "powerful and subtle ways" (Johnston, 2004, p. 2) Reading Recovery teachers use language with students, the Researcher explored how the teachers' use of provoking language not only aimed to stimulate students' cognitive growth, but how it also endeavoured to encourage students to embrace a view of themselves as strategic participants in their own learning. By focusing this investigation within a specific socio-constructivist context (such as a shared story writing task during a Reading Recovery lesson) (Li, 2001), the Researcher sought to examine the attributes of the teacher's talk in supporting the child's writing development. In conducting this study, four Reading Recovery teachers were observed working with their students. The collaborative conversations that ensued during the story-writing portion of a Reading Recovery lesson were audiotaped and transcribed (see Appendix A for the conventions used for transcribing).

This study is framed by a concept of language development arising from a "construction of knowledge within instances of *situated dialogue*" (Purcell-Gates, 1996, p. 406)—as learners use language with others to communicate and reflect upon ideas in their particular social setting (in the classroom; the family; the tutor-student dyad), new understandings are cultivated. The New Literacy Studies (Barton, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 1996; Street, 1993; 1995) draw attention to the ways in which social and cultural interactions affect a learner's construction of knowledge. In recognizing literacy as a *cultural practice* (Gee, 1992; see also Bruner, 1996),

“literacy development occurs wherever literacy practices are occurring” (Purcell-Gates, p. 406). Furthermore, adherence to socio-constructivist views of learning entails a *responsibility* to study the child’s literacy development within the particular cultural contexts in which it occurs. Bryan (2009) further underscores the importance of providing “deep, detailed description[s]” (p. 7) of the literacy event setting, maintaining “just what literacy *is* depends upon the context in which it occurs” (p. 7). Accordingly, this project used a descriptive case study approach to examine the types of social and verbal interactions that occurred between a teacher and a student as they collaborated in the shared 10-12 minute writing task within a Reading Recovery lesson.

Because of the unique nature of the research setting, and the various interpretations readers may have with regards to the use of certain terminology used in this thesis, it is important at this point to provide a description of the phrase “collaborative conversation” so that there may be a greater awareness for how the Researcher interpreted and used this term within the parameters of this investigation.

What is Meant by “Collaborative Conversation” in this Investigation?

Throughout this thesis, the Researcher uses the phrase “collaborative conversations” to refer to the particular ways in which teachers and students working in a Reading Recovery setting use “conversational talk patterns” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 1) to communicate ideas and develop shared understandings. According to the understandings held by this Researcher, teachers create space for collaboration whenever they center their instructive practices within students’ zpd. When teachers consciously direct their attention towards determining the “leading edges” (Johnston, 2004) of their students’ literacy-related understandings, they not only acknowledge the literacy experiences students bring to their learning, students become inherently positioned as key collaborators in the learning event.

As the novice members of the group, young learners may not readily observe or grasp the importance that their particular knowledge and distinct competencies play in their learning. As the more seasoned “experts” in this community, teachers have a particular obligation to notice and name their young learners’ effective practices (Johnston, 2004). As student and teacher engage in conversations that center on the student’s understandings, both participants have a greater chance to develop a shared understanding about the concept under investigation. Within this notion of “collaboration” then, the teacher, as the more skilled member of the group, will, at times, inevitably take on a greater lead during the learning conversations to help the child as he or she tests out new theories and attempts to integrate developing understandings into his or her current perceptions. The anticipated outcome is that each member views the other as an interconnected and influential participant within this learning community.

Indeed this is a very particular view of “collaborative conversation” and certainly, the parameters of the Reading Recovery programme itself arrange for and promote very specific types of learning within this very unique socio-constructivist setting. Yet even within this context, it is envisaged that both novice and experienced members will participate in the activities to their full extent. For the younger members this means contributing to an activity in any way they can—from “dotting the ‘i’ or crossing the ‘t’ to attempting ‘hippopotamus’” (Clay, 2005b, p. 57). For the more veteran participant of the group, this means actively searching for and bringing into play students’ competencies. By using language that both highlights children’s “known” and attempts to connect newer ideas with these, teachers can help students navigate their way through the more challenging aspects of the learning tasks. The ultimate responsibility of the teacher then, is to ensure that the students, as key participants in this specific community of practice, remain actively engaged at all points throughout the lesson. It is in this way that

teachers in a Reading Recovery setting attempt to honour their students' roles as protagonists in the learning events.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study was designed to investigate the nature of the teacher-child interactions during the shared writing task in terms of:

- How the teacher encouraged the student's active problem solving of the writing task through her/his use of specific praise and/or teaching prompts, and,
- How the student's behaviours influenced the teacher's style of interaction.

In order to explore these lines of enquiry, the following research questions were the focus of the study:

1. How does the teacher's interactions affect the child's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the teacher do and/or say to scaffold the writing instruction?
 - b. What things does the teacher do and/or say that potentially provide affective support for the student's learning?
2. How does the child's interactions affect the teacher's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the child do and/or say that potentially influence the teacher's instructional decisions?

In order to build the mind, a teacher must first seek to engage the heart of his or her young learner—to not only take into consideration the child's insights concerning a topic but to also value the particular rationales upon which those fledgling discernments are initially based. The questions framing this study thus attempt to address the interplay between the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. By articulating the research questions in such a manner, the

Researcher was able to sustain the heightened awareness necessary for examining the ways in which the teachers' talk acknowledged both dimensions of learning.

The Researcher

Because of the interpretive nature of the questions posed and the type of methodology selected for this study, a note concerning the Researcher's positioning is needed so that the Reader has an awareness of whose particular viewpoint is behind the discussions.

The Researcher is a Caucasian female who, at the time of writing this thesis, works as a Reading Recovery and Literacy Support Teacher in an urban school division in a western Canadian province. At the time the data was collected, she was employed as a Reading Recovery teacher, working with 6 children daily between two schools in the same school division. Prior to the commencement of her graduate studies, the Researcher had approximately 11 years of teaching experience, including teaching overseas for 9 of those years within primary aged classroom settings. In her final year of living overseas, she completed her Reading Recovery training before moving back to Canada shortly thereafter. Although most of her early teaching experiences occurred in another country, the Researcher did receive her Bachelor of Education degree from a western Canadian university prior to immigrating overseas.

As a Reading Recovery teacher, the Researcher continues to participate in her cohort's monthly continuing contact sessions where teachers engage in collaborative conversations that examine both Clay's (2005) Reading Recovery procedures as well as current literacy related publications. In addition, teachers within the Researcher's cohort take turns teaching a student "behind the glass" so that the other group members can observe and offer the teacher support.

As a Literacy Support teacher, the Researcher is a member of the school's Student Services Team and works directly with classroom teachers to plan and implement effective

research based instructional practices. In addition to this co-teaching role, the Researcher also works directly with small groups of students in a guided reading format. Typically the students with whom the Researcher works are those who are reading below the average band of their classmates.

Undoubtedly, the information presented in this paper is imparted from a very specific viewpoint. The information thus presented is intended to help the Reader position the Researcher as the interpreter of the data and the author of this study.

Overview of the Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis has provided some background information concerning the significant role that “everyday” teacher-talk can have on students’ learning. When teaching in a highly contingent fashion, teachers inherently use language that matters—relevant not only to the demands of the task at hand, but also engaging to the imagination of the students with whom they work. The focus of this study then is to determine in what ways teachers, in a Reading Recovery setting, use conversation as an instructional tool to promote their students’ ongoing engagement with a writing-based talk, and how these types of collaborative conversations can ultimately support learners’ cognitive and affective development.

Chapter 2 of this thesis presents the literature review. In particular, this chapter focuses on understanding literacy as a *social practice* within different contexts. First discussed is literacy as a *home-based practice*, followed by an examination into its changing nature as it transforms to fit within *school-based contexts*. Of particular interest is the comparison made between relying on traditional patterns of classroom discourse in teaching and the necessity of embracing a more student-centered view of learning in order to affect greater engagement and cognitive growth. This chapter then concludes with a rationale of specifically examining the social interactions that

occur between teacher and student within a shared writing activity.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the setting in which this study was conducted. In order to clarify the specific nature of the literacy event setting, a thorough description of the procedures and materials used within a typical Reading Recovery writing session is warranted. Also within this chapter is information about the Researcher and her particular positioning as a Reading Recovery teacher herself.

In chapter 4 the research methodology used in this study is described. A variety of data collection methods were employed to obtain both primary sources of data (i.e., Researcher observations, audiotaping and transcription of the collaborative conversations that occurred between the Reading Recovery teachers and their respective students), and secondary sources of data (i.e., copies of students' writing samples—specifically the top and bottom pages from students' writing books, and teacher-participants' written reflections for each writing session). This chapter then describes the three stages of data analysis undertaken for this study and how inter-rater reliability was achieved.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. Given that there were three key components involved in each Reading Recovery writing session—the joint story-eliciting conversation task, the shared writing task, and the cut-up story activity—the results are organized accordingly. Interspersed throughout this chapter are specific narrative examples from the transcripts that highlight the types of speech under consideration. Also included are three comprehensive transcript analyses that reveal the ways in which teachers supported students' strategic activity using conversation.

Chapter 6 consists of four sections. In the first section of this chapter, the significant findings of the study are summarized and discussed. In the second section, the implications of

these findings for teachers' pedagogical practice are examined. The third section presents suggestions for further research. In the final section, the study's limitations are acknowledged.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In understanding literacy as a social practice (Larson & Marsh, 2005), the role that language plays in a child's literacy development is crucial. Larson and Marsh endorse the critical nature of talk as a *social act* in which the participants engaged in the dialogue collaboratively generate knowledge in their pursuit of a shared understanding. Vygotsky (1978) insists that it is this pursuit for *meaningfulness* that drives children's purposeful interactions with others, ultimately providing them with a measure of control over the conversation. Clay (1991) similarly promotes *understanding* as the greatest "source of anticipation, the guide to being on track, and the outcome and reward of the effort" (pp. 1-2). For the majority of children, their communicative competence develops without an explicit need for step-by-step instructional directives, provided there are plentiful opportunities in which children can collaboratively engage with others to "test the rules of the language they are discovering (p. 71). Strickland and Feeley (2003) maintain that language and literacy learning conditions within home environments are not divided into sets of skills, but rather the whole language system and new concepts are presented and related to meaningful activities, objects, and situations within the child's environment. To encourage children's language development, these learning environments need to maintain a positive atmosphere of achievement and "child-centeredness" (p. 341)—environments where adults talk with children rather than at them; where child-based discoveries about language and literacy learning are situated as paramount; and where children's insights 'run the show'.

Literacy as Home Practice: Learning to Talk

Building onto this image of children growing "into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88), Johnston (2004) suggests that this intellectual life is not merely

“social. . . [but also] relational and emotional” (p. 2). From the first moments of a youngster’s life, her/his language acquisition is the most practical example of what Holdaway (2000) identifies as social learning. Clay (1998) encouragingly maintains that, “almost any adult can talk with children in ways that teach . . . [and] anyone who can converse with a child can foster language development” (p. 13). This can easily be noted by watching the interactions that occur between parents and their young child. Attentive adults can often be observed untiringly encouraging their baby’s language development in a variety of ways—they make curious sounds, smile widely and stare intently, engage in physical contact by stroking the baby’s skin and enveloping her/him in soft embraces. They scrutinize each facial expression, attend to the slightest movements, and enthusiastically marvel over every gurgle and sigh. As the child matures and begins to respond in a manner that is more comprehensible, continued efforts are made to negotiate more lucid meanings—parents encouragingly repeat initial vocalizations to demonstrate the “importance and emerging accuracy of [the child’s] communicative behaviour” (Pullen & Justice, 2003, p. 94). Additional elements of semantic or syntactic information are demonstrated to help the child gain slight variations to his or her speech. For the developing speaker, open-ended questions and reciprocal dialogue encourage extended manipulations of language, resulting in deeper explorations of ideas (Paterson, 2008b).

Once they know what it is they want to say, most children have little difficulty implying their intents (Carlson, 1975). To understand those intents, however, the audience may also have to rely on the immediate contextual circumstances while they actively engage in a communal dialogue to negotiate the child’s precise meanings. Through responsive interactions with their developing speakers, parents often make use of those nonverbal contextual cues to gain further insights into the child’s true intent. In the company of her mother, a toddler, for example, emits a

sound—"Maa". Whether the child is referring to the milk, set tantalizingly out of reach on the counter-top ("Maa!"—while pointing at the bottle), declaring her ownership of a particular item ("Maa!"—while clutching a toy) or whether she is calling out for her mother's attention ("Maa?"—with an uneasy frown on her face) can be inferred by her body actions, facial expressions and attention to the inflective tone she uses to modify her meaning. When children and parents *meaningfully employ* language to negotiate meanings, their participation in this collaborative process fosters a nurturing environment where risk-taking is safely encouraged. In these first, joyfully engaging home environments, "learning is not solitary" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 374). Most parents will invest the energy and time trying to help the child expand her or his oral language because most parents are "convinced their child has something worthy to say" (Clay, 1991, p. 70). Though social in nature, this learning also retains a cognitive dimension. By taking an active role in the communication process, the child negotiates meanings to gain deeper understandings. To truly communicate her/his perspective, the young learner also has to learn how to manipulate others' attentions in engaging and purposeful ways.

From this socio-constructivist standpoint, new learning develops through one's "participation in culturally organized activities" (Larson, 1995, p. 278). It is through the give-and-take of our conversational exchanges with members of our communities (the family network; the classroom setting; friendship circles) that "we come to understand many things that we would not have been able to puzzle out for ourselves" (Corson, 1984, p. 8). In this manner, literacy learning is regarded as a culturally situated phenomenon—representative of the broader social routines of the community (Bruner, 1996; see also Bryan, 2009). As experienced and novice participants within a particular cultural organization reflectively engage in collaborative dialogues, specific literacy understandings can be distributed, adapted, and internalized. Thus,

depending on the communal setting, as long as each member is provided with various and abundant opportunities to co-participate in the language activities of that community, s/he is apt to gain proficiency using those distinctive literacies. What happens, then, when the styles of interaction that a child learns to apply in one setting does not easily translate into another context?

Shifting Communicative Climates: From Home to School

Talk varies in levels of formality and function according to the circumstances and settings in which it is used (Heath, 1982, 1983; White, 2004). In contrast to the more casual atmosphere of the home, the child's entrance into more institutionalized settings (such as the school), still tends to be regarded by many as "the beginning of society's formal attempts to instruct all children" (Clay, 1991, p. 19). The school-aged child, now a member of a much larger heterogeneous society with its own particular expectations for behaviour and learning, will soon discover whether or not the school's values are reflective of her/his previous experiences and whether or not the school's practices suggest valuing of the child's previous experiences. Some children manage the transition between home and school talk easily if familial experiences have been more in line with schooling expectations. Indeed, some come with greater "frames of reference" (Clay, 1991, p. 72) for school-based learning than others and quickly develop an ability to work effectively with printed language, in a communicative style complementary to their teacher's. Other children, however, may come from family environments that incorporate varying degrees of responsiveness to emerging literacy development (Heath, 1983). Furthermore, growing populations of children entering school have a first language that is other than English (Hudelson, Poynor, & Wolfe, 2003). These learners may consequently experience an acute dissonance between the kinds of language and styles of interaction they have experienced within

their home environments and the types of communicative expectations that are made within the classroom (Strickland & Feeley, 2003). These children may not seem to understand the social regulations involved when communicating with others, they may find various concepts about print confusing or simply irrelevant, they may act in impulsive ways that gain others' negative attention, or seem slow to warm-up to other members of their classroom community. Depending on the types of experiences each child brings to the learning environment, each "individual's interpretation of information has been influenced by [his or her] entire history of interaction" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 118). Regardless of their backgrounds, all children enter school with a diverse range of skills and consequently their own unique starting points for learning (Paterson, 2008b). They may just not be the starting points or skills that schools are expecting or are best equipped to build upon.

The Pervasive Nature of Talk

Examining the role of oral language in a child's overall literacy development, Hannaford (2005) draws attention to how literacy practices encompass a great deal more than how to read and write texts, but that "literacy is also about spoken language; it consists of networks of associations, built up over long periods of time through critical discussion of ideas and emotions" (p. 6). Holdaway (2000) emphasizes this gradual and evolving nature of literacy learning: "language stands at the heart of . . . [all] interactional tasks, learned in tiny increments over many years . . . often contributing a significant element to the learning of a nonverbal skill" (p. 8)—such as reading or writing. The importance of attending to a child's early oral language development cannot be overstated. Research suggests that children's early communicative competence is a strong predictor of later school-based literacy (Clay, 1991; Corson, 1984, 1988; Jones, 2003; Wilde & Sage, 2007). Limitations in oral language proficiency and disparities

between home and school styles of discourse can thus have critical consequences for later literacy attainment of reading and writing skills. As the child's home-talk is the principal language s/he brings upon entrance to school, a goal of early years educators, in particular, is to recognize and build upon this early knowledge so that children can learn how to effectively "move between situations where all share common assumptions and others where they do not" (White, 2004, p. 10).

Although teachers tend to believe that they address the importance of oral language development in the classroom, "observational research does not support this" (Howe, 2003, p. 12). Because language development is acquired and continually practiced within ordinary, everyday settings (Holdaway, 2000), many educators perhaps consider patterns of discourse as "too commonplace to warrant" explicit attention (Corson, 1988, p. 3). Mazur (2004) agrees: "The ubiquity of words in human communication can easily lead one to take its significance and its complexities for granted" (p. 174).

Literacy as School Practice

As a child's verbal speech is an explicit act, it is also the most obvious means by which others judge his or her oral and cognitive competency (Corson, 1984). As a result, teachers may incorrectly assume inadequacies on the part of the child overlooking deeper reasons of why s/he uses language the way s/he does. Thus, educators need to be able to "listen (not just hear) and observe (not just see)...not only for the obvious, but also for the subtle ways in which the child makes perceptions and understandings known" (Eliason & Jenkins, 2008, p. 43). Without a sensitive awareness of the child's initial understandings, patterns of thinking, and particular oral practices, even the most well-intentioned teacher-talk can cause some children to "clam up" (Clay, 1998, p. 20). Increased sensitivity to a learner's behaviors and "funds of knowledge"

(Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) encourages teachers to move beyond their adult-centered views and expectations. By starting from what the child knows, the teacher can arrange and deliver instructive practices that “meet an individual learner on a personalized level” (Clay, 1998, p. 31).

The School Environment

As an explicit act performed in front of an audience of students, instructional talk is also “the most transparent and habitual part of a teacher’s professional activity” (Rowe, 1998, p. 106) and, therefore, not necessarily subject to a more automatic self-reflection. As social beings, we do not interact “orally in a void . . . it is not just words that pass between us in communication” (O’Leary, 2009, p. 43) but the manner in which they are concurrently expressed which inadvertently invites (or rejects) further negotiations of meaning on the part of the listener. Because it is easy to get caught up in attending to the overt communicative demonstrations of the child, it can also be easy to think that in our attentive monitoring of the child’s learning that it is only the student who is being observed: “But the students observe us, and we also can observe ourselves” (p. 38). O’Leary consequently urges teachers to pay attention to *personal* styles of interaction and to how their words are expressed so that they might then more ably bring “bare attention . . . to the child’s words and physical presence, [and] to . . . ‘what exists’ between you and the child as the child reads” (p. 43). By paying attention to *who our students are*—how they use various forms of their language and engage in literacy practices to make sense of their world—and examining *who we are* when working with them—our interpersonal styles and didactic approaches (including attention to the interplay between our verbal and nonverbal behaviours)—we can begin to espouse a more mindful awareness of the ways in which our teacher-talk fundamentally communicates “what [we] believe about this child” (p. 42).

Talking to Learn

While the everyday implications of one's instructional discourse may not necessarily be at the forefront of many teachers' minds, there does remain a plethora of research that demonstrates the important role of verbal and nonverbal communications in learning (Bogetic, 2009; Bryan, 2009; Cazden, 1988; Clay, 1991, 1993, 1998, 2001, 2005; Corson, 1984, 1988; Cromley & Azevedo, 2005; Eliason & Jenkins, 2008; Gillies & Boyle, 2005; Graesser, Person, & Magliano, 1995; Hayes & Matusov, 2005; Howe, 2003; Johnston, 2004; Jones, 2003; Juel, 1996; Kalis, Vannest, & Parker, 2007; Kucan, 2007; Lyons, 2003; McVee & Pearson, 2003; Merrill, Reiser, Merrill, & Landes, 1995; Palincsar, 1986; Rowe, 1972, 1986; Rowe, 1998; Thompson, 2009; White, 2004; Wilde & Sage, 2007; Wood & Middleton, 1975). Initially, as teacher and child jointly work on literacy tasks during a Reading Recovery lesson, the helpful conversations that take place serve to raise the child's level of awareness in regards to the particular issues s/he is experiencing with learning to read and write. This consciousness "is constructed as the child actively participates with an adult during meaning-making dialogues" (Dorn, 1996, p. 16). Collaborative problem solving thus facilitates both communicative and cognitive competencies—as differing perspectives are shared, deeper understandings, of the "how and why of things" (Eliason & Jenkins, 2008, p. 40) develop.

It can be difficult to determine how to support a child's more conventional literacy development "without first understanding something about the critical conditions of social learning" (Holdaway, 2000, p. 8). Because a child's oral language development tends "to be thought of as simple in structure and unproblematic—indeed 'natural', and not a likely source of methodological insights" (p. 8), it becomes all the more crucial to examine the commonplace conditions involved in social forms of learning. While the establishment of these social

conditions within a more structured and larger classroom environment is the most time-consuming and challenging aspect of effective language and literacy instruction, they will also have the greatest impact upon a student's learning.

Holdaway (2000) identifies four different processes that students typically undergo as they engage in learning. These processes include: demonstration; participation; role-playing (or practice); and performance. A learner in the *demonstration phase*, for instance, "observes and admires" (p. 13) the members of her/his particular community (i.e., a parent; a classmate; a best friend) performing tasks (engaging in conversation with a neighbour over coffee; tying a shoe; kicking a soccer ball) to carry out a genuine purpose (to catch up on the latest gossip; to keep his shoes on; to have fun). Moreover, if a strong emotional attachment to the experienced 'expert' is already in place, there is an increased likelihood that the learner's level of engagement and participation (to closely observe and ask questions to refine initial understandings) significantly increases (see also Lyons, 2003).

During the *participation phase*, the learner makes more determined efforts to "get into the act" (Holdaway, 2000, p. 14). Naturally awkward, these early endeavors are regarded as a necessary component in eventual mastery. Key within this process is the acceptance and emotionally charged encouragement received from more practiced observers that serve to shape and scaffold the child's approximations. This cooperative engagement in the activity subsequently initiates a process of *learning-by-doing* that evolves into a *practice (or role-play)* phase in which the learner continues to improve upon her/his performances through repeated attempts. During this process, it is anticipated that the child's imperfect rehearsals will occur without fear of embarrassment as the child's purpose for engaging in the practice is *not necessarily for an audience* but rather "exclusively for self, listening or monitoring in self-

appraisal” (p. 14). Schwartz (1997) accentuates the significance of one’s ability to self-evaluate her/his attempts. Unless the child is able to distinguish whether her/his personal approximations are in line with (i.e., ‘make sense’ and/or ‘look like’) the models s/he has initially admired experienced individuals perform, independent control of a learning situation is unlikely to develop. As a result, the importance of these early, *everyday* learning experiences, in which young learners begin to cultivate these crucial self-monitoring capabilities, cannot be understated. In this manner, the young learner develops what Clay calls a “self-improving system” (in Holdaway, p. 14) in which s/he continues to actively learn through her/his own self-appraisal and consequential refinements of action.

During the *performance* phase of learning, small improvements in ability become notable as the learner is more directly driven to perform “by the expectation of approval, or the fulfillment of real literate purposes (Holdaway, 2000, p. 15). Holdaway emphasizes that, during this particular part of the learning process, the child seeks a sense of belonging, performing his or her growing approximations of the task for the purpose of gaining a “ticket of membership” (p. 16) to the club to which other members belong. Smith (1988) speaks of the benefits of membership these “junior associates” enjoy—in which they are supported to purposely participate in the activities of the community without an expectation for flawless performance.

Patterns of Classroom Discourse: “Who Do I Think They Are?”

The ways in which we interact with our students and the opportunities we provide for their talk “shows them what kinds of people we think they are” (Johnston, 2004, p. 79). Unintentionally or intentionally, teachers may limit students’ attempts to communicate by maintaining a jurisdiction over the amount and kinds of talk allowed to take place within the classroom. The teacher’s role in the classroom is undeniably a critical one. Plying the “central

tool of their trade” (p. 4), teachers use instructive patterns of talk to integrate children’s activity and experience, helping them “make sense of learning, literacy, life, and themselves” (p. 4). Yet, in many conventional classroom environments, classroom discourse patterns tend to be more teacher-directed as learning activities focus on the learning needs of the group *en masse* rather than focused on the particular interests and learning styles of individual children.

The relationship between teacher-talk and learning opportunity is explored by Walsh (2002), who notes that “as in any institutional discourse setting, participants in the . . . classroom are to a large extent restricted in their choice of language by the *prevailing features of that context*” (p. 4, emphasis added). Walsh identifies several features sustained within traditional classroom environments that tend to limit students’ active participation in discussions. Inherent in all of the elements discussed—the topics of discussion; turn-taking procedures; who may participate and when; types of questioning employed—is the amount of *control* the teacher retains—revealing embedded gaps between the power relationships that exist between teachers and students within conventional learning settings. In addition, research conducted by Crowhurst (1994) illustrates that, although the teacher is only one person in a room of many others, it is often the teacher who controls most of the dialogue in the classroom setting—with perhaps as much as 2/3 of the talk that occurs carried out by the teacher her/himself. Thus, in light of this disparity, it is essential that teachers continually give consideration to the question, “Do the literacy practices of my classroom disempower some and empower others?” (Cairney, 2000, p. 63).

There are notable differences between the “communal warmth of the settings in which oral language [is initially] mastered as compared to the socially stressful environments of traditional schooling” (Holdaway, 2000, p. 10). For children who have been unsuccessful in their

initial attempts to learn to read and write, these differences in learning conditions have typically received little attention as a basis behind which later literacy issues emerge. Issues underlying a child's literacy learning tend to be predominantly viewed from a cognitive standpoint—that is, a child's struggle in learning to interact successfully with print arises because of the notable differences between his or her written and oral language *skills* rather than because of a disparity between home and school settings. Thus a typical teacher-reaction to encouraging at-risk students' literacy development likely includes further attention on specific reading and writing skills rather than on examining the instructional styles of interaction.

Research has examined the ways in which teachers present instruction in their classrooms and the effects classroom environments have on students' learning (e.g. Aram & Levin, 2001; Boocock, McNaughton, & Parr, 1998; Bryan, 2009; Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006; Gillies & Boyle, 2005; McVee & Pearson, 2003; Sperling, 1996; Vanderburg, 2006; Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001). In an extensive meta-analysis of studies in the area of written composition, Hillocks (1986) identifies specific procedures involved in the act of writing in an attempt to “predict the effects of certain practices with some degree of accuracy” (p. xvi). Although much of his review describes a number of foci of instruction found to be effective in the teaching of writing (e.g., teaching of models, free writing, teaching of scales, traditional grammar versus teaching of sentence combining techniques, and the use of the inquiry approach), of particular interest for this study are findings concerning the most effective *pedagogical style of discourse*—the modes of instruction that influence the *general classroom atmosphere*—and its impact on students' quality of learning.

Presentational Mode of Instruction

Hillocks (1986) identifies four modes of instruction that shape the general learning atmosphere of a classroom: presentational/explanatory; natural process; environmental; and individual. Classroom environments that tend to uphold traditionally based *presentational/explanatory* styles of instruction tend to focus on expanding students' various types of declarative knowledge (i.e., the 'whats') rather than on developing procedural understandings (i.e., the 'hows'). Teachers who predominantly communicate with their students using traditional patterns of language interaction—relying on *Initiation-Response-Evaluation* (IRE) or *Initiation-Response-Follow Up* (IRF) models—may confine the quality of students' ideas by regulating the full expression of their understandings. Furthermore, over-reliance on using these particular patterns of dialogue “limits the range of ways students can interact in a discussion” (Dashwood, 2005, p. 146). Educators employing a presentational style of instruction in their classrooms are often looked upon as the authority “whose knowledge and expertise are unquestionable” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 37). As such, they dominate most of the discursive activity while students remain “passive recipients of rules, advice, and examples” (Hillocks, p. 246). When teachers principally rely on asking *known-answer questions* (Cazden, 1988), the quality and degree of classroom discourse can be conveniently managed yet little time and space are offered to students to actively confront unfamiliar concepts. Thus, it is the ways in which the teacher responds to students' communication in this mode of discourse that typically reduces students' shared and active responsibility for meaning making.

In many classrooms today, it is not uncommon for teachers to make attempts to redress these imbalanced means of interaction. Many classrooms are more likely to exhibit *Responsive IRE* models of instructional discourse—in which questions may still be predominantly posed by

the teacher but to which there may be several correct answers (Larson & Marsh, 2005). This type of instructional model evaluates students' responses with the *teacher's* invitation to elaborate. The implied goal of talk in these situations, therefore, "combines getting the correct answer and developing shared understanding" (p. 14). However, this type of classroom discourse pattern still tends to be driven by the teacher and supports more conformist views of knowledge.

As convenient as these forms of "triadic dialogue" (Lemke, in Dashwood, 2005, p. 145) are in managing classroom instruction and, consequently, learner-behaviour, more intimate patterns of communication are necessary to intensify a student's reflective engagement with her/his learning. For developing literacy learners in particular, open-ended questions and reciprocal dialogue encourage their extended manipulations of language, resulting in deeper explorations of concepts (Paterson, 2008b). Rather than viewing students as passive recipients of learning and the teacher as the ultimate authority, those who subscribe to what Hillocks terms the most effective mode of instruction—an *environmental approach*—tend to regard learning as a socially constructed practice in which a more skilled "other" (i.e., typically the teacher, but may also be peers) supportively scaffolds the learning of the student.

Environmental Mode of Instruction

In an *environmental mode of instruction*, students' cognitive and behavioral development is scaffolded through their social interactions with other members of the classroom community (i.e., teachers *and* peers). In these settings, instructive mediation typically occurs within a child's zpd, inferring "not only sensitivity to the child's actual level, but also the ability to challenge the child beyond this level, within the limits of her/his potential level" (Aram & Levin, 2001, p. 848). Shifts in the child's levels of cognitive functioning occur as s/he moves from "assisted to independent performance" (Bodrova & Leong, 1998, p. 4). The highly interactive nature typical

of these learning environments point to the vital role collaborative discourse plays in the teaching-learning process. Indeed, as Hayes and Matusov (2005) point out, it “seems to be impossible to use traditional institutional practices focused on decontextualized knowledge to promote a [shared] dialogue” (p. 340). As previously noted, the role of dialogue may not have a “preeminent role in our classrooms [but] it can promote the kinds of opportunities necessary for the teacher to provide scaffolded instruction” (Palinscar, 1986, p. 73). Slavin (in Tracey & Morrow, 2006) attempts to broaden understandings of this instructive approach by drawing attention to some of the more common forms scaffolding can take: hints, prompts, encouragement, breaking down a problem into more manageable steps, providing examples, modeling an action, and “anything else that allows the student to grow in independence as a learner” (p. 109). Stone (1998) suggests that the incorporation of various scaffolding strategies to support children’s understandings ultimately leads to “better learning” (p. 350) provided that we regard scaffolding “as a complex social process of communicational exchange” (p. 354) and not just a leveled series of steps that can be adjusted to provide “more or less of the same type of assistance” (p. 351). Thus, it is not necessarily the types or quantity of scaffolds that are used that affect the learning development of the students, but more likely, it is the quality of the instructive talk provided in conjunction with the mediated application of these supports that facilitates a student’s learning.

As a didactic process, scaffolded instruction “embodies the best of teaching practices [as teacher] attention is directed to the profile of the learner, to the profile of the skill to be learned, and to matching the skills of learners to the way new skills are presented to them” (Palinscar, 1986, p. 95). The teacher, who at times, in her/his capacity as the more practiced member of the group, takes control of the learning process through explicit instruction in various strategies,

carefully arranges instruction and introduces activities that encourage students' active engagement in problem-solving experiences. Similar to the *natural process mode* that encourages high levels of peer interaction, the more effective environmental mode supports students working together in small-group situations so that collaborative problem solving can take place. However, unlike the natural process mode, which places an emphasis on the *student* as the main "generator of ideas, criteria, and forms" (Hillocks, 1986, p. 123), the more experienced teacher remains significantly involved in the planning of instruction and selection of appropriate materials. Some aspects of the *individual mode* can also be noted in an environmental style of interaction. To be most effective, the teacher must be highly aware of students' *particular* learning needs so that appropriately challenging activities and varying degrees of scaffolding can be incorporated into the learning situations as the needs arise. The *environmental mode* thus "brings teacher, student, and materials more nearly into balance and, in effect, takes advantage of all resources of the classroom" (p. 247).

Effective classroom discourse structures that promote students' active participation are those termed *Responsive/Collaborative* by Gutierrez (in Larson & Marsh, 2005). Observance to these instructive styles of talk focuses on incorporating the four conditions of *dialogic teaching* (collective, reciprocal, cumulative, and supportive) into classroom conversations (Jones, 2007). These, in turn, encourage more interactive and exploratory talk among class members. Within these patterns of communication, the teacher still frames and facilitates activity, but keeps his or her personal contributions to classroom discussions to a minimum. As the class addresses learning tasks in a collaborative manner, the "boundaries of participation become more relaxed" (p. 571)—open-ended questions are posed and students are actively encouraged to submit their own questions, investigate various ideas and consider alternative viewpoints. The ultimate goal

of instruction then, centers on the construction of shared knowledge by building on one another's ideas, rather than on correctly ascertaining (a teacher's or a textbook's) narrow lines of reasoning.

With increased emphasis on learning as collaborative inquiry, students are naturally expected to participate. In these open and supportive classroom environments, the teacher is positioned as a *guide on the side* as opposed to the *sage on the stage* (King, 1993) and the language used within the classroom tends to be more personal, caring, creative, and varied as children are encouraged to help one another reach common understandings. The cooperative discussion that transpires between teacher and students "provides building materials for children's understanding of a wide range of literate concepts, practices and possibilities, and helps shape their identities" (Johnston, 2004, p. 10) as co-participants within the classroom community. Through their communal talk, students are made aware "of their responsibilities, and [of] *reasonable* [emphasis added] ways to act" (p. 24) towards each other as well as the object of study. In effect, this type of learning environment "invites the child to consider who he [or she] wishes to be" (p. 24) while providing opportunities for him/her to engage in trying out those identities with others.

Echoing Hillocks' views and reminiscent of Holdaway's conditions of social learning, Clay (1998) offers educators five specific suggestions to increase the opportunities for, and the quality of, spoken language in classrooms. These include providing *sufficient wait time* (based on Rowe's (1972, 1986) work, Clay suggests a minimum of three seconds) to elapse between speakers (this 'think time' offers the child space for talk); *a joint focus* (in which both parties have some understanding of the topic at hand); *a cooperative and collaborative stance to conversation* (in which teachers need to find out students' starting points of learning in order to

scaffold understandings in appropriate ways); *personalization of the conversation* (quality interactions require that the teacher works at the child's level "whenever the learning is challenging for that student" (p. 31). Finally, by engaging in *authentic dialogues* where the conversations are grounded in the genuine experiences and actions of the child, personally relevant and, consequently more powerful, connections can be made by the learner.

Initial Understandings, Initial Responses: Recognizing the Leading Edge of a Child's Learning

When instructive practices focus on teaching to normative expectations, some students—such as those who come with 'greater frames of reference for school-based learning'—will undoubtedly shine as their reference points are notably celebrated. This does not necessarily mean, however, that any new learning is taking place (Johnston, 2004). Furthermore, those children who come from alternative environments may find their reference points of learning undervalued as their initial understandings are misjudged, or indeed, judged not to be of value at all. While a prescribed method of teaching manufactures opportunities to learn, it does not necessarily create the learning itself—"it is children who do that through their own activity" (Clay, 1987, p. 32).

As a communicative vehicle, *talk*, with all its verbal and nonverbal nuances, surrounds and supports the "learning of almost every task" (Holdaway, 2000, p. 12). Clay (1998) points to the heavy responsibility teachers assume in encouraging a child's more active stance towards learning. She argues that it is the ways in which teachers initially respond to children's communications "that determines whether [children] will continue their efforts or not" (p. 10). Johnston (2004) urges teachers to make a concentrated effort to notice (and to help children notice) the "*leading edge* [emphasis added] of what is going well" (p. 13) in the child's

practice—particularly when her/his initial reply seems to have come out of the proverbial ‘left field’. Attention to these early reference points is necessary to effectively bridge new learning with previously held ideas. Explicit confirmation and indication of the child’s accurate aspects of understanding will encourage her/his own detections while simultaneously asserting “the learner’s competence so she [or he] will have the confidence [and the desire] to consider new learning” (p. 13). As child and teacher collaborate, their joint discoveries not only place value on students’ preliminary beliefs, but also elevate the learner’s sense of “agency” (p. 29) and control over the instructional conditions. In drawing attention to their competencies, students begin to understand that learning is both a continuous and personal process, over which they already hold a measure of influence, rather than some external event to which the teacher grants access. By attending to and assuming the child’s *starting points* of learning as strengths, the child starts to view him/herself as a “figuring out kind of person” (p. 8)—a “key player” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 117) who participates in generating meaning through active communications with the other members within her/his classroom community. Thus, when teachers take the time and offer space to cultivate children’s perceptions, they promote an engaging classroom community in which all students’ voices can be heard.

The Impact of Mode of Instruction on Affective Development

In supporting children’s literacy development using a *learner*-focused approach, instruction begins from the child’s strengths. Consequently, the child is made aware of her/his capabilities as a learner as s/he actively negotiates various tasks with a more supportive partner. In addition to cognitive development, the affective dimension of learning is enhanced as positive attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs are greatly fostered within nurturing environments. In a study that looks at the profiles of effective tutors (De Grave, Dolmans, & van der Vleuten, 1999), the

authors summarize a number of characteristics that expert tutors display when scaffolding their developing learners. Besides having sufficient subject matter expertise and pedagogical knowledge to deal with the cognitive difficulties students face, expert tutors also “display a high level of affective support and nurturance in their interactions with students [and] devote substantial effort to encouraging and motivating students” (p. 33). These two dimensions of effective tutoring—*social congruence* (interpersonal qualities) and *cognitive congruence*—are not merely factors that promote student learning, but are in fact, “necessary conditions for cognitive congruence to occur” (p. 33).

Kelly (2009) also stresses the importance of attending to the affective aspects of learning, stating that “people learn better in the presence of some emotional connection—to the content or to other people . . . learning with emotion is a far deeper experience than learning without emotion” (p. 5). Echoing these views, Lyons (2003) examines how research in neuroscience and learning highlights the impact that emotions and motivation have on a learner’s cognitive development. She notes that any information acquired through “language embedded in an emotional context seems to stimulate neural circuitry more powerfully than does information alone” (p. 68). Current understandings gleaned from brain-based studies of learning (as noted in Lyons) confirm the centrality of a child’s emotional state as “an inseparable part of the learning process” (p. 58).

Lyons (2003) further identifies three conditions—attachment; autonomy; and challenge—found to support the development of a child’s internal sense of motivation. As previously indicated (see Holdaway, 2000), when a novice learner has developed a strong emotional attachment with an expert teacher, a trusting and nurturing learning atmosphere is established in which the child’s understandings are sought out and celebrated. Working from these current

strengths, a child's self-confidence and feelings of ownership of the learning process can effectively be cultivated. Learners who have acquired a sense of autonomy are often those who have been encouraged to take personal risks to learn from their mistakes, "suggesting that experiencing some failure isn't all bad" (Lyons, 2003, p. 83). Indeed, in regarding a child's errors as windows into her/his thinking, a more constructive and optimistic view of error making can be espoused by both teacher and child. By tailoring instruction to start from the child's strengths, treating errors as a *natural* part of the learning process, and continually fine-tuning the learning tasks so that an "appropriate level of challenge" (p. 83) and curiosity is preserved, a learner can continually experience success—either through the accurate completion of the whole task, or through her/his responsiveness to the *leading edge* of what went well on parts of the task. As a result, a heightened sense of confidence and the willingness to try—"a can-do attitude" (p. 72)—becomes instilled in the child.

Juel (1996) further accentuates the importance of developing a safe and caring learning environment between teacher and student. While the tutors observed in her study competently modeled various cognitive aspects of the reading and writing processes to students, most notable were the supportive relationships that developed between tutor and child: "The pairs sat close together, the tutor often held or lightly guided the child's hand as the child wrote . . . and sessions often ended with hugs, high-fives, or holding of hands" (p. 282). Indeed, similar to suggestions previously made by De Grave et al. and Lyons, McDermott (as cited in Juel, 1996) reminds teachers that what is vitally "necessary for learning to flourish" (p. 282) is an established sense of trust, warmth, and a genuine affection for the student.

Classroom environments rated as "quality" or exemplary in its support of literacy learning are described as having at least three out of the four aspects that Snow, Burns, and

Griffen (1998) maintain contribute to the child's successful reading and writing attainment. Included are both cognitive and affective elements of learning. Specifically, these were stated as: (a) intellectual and sensory capabilities; (b) positive expectations and literacy experiences from an early age; (c) support for literacy related activities and attitudes; and (d) instructional environments conducive for literacy learning. A study conducted by Cunningham (2008), found strong correlations between children's literacy development and their attitudes towards reading and writing. Results indicated that literacy related attitudes significantly varied "depending on the quality of the classroom literacy environment" (p. 19). Thus, as the quality of the literacy environments improved, students' attitudes towards reading and writing became more positive. Cunningham notes that these exemplary classrooms tended to adopt the last three factors (from Snow et al.) in particular.

Examining Writing Development within an Environmental Mode of Instruction

While Cunningham's (2008) investigation documented a rise in reading related attitudes when classroom environments were rated as exemplary, alarmingly notable were the more negative attitudes students held towards writing regardless of the learning environment. Yancey (2008) affirms a continued existence of an imbalance between reading and writing instruction in today's classrooms, arguing that reading instruction "has traditionally been granted an elevated degree of attention and consequently more support than writing in classroom settings" (Faber, Hyrich, & Paterson, 2009, p. 2). Building on these concerns, Faber, Hyrich, and Paterson (2009) examined research to investigate the current state of instructional practices of written composition in Manitoba classrooms. Results examined from the classrooms surveyed indicated that little time was actually being allocated to writing and written composition. In addition, concerns were raised over the types of instructional foci being emphasized in the teaching of

writing when it was being taught. Lastly, although previously cited research (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks, 1986; MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006; Smagorinsky, 2006) indicates that the environmental mode remains the most effective mode of instruction, data from this study indicated that the environmental mode was not being implemented *at all* among the Manitoba elementary teachers surveyed.

Englert, Mariage, and Dunsmore (2006) cite a need for more “rich descriptions of how writing is socially constructed and reconstructed in classroom communities [as this information] will allow teachers/educators to gain insight into the types of assisted development that advance writing” (p. 217). They encourage future researchers to explore the impact that this theoretical stance may have “on the dispositions students have toward writing and learning” (p. 217). Thus, the intent of this study was to explore the social and verbal interactions that arose as teacher and student collaborated on a shared writing task to determine the ways in which the teacher’s talk and actions affected the writing development of the student.

Conversations in a Reading Recovery Lesson: Examples of Responsive Teaching and Socially Constructed Learning

Previously described in the first chapter as a *cognitive apprenticeship setting* (Askew & Frasier, 1999), the Reading Recovery lesson is an ideal setting in which to base an investigation of this nature. The particular format of the Reading Recovery lesson promotes the recurrence of specialized opportunities in which its participants can systematically engage in meaningful conversations centered on literacy related topics. Throughout the reading and writing components of the lesson, for example, teacher and student continually engage in focused dialogues about specific reading and writing practices. In addition, because of the individualistic nature of the programme, the teacher can center his or her instructive practices within the child’s

zpd and, as a consequence, the teacher-talk that ensues aligns more readily with the child's most current levels of understanding.

Within each literacy related undertaking, the child is encouraged to contribute all he or she can to the task. When testing out new theories, however, the student remains contingently supported by the teacher, who braces the child as much as is needed in order to help him or her reach some new learning. Because of the unique nature of the Reading Recovery environment, teachers are able to adapt their instructive approach to meet the "on the spot" needs of their students, changing the types of language they use in direct response to child's most current level of performance. As a result, teachers can immediately confirm a child's more appropriate ways of responding just as they can quickly intervene whenever the student's attempts are more "off the mark". Most importantly, they are always scaffolding the student's strategic activity, helping the child step out of his or her comfort zone of established understandings in order to venture into (and hopefully explore) new learning territory.

In order to clarify the nature of the literacy event setting used in this study, the next chapter presents the Reader with a more detailed description of the physical and contextual structures of a Reading Recovery lesson, specifically the procedures and materials used during the writing section of the lesson.

Chapter 3: Reading Recovery as the Literacy Event Setting

As previously expressed, Bryan (2009) asserts that the setting in which the literacy event occurs serves to define the literacy act itself. It is important to include in this paper, therefore, a detailed explanation of this study's specific literacy event setting as the research site (i.e., the writing session of a Reading Recovery lesson) in order to support the Reader's understandings of how language is particularly regarded and used within this context.

Beginning in the next section is a general description of the structure of a Reading Recovery lesson and the timing conditions involved, followed by a more specific description of the procedures used within the Writing Session of each lesson. Following this is a description of the types of materials found in, and logistical set-up of, a typical Reading Recovery room.

Structure of a Reading Recovery Lesson

In order to appreciate the timing protocols Reading Recovery teachers are expected to follow, Figure 1 presents the scheduling framework of a typical 30-minute lesson. A child's Reading Recovery lesson is commonly divided into three sections—the familiar reading, the writing session, and the new book. With reference to Clay's guidelines for practice (2005a, p. 37), each of these sections has been furthermore divided into its particular components so as to provide a greater understanding of the types of activities of which the teacher and child take part. Timing indications have also been added to illustrate the ways in which the teacher may use her time when conducting the lesson. While adjustments to these timing allocations may be made according to an individual child's needs, the main goal is to have the child read and write continuous text in every lesson (A. Matczuk, personal communication, November 21, 2014).

Daily Timetable for a Typical 30-Minute Reading Recovery Lesson.	
10 minutes	<p>Familiar Reading Task</p> <p>This task could possibly be broken down into:</p> <p>8 minutes: Familiar rereading of previously seen/easy texts (95% accuracy and above).</p> <p>2 minutes: Teacher takes a Running Record of Child’s unassisted reading of yesterday’s New Book.</p>
10-12 minutes	<p>The Writing Session</p> <p>This could possibly be broken down into:</p> <p>1-2 minutes: Letter Sort and Working with Words activities (using magnetic letters on the whiteboard).</p> <p><u>Composing Task:</u></p> <p>1-2 minutes: Story Conversation with Child to elicit a story for writing.</p> <p>5-8 minutes: Shared Writing of Child’s story.</p> <p>1-2 minutes: Cut-Up Story: Child assembles the cut up story.</p>
8-10 minutes	<p>Child’s First Reading of a New Book</p> <p>Teacher introduces a new book at Child’s instructional level (90% accuracy and above). Child attempts his/her first reading of the new book with Teacher’s support.</p>

Figure 1. Daily schedule of a Reading Recovery lesson.

As shown in Figure 1, a typical Reading Recovery lesson is divided into three main sections. In the first section, *Familiar Reading*, the child reads aloud two or more familiar books. Also involved in this section is the child's unassisted reading of yesterday's "New Book" while the teacher takes a running record of his or her performance. The second part of the lesson, the *Writing Session*, is predominantly concerned with the processes involved as the teacher and student orally collaborate and then record a shared message. The first two minutes of the writing session are devoted to activities at the letter and word level that foster a child's rapid identification and an understanding of how words work (i.e., breaking words into parts: onsets, rimes, blends, diagraphs). Following on from these more singular explorations is the *Composing* task, which consists of: the story-eliciting conversation, the shared writing activity, and the child's reconstruction of his or her story using a cut-up version. The final section of the Reading Recovery lesson, the *New Book*, includes the teacher's introduction of a new story and the child's attempt to read it with the teacher's support (For further details on the particulars of the tasks and the rationale for their specific arrangement within the lesson, refer to Clay 2005a, p. 37-38).

Generally, 10-12 minutes is scheduled for the entire writing section of a Reading Recovery lesson. The shaded area in Figure 1 represents the three specific activities involved in one story-writing session (the "Story Conversation" activity, the "Shared Writing" undertaking, and the "Cut-Up Story" task) that were examined and included for analysis in this study. While letter sorting and word work activities occurred within the parameters of the lesson's writing section, they were not considered for inclusion in this investigation. Predominantly conducted as tasks unto themselves, they were not inherently aligned along the same lines as the more comprehensive message-composing exercise.

Components of the Reading Recovery Writing Session

In sections six, seven, and eight of *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, Part two: Teaching Procedures*, Clay (2005b) thoroughly describes the specific techniques that teachers use to support their students' word solving attempts as they jointly compose and construct a story. She also expounds upon the reasoning behind the practices designed to help children learn to orally compose, write, and read messages during a Reading Recovery lesson. For the purposes of this chapter, a more general explanation of the principal tasks involved in a story writing session is provided below.

Each Reading Recovery writing session involves three interconnected pursuits that jointly function to deepen the child's understandings about the composing and constructing processes involved in writing. "Drawing upon language knowledge in similar ways" (Clay, 2005b, p. 50), the three components have been identified in the following tables as: the Story Conversation task, the Shared Writing task, and the Cut-Up Story task. Following is a brief summary of each.

The story conversation task.

As teacher and student prepare to write, Clay (2005b) advises teachers to give careful consideration, even before the lesson starts, as to how they will encourage the student's story contributions—Be "guided by all you know about this child. Talk about something you feel sure he [or she] would be interested in" (p. 55). For the task to have true merit, the teacher needs to regard the child as a genuine composer before s/he can help the child take on this identify for him/herself. A goal of the Story Conversation thus is the child's recognition that s/he has something important to say—that writing "is not a matter of copying words or stories [but involves] going from ideas in the head; to spoken words; to printed messages; and finding out

that you can reconstruct those messages” (p. 51). It is not the teacher’s job to decide on the words or phrases the student will record, but rather to help the child formulate a clearly defined message against which writing production can be checked with consistency and confidence.

The shared writing task.

Freshly armed with a message to record, the teacher and student now move into the Shared Writing task. Typically the longest running component of the writing session, this joint writing activity is concerned with the specific ways in which “the written code [is] used to record the [child’s] oral language” (Clay, 2005b, p. 48). As teacher and student collaborate, it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that the child writes all he or she can independently; directing the child to first “give it a go” on the top working page of the writing book—from practicing a letter’s formation, to recording the sounds s/he hears or remembers seeing in a word s/he wants to write, to repeatedly writing a word in an effort to overlearn its less salient features. The teacher specifically uses the top page for the Sound (Elkonin) boxes s/he draws to represent the number of sounds within a word. S/he may also use it to display correct models of particularly troublesome script that the child can then copy onto the bottom page. As the pen is cooperatively shared, the teacher may even write, directly onto the bottom page, whatever is judged to be too difficult for the child at this point in time.

It is also during this middle part of the writing session that the teacher has the best opportunity to observe which words the child can write independently, recording these onto the student’s “Weekly Record of Known Writing Vocabulary” chart (see Clay, 2005b, p. 192). In addition she may also decide to take particular words (i.e., high frequency words, nearly known words) from the child’s story to fluency—encouraging a fast and smooth replication of these words in order to commit them to memory.

From the child's "Known Writing Vocabulary" chart, weekly totals can be accumulated and word types examined more closely. These totals are then charted on an accompanying "Change Over Time in Known Writing Vocabulary" graph (see Clay, 2005b, p. 193), as part of the teacher's record keeping responsibilities for each child. Maintaining both the word chart and the cumulative graph ensures that teachers have ready evidence of the child's progress that can be quickly consulted throughout the lesson.

The cut-up story task.

As the final punctuation is added, the child's message is completed and the teacher now prepares the materials for the cut-up story task. After rewriting the story onto a strip of paper or light card, the child is typically asked to read from this strip as it is cut up "into language units that the teacher knows the child will be able to reassemble" (Clay, 2005b, p. 82; refer to Section Eight of Clay's guidebook for a more comprehensive description of the Reading Recovery procedures involved in the cut-up story task). The child is then invited to reassemble the cut-up story and to check it once more by rereading it aloud. The benefit of cutting up the child's story is that what was previously a personalized writing activity now becomes a customized reading task. As the child reassembles her or his personal message, s/he is presented with an customized context in which to meaningfully "relate reading to writing, writing to speaking, and reading to speaking" (p. 81), thereby strengthening his or her understandings of how these language activities interconnect. This cut-up sentence is then put into an envelope and sent home with the child as part of the homework tasks.

Reading Recovery Procedures for the Story Writing Session

Throughout the course of the child's Reading Recovery programme, the teacher supports the learner to become more aware of, and independently able to manage, many aspects of the

writing process including: the *preplanning* of the message (coming up with suitable ideas for writing); the *composing* of the message; the search for *ways to record* the message; the *monitoring* of the message production; and the *reading* of the written message (Clay, 1993; see also Clay, 2005b). The ultimate goal of any of the reading and writing tasks in the child's daily Reading Recovery lessons is to help the child strengthen the "range of ways of solving new words" (Clay, 2005b, p. 61), rather than on merely reading or writing individual words correctly. When the child is sensitively coached on *how* to attend to and analyze new aspects of language in a personally relevant way (by drawing on what s/he already knows), then "that 'knowing how to do it' can be applied to hundreds of new instances" (p. 61). By the end of the student's series of lessons, the student will have gained a more flexible and confident control of the practical aspects of composition so that more complex stories can be individually managed back in her/his classroom (Clay, 1993).

To begin the story-composing process in a Reading Recovery lesson, the child and teacher first have a brief but "genuine" (Clay, 1993, p. 29) conversation that builds on something of interest to the child. Arising from this shared dialogue, this child's communication is usually one or two sentences in length and may be based on his or her own experiences, a message to someone, or on a book recently read. Early in the child's programme, the teacher may contribute greater input and offer a higher degree of support during the shared story-writing task. Although the goal of instruction is to encourage flexible and fluent control over a range of ways of problem-solving new words, the teacher's overarching aspiration is always for the child "to want to write tomorrow" (Clay, 2005, p. 56). As such, there is a delicate balance to be maintained between helping the child record what s/he wants to say and how s/he wants to say it versus over-adherence to applying standard language structures and complex vocabulary. Too much

interference by the teacher during any part of the process “may be enough to throw the child so that he [or she] cannot recall what he [or she] has composed” (p. 56). Conversely too little of this dialogic mediation (Wells, 1999) and any dilemmas that the child encounters while trying to “go it alone” may only exacerbate his/her frustration with the writing process.

When making instructive decisions during the writing sessions, of the utmost importance are attention to the *child's message* and *ways of responding* (Clay, 1993, 2005). As learners offer ideas for the story composing process, teachers can demonstrate acceptance of the children themselves, “by not immediately correcting to standard forms what children offer” (New Zealand Department of Education, 1985, p. 64). Teachers can model appropriate language structures and help children expand on their initial phrases, but as Clay (as cited in the New Zealand Department of Education) states: “for the non-reader, his [or her] own language patterns should be a guide to the type of text s/he should try to read [and write] until [these processes are] well-established” (p. 65). Consequently, when a writing task becomes overly centered on children's accurate production of text, the creativity and the desire to compose become stifled as confusions develop and frustrations arise. Beginning writers need “access to strategies for composing, planning, and starting a piece of written language” (Schulze, 2006, p. 8), but the application of these strategies needs to be addressed within personally relevant contexts. Because the talking and writing components of a child's story are exclusive “products of each child's thoughts about [her/his] own world, they have special meaning” (Department of Education, p. 62). Within the context of the child's message, the teacher models and clarifies the writing process to make explicit the use of a variety of print conventions. Thus, as the student works with the teacher to record a meaningful story, s/he is provided a distinct opportunity to observe

her/his language *in action* (Paterson, 2008a), and, as a result, deeper and clearer understandings about essential print concepts can be cultivated.

Regardless of the child's current level of operation, during every writing task in the child's Reading Recovery programme, s/he is expected to write all that s/he can independently—from “dotting the ‘i’ or crossing the ‘t’ to attempting ‘hippopotamus’” (Clay, 2005b, p. 57). During each writing session, Clay recommends that the child use an unlined exercise book (in a landscape orientation) for her/his story composing. The blankness of the page is important as lines often cause the struggling or beginning writer needless distraction with its structural constraints. Children in Reading Recovery have many things competing for their attention as they write—they have to consciously retain their message as they attempt to say and hear the sounds within the words they want to write, they have to concentrate deeply on using the appropriate directional movements when forming the letters, and they have to continuously reflect on each letter's appropriate placement within the word and on the page. With an unlined book, the teacher can guide the child's attention to the most prudent element at the time, sustaining his or her attention and efforts as he or she learns to use the space on the page efficiently (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

While the child writes the story on the bottom page, the top page is used as a communal “working space for problem-solving” (Askew & Frasier, 1999, p. 45). Within this working space, the student and teacher develop the child's strategic writing behaviours. On the working page the child: makes attempts to record known parts of nearly-known words; works with the teacher to learn how to hear and record the sounds within “suitable” (Clay, 2005b, p. 57) words (i.e., words from the child's message that are *sufficiently* challenging to the child at this point in time) using Sound (Elkonin) Boxes; and practices repeated writings of high-frequency words in an attempt to

over-learn them in terms of their sounds, their visual ‘look’, and their ‘feel’ (i.e., establishing a motor plan). In addition, the teacher uses the working page: to demonstrate suitable motor plans for forming letters; to highlight appropriate directionality of recording sounds within words; or to provide written models of particular letters or whole words that the child may copy. Thus, through the joint use of the working page, the child is carefully supported by the teacher’s actions and dialogue as s/he actively participates in the writing task. In addition, the top page provides the teacher (and subsequently the Researcher) with a valuable record of “most of the teacher-child interactions about any aspect of the writing” (Clay, 1993, p. 28) that has occurred during a particular session.

Reading Recovery Materials

Although this study involved observation of four different teachers (Darcy, Jan, Lydia, and Cassandra) in four different rooms, in four different schools, the Reading Recovery room’s physical and logistical set-up must follow specified guidelines to ensure that all teachers have access to similar materials, ensuring some continuity of the procedures.

In this study, all of the observed Reading Recovery rooms were outfitted in a similar manner. The reading and writing materials for each teacher’s Reading Recovery programme included:

The physical workspace.

1. The Reading Recovery Room: Each teacher’s Reading Recovery working space was housed in a room separate from other classrooms. Each room contained the materials mentioned below. Some rooms, like Darcy’s, were much larger than all of the others and some teachers’ rooms were set up as a separate room within the general Resource room (Jan’s). Lydia’s room was situated in the middle of a long, narrow, and at times busy hallway. There were no

windows in this room although the door had a top to bottom window glass set into it so that natural light could get through. However, because of the glass, child and teacher were also able to view other people passing by and vice versa. To alleviate the distraction, Lydia had her table area set up facing away from the doorway. Cassandra's regular Reading Recovery room, was undergoing renovations so she conducted her lessons in a 'makeshift' Reading Recovery-like area that had been situated in a corner section of a larger, empty classroom. To try to minimize both visual and aural distractions, a large, upright whiteboard on wheels served as an outer 'wall', blocking off the view to the doorway and the outer hallway beyond. Important to note though is that all the rooms were specifically used just for Reading Recovery lessons and usually only the teacher and the student occupied the room during lesson-times (although from time to time, parents or the Teacher Leader would observe a lesson).

2. An adult sized working table big enough for two people to sit side-by-side, with the child typically seated to the left of the teacher.
3. Two chairs: One was always an adult-sized chair (for the teacher), the other chair also tended to be adult-sized but with additional modifications for the child. Teachers had a variety of devices on hand to support a child's comfort and productivity. Lydia and Darcy, for instance, had a tall, high-backed stool for their students' use. The other teachers had a firm cushion or a short stack of telephone books taped together for the child to sit upon. Some teachers also had a small footstool at the ready for students to rest their feet upon as they worked to discourage excessive fidgeting as well and to provide a more physically comfortable working environment for both child and teacher.

4. A magnetic whiteboard adhered to a wall: For its suggested dimensions, the whiteboard needs to be large enough for a Grade One child to be able to move the letters around and still have physical room in which to maneuver his or her body. Reading Recovery teacher trainers and teacher leaders typically suggest a 1.0m x 1.2m sized whiteboard or two slightly smaller boards placed side by side on the wall. When placing the whiteboard it is recommended “that the board be mounted at a height appropriate for a six year old child, from their knees to the full extent of their reach” (A. Matczuk, personal communication, November 14, 2014). The rationale for this is that Reading Recovery practices are always focused on the students’ needs—this is about the children learning to look at words and letters from close up, “not about an adults’ comfort” (A. Matczuk, personal communication, November 14, 2014). Some of the teachers had whiteboards that were even larger in height and width (as in Darcy’s room), or that were freestanding but still of the required dimensions. Each teacher also had a selection of coloured magnetic dry-erase markers and a whiteboard eraser on hand for when the child and teacher practiced writing words on the board.
5. Multiple sets of magnetic letters including multiple sets of lowercase and uppercase letters. These were typically stored in a plastic, compartmentalized container, with the letters sorted in alphabetical order for the teacher’s ease of access. Again teacher leaders and trainers recommend that Reading Recovery teachers use colourful Quercetti font magnetic letters as these have raised edges offering the child a greater degree of tactility.

The Reading Recovery library.

6. A collection of little levelled stories, each in a published book format. The books used in Reading Recovery are short (i.e. usually 16 page stories) written by various authors and from an assortment of publishers ranging from a Reading Recovery Level 1 (early Kindergarten) -

Level 22 (end of grade 2). In addition to using their own little stories that they have composed with their Reading Recovery teacher, students also learn how to effectively work with print by reading books that have been previously approved as appropriate beginner texts for Reading Recovery students by the Reading Recovery teacher leaders and trainers. In all the rooms observed, books were categorized by their levels and typically housed in magazine-sized boxes or, as in the case of one teacher, in a tall, rotating book carousel. Each box and shelf of books was labelled with its corresponding level number. While some rooms appeared to have a greater number of books than others, there is a published list of specific titles around which teachers' collections are built. (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, 2014).

Specific materials used in the shared writing task.

7. A set of thin felt-tipped markers (with two of each colour so that the teacher and student can write in the same colour). All teachers had an assortment of writing tools, including pencils, pens, and various sizes of markers. While usual Reading Recovery protocols suggest children use felt markers for their writing, one teacher, Darcy, did offer her student the use of a pencil. Clay (2005b) suggests that teachers have a ready supply of colourful felt markers for the child's use so as to "motivate the writing" (p. 54).
8. The child's story-writing book: about 15 or so pages stapled together in a landscape orientation. As previously mentioned, the pages on which the child constructs his or her story are unlined.
9. Opaque, white cover tape: these could be computer labels of various sizes or one-sided white eraser tape. Used by all the teachers, it completely conceals the child's writing errors, minimizing further confusions. Whereas the top practice or "working" page of the child's

writing book is used for the student's initial writing attempts, the bottom page of the book is considered as space for "publishing". As such, the writing approximations made by the child and demonstrations made by the teacher on this top page are not usually covered over with the white tape. Writing errors made on the bottom page, however are covered before being revised by the student with support provided, as needed, from the teacher.

Specific materials used in the cut-up story task.

10. Long strips of study paper on which the teacher rewrites the child's final story.
11. A pair of scissors that the teacher uses to cut the story strip into words/word parts.
12. Blank envelopes on the front of which the teacher rewrites the story and places the cut-up story cards inside. The child will then take this 'cut-up story puzzle' home to practice making as part of his/her daily Reading Recovery homework.

Other materials used in the lesson.

13. Child's book box: Each teacher observed in this study maintained an individualized container for her student. Inside this container could be found a selection of books previously read by the child, his or her story writing book(s), and his or her personalized alphabet book. All teachers kept their notes and records on the child's progress inside a small binder or folder. The child's book box and his or her corresponding binder were pulled out for each lesson observed. The teacher made individualized notes on each days' lesson and was often seen referring back to previous records to either confirm or query issues as they arose. Throughout the lesson, teachers were observed writing their own observations of the student's work on the "Daily Lesson Record" sheet (see Clay, 2005b, p. 196-197). In addition to this daily anecdotal record-keeping, also included in the child's binder were graphs that charted the child's "Change Over Time in Text Level", the weekly Reading Vocabulary sheet and, of

particular relevance to the focus of this study, the weekly Writing Vocabulary sheet and corresponding graph (Figures 2 and 3).

The context of the Reading Recovery lesson was chosen specifically for this study because the teachers involved in this programme are regularly required to engage in self-reflective practices with the assistance of an experienced Teacher Leader and a collegial cohort. To maintain their certification, Reading Recovery teachers are required to attend monthly continuing contact sessions so that they have an opportunity to examine their instructive practices in relation to the theories encompassed by current research-practitioners and the Reading Recovery guidebooks: *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, Part one: Why? When? How?* (Clay, 2005a) and *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, Part two: Teaching Procedures* (Clay, 2005b). As part of the ongoing professional development, each member of the cohort takes a turn teaching one of her students “behind the glass” for the others to observe. This event has a dual purpose—to examine the understandings the child currently displays in reading and writing, and to discuss the related efficacy of the teacher’s instructional talk and actions. As specific qualities of a teacher’s tutoring are brought to light and examined within this collegial setting, effective practices become acknowledged and suggestions for improvement are cooperatively communicated.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, a description was provided describing the general format and timing structure of a Reading Recovery lesson. In order to support the Reader’s understanding of the specific context of this study’s setting, further description was then presented that detailed the Reading Recovery procedures and the types of materials used during the writing sessions. In the following chapter, the study’s design is described and the procedures used are explained.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In the previous chapter a detailed explanation of the literacy event setting as part of the research site was provided in order to clarify the context of the study. Continuing on from that information, this chapter is concerned more specifically with outlining the methodology used in the course of this investigation. Suffice it to say at this point, the research site for this study was comprised of four separate Reading Recovery rooms in four different elementary public schools in a large multicultural metropolitan city in one of Canada's western provinces.

To investigate the nature of the interactions that occurred as four teachers and their students collaborated one-on-one in the shared writing tasks within a Reading Recovery lesson, this project employed a holistic single case study design. Best suited for "studying a particular phenomenon within its natural context" (McMillan, 2008, p. 288), a case study approach contends best with the *how* and *why* type queries that typically arise when one aims to investigate "individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes" (Yin 2003 in Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 544). As the contextual conditions of the phenomenon under investigation are also under scrutiny, data obtained in response to the case study's research questions are necessarily derived from a range of sources. Documentation, interviews, physical artifacts, participant-observations, and direct observations are only a few of the types of data collected, "which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood." (p. 544). In addition to collecting descriptive forms of data, a unique feature of case study research in comparison to other qualitative methodologies, is the inclusion and analysis of quantitative survey data (Baxter & Jack 2008). With the inclusion of such distinctly measureable evidence, case study research affords a more rounded understanding of the situation under examination. Whatever information is gathered throughout the course of the investigation

though, the Researcher's ultimate responsibility is to "ensure that the data are converged in an attempt to understand the overall case" (p. 555).

By examining a specific event (the shared language interactions), in a specific setting (the writing section of a Reading Recovery lesson), within a specific community (a Reading Recovery teacher and her student), the focus of this investigation was to consider how teachers' instructive interactions influenced their students developing literacy understandings.

Consequently this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the teacher's interactions affect the child's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the teacher do and/or say to scaffold the writing instruction?
 - b. What things does the teacher do and/or say that potentially provide affective support for the student's learning?
2. How does the child's interactions affect the teacher's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the child do and/or say that potentially influence the teacher's instructional decisions?

This chapter first provides a comprehensive discussion of the study's methodology, including the process for selecting participants. Following this is a more thorough description of the ensuing teacher-participants involved and their respective students. With regards to students' personalized information, included is some basic Reading Recovery information (i.e., the number of weeks and lessons the child has been in the programme, the child's Writing Vocabulary, his or her instructional reading level), the teacher's specific comments about the child's needs and strengths, and the Researcher's observations of each student's behaviours. All of the names—the students, their teachers and any other names mentioned in the field notes or discussions—are pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Following on from the participant descriptions, the types of data collected are described, as are the three phases of analysis used to examine the transcripts of the conversations between the teachers and their students. In the final section, the protocols that were used to code the teachers' dialogue are discussed, and included are three tables, defining each of the communication categories. Within each table examples are provided to illustrate the nature of each of the kinds of talk and timing cues observed in the conversations.

Study Design and Procedures

Four Reading Recovery teacher-participants were observed individually conducting the 10-12 minute story-writing portion of a Reading Recovery lesson with their particular student. The conversations that arose between teacher and student were audiotaped and later transcribed by the researcher.

Due to the highly situated nature (Bruner, 1996) of the literacy interactions that occurred within the writing section of the Reading Recovery lessons, this study is primarily descriptive in nature. The data collection phase of the study consisted of:

- 1) Researcher observations of four different Reading Recovery teachers as they worked with one of their students on the shared 10-11 minute writing task in a Reading Recovery lesson. To enhance the validity of the observations, each teacher was observed with her same student on two separate occasions.
- 2) Audiotaping of the literacy-related conversations that arose between the student and teacher as they talked about and wrote a story together.

The Researcher observed each lesson in its entirety, yet only the conversations that occurred during the writing sessions—specifically the three story writing sub-tasks—were transcribed and analyzed.

Teacher-participants were observed as they conducted a typical Reading Recovery lesson with a student. The Researcher observed and audiotaped the interactions that arose between the pair during the collaborative story-writing task. Of particular concern was the shared conversation that occurred just before writing began, the actual story writing session, followed by the cut-up story task.

All writing portions of the Reading Recovery lessons were audio taped and transcribed by the Researcher. Visits with the teachers and their students took place during the final two months of the school year.

Selection of Study Participants

The participants for this study were four Reading Recovery teachers and one each of their respective Reading Recovery students. The Teacher Leaders of Reading Recovery teachers in a western Canadian urban school division were initially contacted by the Researcher to extend the invitation to all non-training year Reading Recovery teachers to participate in this study. The decision to include the Teacher Leaders' assistance was made for two reasons. Firstly, Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders have greater access to a larger number of Reading Recovery teachers often within one or more school divisions. Secondly, in having the Teacher Leader extend the invitation on behalf of the Researcher, other teachers might feel less pressured to participate than if the Researcher (also a Reading Recovery teacher within the same school division) had extended the invitation herself.

A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select the teacher participants. The names of all interested participants were gathered together and the first four names randomly drawn by the Researcher were selected to participate. The other interested teachers were listed as alternates should they have been needed in the event of such things as scheduling conflicts, teacher-

participant withdrawals or illnesses. The four teachers who were chosen were to be used in the study only if parental permission could be obtained for one of their students to take part. If the teacher had been unable to obtain the necessary permissions from a student's parent, then another interested teacher from the alternate list would have been randomly selected and contacted by the Researcher to enlist for participation. Because the study involved participants not legally able to give their consent to participate (i.e., children under 18 years of age), written informed consent had to be obtained from the student's primary caregiver(s). Additionally, each child was required to provide her/his verbal assent to take part.

Teacher-participants were asked to send parent invitations to participate to all of the parents whose children were currently in their Reading Recovery programme. The names of all parents who provided consent for their child to participate were gathered together. All of the parents' names were separated in accordance with the names of the four teachers who agreed to participate. The names of all those parents who consented to their child's participation in the study were collected and, in correspondence with their child's teacher, the first name randomly drawn by the Researcher was invited to participate in the study. The name of one parent/child for each teacher was obtained by the Researcher.

There was no benefit or risk to any of the students involved in the study, or those not involved in the study, since the observations took place within the normal operations of the programme, and no additional services or deprivations occurred for any child. Other than the child's age, first name, and a photocopy of each session's story and the working page, no additional records were obtained. Students, their caregivers, and the Reading Recovery teachers involved all had the written assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Teacher participants.

The four teachers—Darcy, Jan, Cassandra, and Lydia—eventually selected to participate in this study shared some common characteristics. All participants were Reading Recovery Teachers within the same school division (although each teacher came from a different elementary public school), all teachers were female, and all teachers had previously held positions in a classroom and/or had worked in another capacity besides Reading Recovery. The teachers, however, varied in the length of time they had served as a Reading Recovery Teacher. At the time of this study, Jan, in her eighth year as a Reading Recovery teacher, had the most experience implementing the Reading Recovery protocols while Lydia, who had trained just the year before, was the teacher with the least amount of Reading Recovery experience. Darcy and Cassandra were in their third and fourth years as Reading Recovery teachers respectively.

Most teachers held another teaching position in addition to their Reading Recovery duties. Lydia, although having only finished her Reading Recovery training the year before, was the longest serving early primary teacher of the group. At the time of this study she was teaching Grade One students for half of her workday while during the other half, she worked with four students in the Reading Recovery programme, some of which were children from her own classroom.

In addition to her Reading Recovery role, where she worked with the highest number (five) of students a day in the programme, Darcy also was one of her school's Resource teachers with a particular focus on implementing literacy programming in the early years. As a Literacy Support teacher, Darcy worked daily with various guided reading groups from Grades 1-3 as part of the early year team's shared literacy block.

In her fourth year as the Reading Recovery teacher for her school, Cassandra worked with three students per day. She was also her school's Teacher-Librarian and was involved in working with small groups on research activities, implementing guided reading programmes in the early grades, supporting and planning with teachers, purchasing and suggesting appropriate reading materials for all levels and subjects, supporting teachers and students with *Information and Communications Technology* (ICT), and integrating ICT into various units.

Prior to this study, Jan had worked as both a half-time classroom teacher in the third grade and a half-time Reading Recovery teacher. At the time of this study, she had elected to remain in only the half-time Reading Recovery position for her school. Jan worked with four students each day.

Student participants.

While the teachers' instructional discourse was the focus of this investigation, the children's talk was also examined to the extent that it clarified the intents behind the teachers' talk. To enhance the understanding of the overall context of the setting, what follows is the basic information that was collected about the students involved in the study as well as specific learning factors deemed as significant that the teachers opted to provide in their verbal descriptions of their students.

All students involved in this investigation were in Grade One, ranging in age from 6 years and 7 months to 7 years and 2 months. All children were students in the same school division but attended different elementary schools. There were three boys and one girl involved. What follows is a description of each child based on the observational data supplied by the teachers and the behavioral impressions noted by the Researcher, where applicable.

Colin (Darcy's student). Colin was in week 12 (of a potential 20 weeks) of his lessons and was observed working with Darcy for his 54th and 55th lesson (out of a potential 100 lessons) on two consecutive days. Colin's Writing Vocabulary (i.e., words that he has shown he can write with independence) totaled approximately 62 words and he was reading books at an instructional level of 12 with Darcy's support.

One of the key aims for a Reading Recovery teacher is to help the child discontinue from his or her 12-20 week programme writing within the average band of their classmates and reading at an "end-of-year" reading level. To understand the end-of-year reading levels designated for children in Grade 1, Appendix B presents a *Reading Level Correlation Chart*. For children in Grade 1, this end-of-year reading level is 16—hence the Reading Recovery programme's discontinuing level is also 16. If the child's 20 weeks of lessons continues while he or she is in Grade 2, this end-of-year/discontinuing goal is Level 20.

In writing, Darcy noted that Colin could identify the individual sounds in words in sequence, although he still had difficulty distinguishing between short vowel sounds. To address this issue, Darcy said she used Sound Boxes (Elkonin boxes) during the shared writing task. Darcy also felt that Colin demonstrated greater difficulty with fluent letter formation when using a felt-tip marker so she had him use a pencil, feeling that this particular tool offered less resistance on the paper making for a more controlled movement. When considering topics for story writing, she noted that Colin preferred to write about his life experiences including his family and himself, and typically began most of his stories with the word "I". She felt that she often had to encourage him to vary his sentence beginnings (an idea which was not always met with enthusiasm). Darcy indicated that Colin's oral language structure was 'fairly good... he [didn't] seem to have any grammatical difficulties' in his speaking and maintained that Colin's

writing was “probably stronger” than his reading. She also made particular mention of how she found that his processing time seemed much faster in writing than in reading.

Marc (Jan’s student). Marc and Jan were observed while Marc was in Week 12 of the Reading Recovery programme. The two lessons (lesson numbers 56 and 60) were observed approximately a week apart. Marc’s Writing Vocabulary contained approximately 58 words. Jan’s observations about Marc centered primarily on him being an “extremely ADHD” (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) child, who could lose focus “easily”. To help him refocus his attention during the observations, Jan had him take a couple of quick breaks in between tasks (i.e., specifically within the reading based sections of the lesson) to perform simple physical exercises such as having him push his hands against hers. When he entered the programme in March of 2010, Marc’s reading level was at 0 (dictated text) indicating he could not independently read published materials at the Kindergarten level. At the time this investigation took place (in early June, 2010), Marc was reading at an instructional Level 9. During the Researcher’s observations of Marc’s conduct during the lessons, discerned were a number of overtly physical behaviors including but not limited to: eye rubbing/putting his hands over his eyes, holding his neck, putting his head in his hands, grabbing at his hands/ears, hunching over the table. A few times he made noises that could be described as moans (“Awwww! Nawww!”) and heavy sighs, and yawned openly while covering his eyes with his hands. Interestingly these types of behaviours tended to take place more often during the reading portions of the lesson and less so during the writing. During the writing tasks it was observed on more than one occasion that Marc would emit a noticeably thin, nervous sounding laugh, and that he would often interrupt or override his teacher’s talk with both off-track and on-task comments.

James (Cassandra's student). James and Cassandra's sessions were observed back-to-back, for lessons 42 and 43 during his eleventh week of lessons. At the time of his observations, James was reading at an instructional Level 15. According to Cassandra's Writing Vocabulary Graph and Weekly Record of Known Words in Writing, James' Writing Vocabulary contained approximately 60 words that he could write with relative ease. When talking about her student, Cassandra commented that James greatly enjoyed the individualized attention he received in lessons, often appearing "needy" in this sense. She further emphasized that his attention to task highly varied, noting that he easily went "off track", and that it was "normal" for her to have to provide lots of re-directive prompting to get him back on task. Upon our first meeting, James quickly confirmed himself as a highly enthusiastic and energized child—constantly moving around in his chair, twisting his shirt in his hands, stuttering over his words as he spoke as if in a rush to get them out, and by swinging his legs back and forth whilst seated. His verbal 'train of thought' often veered off track as he made spontaneous observations or shared recollections triggered by some minute topic point from the conversation. Indeed, James was the only child observed who attempted to include the Researcher in his conversations on more than one occasion by turning to face her as he spoke, to offer direct eye contact as he read his story aloud, and by directly showing the pictures from his books.

Marianne (Lydia's student). Marianne was the only female student participant in this investigation. Prior to entering the Reading Recovery programme in mid-May, 2010, Marianne was a student in Lydia's grade one classroom who had been receiving individualized help with the school's Resource teacher. Yet even with this support, Marianne had continued to "stump" both the Resource teacher as well as her classroom teacher. When a spot in the programme opened up, Marianne was next in line for services. Both lessons with Marianne and Lydia were

observed one week apart (Week 3, Lesson 7; Week 4, Lesson 14). At the time of observation, Marianne was supported to read books within the Levels 3-4 range.

As Marianne was in the early stages of her 20-week Reading Recovery programme, the Researcher had the opportunity to observe a lesson while she was still in the “Roaming around the Known” (Clay, 2005a) stage. During the ten or more Roaming lessons, no new teaching is purposely introduced to the child. This period is meant to be a time for the teacher to free herself from the pressures of direct instruction so that she has an opportunity to observe all that the child categorically knows about reading and writing. The other aim of this observational period is for the teacher to help the child consolidate his or her understandings within a variety of contexts in order to promote flexible use of that information. As a result, lessons in the Roaming phase may not follow the typical format of a Reading Recovery lesson (see Figure 1). For instance, in the case of Marianne’s writing activities observed during the first visit, her teacher did not include the Cut-Up Story task after the story was written. Lydia found that Marianne seemed to have a lot of difficulty grasping the undertaking of this activity at this point in time and required a high degree of teacher support to complete it.

Data Sources

Overall four types of data were collected for this study, including two main primary sources—1) the audiotaping and transcriptions of the conversations that occurred between the Reading Recovery teacher and her student and 2) the field notes of participant observations—and two types of secondary sources—3) teachers’ personal written reflections of the writing sessions and 4) photocopies of the children’s stories, including the working pages from students’ writing sessions. (See Appendices C through J for copies of the students’ stories.) While the teacher-student conversations and the field notes were the data sources predominantly under

examination, the secondary data sources were used more to clarify or reinforce information gleaned from the transcriptions and field notes. Since no video-graphic evidence was available to corroborate the Researcher's findings, these secondary forms of data maintained that role. The Researcher observed and audiotaped the 10-11 minute story-writing task between the teacher and the child, which included the brief story-eliciting conversation that occurred prior to the writing, the actual writing session, and the cut-up story session afterwards. Field notes were used as a means of supplementing the information recorded on the audiotapes and subsequent transcripts of the audiotaped conversations, as were the teachers' personal reflections of their lessons. With consent, the shared story written by the student and the teacher was collected and used as a form of constructed text to help further situate the literacy events (i.e., the conversations) that were described and analyzed by the Researcher. As an observer, the Researcher positioned herself behind the teacher and the student in an attempt to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Data Analysis

Observational data collected was concerned with the organization of the Reading Recovery rooms, the resources used, the specific procedures employed, and the accompanying relational behaviours between teacher and student. These data yielded important situational information central to understanding the context of each dyad's literacy event. While the similar physical and operational structure of the working environments shed light on a Reading Recovery view and use of literacy, the differences in the environments and in application of the verbal procedures also potentially illuminate an individual teacher's view and use of literacy within that context.

Data analysis for the audiotaped transcriptions.

Data that were gathered through participant observations, field notes, audiotapes and transcripts was analyzed in three stages. Although student responses were considered during the analysis, the teachers' talk remained the primary talk that was coded, categorized, and eventually, tabulated.

The first phase. Because “discourse allows for the co-construction of meaning” (Van Bramer, 2003, p. 25), the use of discourse analysis is an appropriate tool in analyzing how knowledge is constructed within the Reading Recovery setting. Consequently, during the first phase of analysis, each conversation was transcribed by the Researcher and analyzed for those typical features found within “genuine conversations” (p. 26), including: turn-taking procedures; back channelling; overlapping; and pausing—“all of which are meaningful aspects of communication and which reflect not only the power relationships between the tutor and the student but also the hesitations and awkward starts and stops common in the learning process” (Thompson, 2009, p. 426. See also Appendix A for Sample Transcription Conventions.).

The second phase. During the second phase of analysis, transcriptions were segmented into the three subsections of the Reading Recovery writing session (i.e., pre-writing conversation; shared writing of the story; reassembling the cut-up story) and the teachers' verbal scaffolding was examined within the context of the three conditions of instruction as referenced in Cromley and Azevedo (2005). These three categories are described in Thompson (2009) as: direct instruction (i.e., telling students what to do—including giving direct instructions, explanations, examples, or the answer; explaining the answer; referring to a previous discussion; posing a leading question; and planning what the student should do as a next step); cognitive scaffolding (i.e., this category is concerned with providing structured support for helping the

child manage aspects of a task. Some examples of this cognitive scaffolding are: demonstration; setting up a “forced choice between alternatives” (p. 427); hinting as a means of simplifying the task; suggesting a strategy; providing part of the answer; pumping to get the student to elaborate on an answer); and motivational scaffolding (i.e., concerning the ways in which the teacher maintains and encourages the child’s engagement with the writing task and helps the learner gain confidence in writing. This includes: acknowledging the difficulty of the task; using humour; providing feedback—positive or negative; reinforcing the student’s correct or partially correct responses by repeating them; using sympathy or empathy to help students maintain motivation).

Although not a primary focus of this study, in addition to examining the teachers’ *verbal* examples of scaffolding, where and when possible, the Researcher made attempts to clarify intents behind teachers’ communicative efforts by describing some of the more notable nonverbal aspects of the teacher’s talk as recorded in the Researcher’s field notes. The reason being that, as a person’s body language and gestures “act as partners with words or alone without words to convey meanings to listeners and to build rapport” (Thompson, 2009, p. 420), some attention to their occurrence is warranted.

The third phase. In the third phase of analysis, the Researcher conducted further examinations into the scaffolding nature of the teacher’s verbal interactions. The dialogue examined was divided into either Cognitive-Based Communication (Direct Instruction/Cognitive Scaffolding) or Affective-Based Communication (Motivational Scaffolding). The dialogue that occurred specifically within the categories of Direct Instruction and Cognitive Scaffolding was analyzed based on the five levels of contingent support for learning as conceived by Wood (2003; see also Matczuk, 2005, and Lose, 2007), which are described as follows.

Level 1: General Verbal Intervention: At this stage of intervention, the teacher provides the least amount of help. In response to a child's action, s/he may say something like, "It could be" or "You try it". A general verbal intervention is a "signalling [of] the current state of activity" (Wood, 2003, p. 12) without attempting to provide a specific objective to the child. Talk on this level tends to serve as an "external evaluation. . . of what is happening" (p. 12).

Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention: Often articulated as a question (i.e., "Does the word you said look like the one on the page?"), a specific verbal intervention makes note of some aspect or action the child is doing but does not explicitly present the next step. The responsibility of turning that question (or comment) into the next step is left to the learner.

Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with Nonverbal Indicator(s): Building on from level 2, to draw the student's attention to a specific error, the teacher offers a *verbal clue* (i.e., "Does the word you said look like the one on the page?"). In addition, s/he *also* provides a *nonverbal clue* that supports the child's active problem solving (i.e., while talking, the teacher points out the beginning letter of the word).

Level 4: Prepares for Next Action: At this level, the teacher exerts even more control over the next action, typically offering the child two alternatives to choose from: "You want to write 'cat'. Does it start with 'c' or 'k'?"

Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action: The teacher takes *complete* control over the action by demonstrating the next step for the child.

Rather than regarding each of these levels as a discrete, "one-size-fits-all" (Wood, 2003, p. 12) move, Wood asserts that teachers need to continuously reflect upon the level of support a learner needs so that s/he may have as much opportunity as possible to independently complete a task. By tuning into what a child notices about print and basing instruction on her/his strengths,

the teacher is more likely to have success in weaving her/his instructional talk throughout these levels.

While Wood's framework for the five levels of intervention was explicitly referenced in order to categorize the teachers' cognitive based talk, the two non-levelled cognitive-based categories were not arranged "a priori". As the teachers' cognitive talk was analyzed, it became apparent that some forms of speech, while cognitively-based, did not necessarily fit into Wood's structure yet still played a particular role in the conveyance of teachers' messages. As a result, the two categories of *Teacher Directed* and *Signal Words* were created.

Teacher-dialogue that fell under the category of *Motivational Scaffolding* was further categorized under one of three headings. Again, while these affective-based speech categories are based on the work of Wood (2003) and Thompson (2009), they were not prearranged prior to the analysis phase but rather emerged as the talk was examined. Emotionally supportive forms of talk included:

General Verbal Praise: Unspecific, positive feedback made in response to the child's cognitive based action(s).

Specific Verbal Praise: Specific, positive feedback made in response to the child's cognitive action(s). Such comments included the teacher repeating the child's correct or partially correct responses, or by providing a brief reiteration of how the child solved a task.

Verbal Emotional comments: Comments analyzed under this category tended to be of a nurturing and empathetic nature designed to help students maintain motivation as they worked on difficult tasks. They included using terms of endearment, acknowledging the difficulty of a task, and using humour to connect empathetically with the student.

Lastly, teachers' use of *Timing Cues* offered the Researcher insight into the ways in which nonverbal communication supported students' strategic contemplation of a writing task. In particular turn-taking features inherent in typical conversations (i.e., overlaps and interruptions) were observed as were the linguistically based pauses that teachers' intentionally offered their students. These deliberately provided pauses, which Rowe (1972, 1986) refers to as "wait time", were tabulated under the Researcher's headings of *Tussle Time* or *Pointed Pauses*. While the Researcher previously maintained some general understandings about the nature of Wait Time based on her own Reading Recovery teaching experiences, the two categories of *Tussle Time* and *Pointed Pauses* were not predesigned. It was only after the categories were established that the Researcher conducted further investigations into Rowe's work in order to clarify and confirm her initial judgements.

Coding Procedures

Verbal communication.

As previously mentioned in the data analysis procedures, the two main themes of Cognitive and Affective based communication were used to code the transcripts. This analysis also included differentiating between the teacher's verbal and nonverbal interactions. To categorize teacher's cognitive centered talk, Wood's (2003) framework of contingent support was applied. Two other categories of cognitive speech—Signal Words and Teacher Directed—were developed out of a need to classify language that did not fit within Wood's leveled types of speech. Thompson's work with verbal motivational scaffolding (2009) was specifically consulted to help define instances of teachers' emotionally centered talk. Additionally, Wood's distinction between prompts of a general versus specific nature was also recalled to create the

three specific categories under the Affective Communication heading: General Verbal Praise, Specific Verbal Praise, and Verbal Emotional comments.

Nonverbal communication.

In the beginning of analysis, an attempt was considered to tally all the affectively based gestures and expressions made by each teacher with her student (i.e., fist-bumps, smiles, hugs, making direct eye contact, turning the whole body towards the child) and the nonverbal prompts used to direct the child's attention to an aspect of the task (i.e., tapping or pointing to the child's top page of the writing book or motioning towards the whiteboard in order to indicate where the child should practice writing or making a word with the magnetic letters) as recorded in the field notes. However, without the use of videotape, a consistent count of such events was haphazard at best and the numbers of these types of physical responses were not included in the final tables. Not wholly disregarded, they are used primarily to provide a contextual record that supports descriptions of the teacher-talk's probable intent.

Less ambiguous to count were the "nonverbal" pauses and interruptions (Timing Cues) amidst the teachers' articulated talk as well as those prosodic features that include changes in tone, volume, and all those vocal expressions that serve to 'colour' and add emphasis to one's actual speech.

Timing cues. The main type of nonverbal behaviour that was predominantly considered involved noting the specific pauses (namely, the Wait Times) a teacher employed as part of her cognitive support. Similar to Rowe's "wait time 1" and "wait time 2", Pointed Pauses and Tussle Times were the two types of wait time distinguished under the broader category of Timing Cues. The third type of timing event counted was somewhat divergent in nature: Teacher Interruptions focused on those instances where the teacher was heard to abruptly intersect a child's speech by

cutting him or her off in mid-statement (i.e., interruptions), or by beginning her talk-turn before the child had finished his/hers (i.e., overlaps).

While a teacher's interruptions were simply counted as the number of occurrences, the teacher's use of Wait Time was measured in seconds. In order to maintain consistency when measuring each wait time's length, the Researcher referred to the timing feature on the portable digital recording device that was also used to audiotape the lessons. During the transcription phase, the Researcher employed the visual timing feature displayed on the screen of the recording device to count the number of seconds that arose after a final prompt was given until the student began to speak/act (*Pointed Pauses*) or to measure the gaps of time that the teacher remained silent while the student worked on a task (*Tussle Time*). The length of the teachers' Wait Times are marked in the transcripts as a series of ellipses with one ellipsis equalling one second of silence.

Prosodic features of teachers' speech. Also observed in the transcripts were those prosodic features of language that could be aurally discerned on the audiotape. Vocal changes included fluctuations in teachers' pitch or volume, application of stress on a word or part of a word, and were the laughs, whispers, sighs, and gasps that teachers sometimes used to modify their speech.

The "nonverbal" forms of communication—the vocal changes and gestural indicators—while not presented as specific categories, did influence the categorization of the teachers' verbal utterances. Whenever a teacher's cognitive based verbal prompt, for example, was accompanied by vocal changes (i.e., voiced stress of a specific letter sound), the talk was usually categorized under Wood's *Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with Nonverbal Indicator(s)* category.

Whenever the teacher's comments were accompanied by a laugh or a gasp, this usually tended to be speech more indicative of the *Verbal Emotional* category.

Whenever teachers integrated their verbal intervention with a specific nonverbal *action* (i.e., drawing Sound Boxes on the working page of the child's writing book), this too was classed as a Level 3 support as the teacher not only offered a specific verbal intervention (i.e., "Let's try 'tooth' on the top page.") but accompanied this prompt with a specific nonverbal indicator (i.e., As she speaks, she draws three sound boxes on the top page).

Oftentimes teachers included both types of "nonverbal" supports (vocal stress and sound box diagramming) with their specific verbal prompts (i.e., After Jan draws the boxes, she emphasizes the sounds within the word: "T**oooo**oth.") As these are the two most notable types of nonverbal prompting referred to in the Reading Recovery writing procedures (Clay, 2005b), their occurrences were anticipated by the Researcher, thus easily noticed and recounted with greater assuredness. It could be rightly argued that in seeking out these particular types of nonverbal indicators, they became prioritized over observing others, but by having knowledge of what nonverbal behaviours to look for in the writing sessions (especially without the use of videotaping the lessons), this did allow the Researcher a greater continuity of recording for that particular data.

Dissecting the Teachers' Talk

Understanding the intended message behind a conversational partner's talk can be a demanding task even when that pair share positional equality. Counter responses are more likely to be volleyed back and forth in an effort to remedy misinterpretations, yet confusions between skilled speakers can still linger. A teacher's talk is no exception, except that in a classroom (and the Reading Recovery room setting, the child's confusions may have a more drastic result. The

young student is highly unlikely to have the same degree of pedagogic know-how as his/her teacher and he/she will typically lack expediency in conversational techniques, or have the confidence necessary to hash out a mutually agreed upon clarification of the teacher's true intent. Thus, in order to clarify the actual meaning behind the teacher's talk, it became necessary to divide each talk-turn into its significant components.

Although ideas have been isolated and separated into different categories for the purposes of clarity and data management, in reality, the ideas expressed by each teacher remain deeply interwoven amongst the analytical and emotional dimensions of the instructive talk. With this in mind, each utterance made by a teacher was closely examined for the specific ideas that arose within. Each idea was marked as a separate unit. In one teacher's talk-turn, for instance, a number of similarly themed remarks pertaining to a child's current action might have existed, but each remark might also carry its own particular level of support. As an illustrative example, in the following dialogue Darcy helps Colin fix up a word in his story. He initially writes "going" but includes a reversed lower case 'n'. He is about to carry on with the next word without noticing the error. While all the comments made by Darcy are generally concerned with the problem at hand, the level of her support fluctuates as she helps him work through it.

Darcy: Colin, can you think about the 'n'? Show me . . . a lowercase 'n' up there (*she points to the top page.*)

Colin: (*He silently writes another reversed 'n' on the top page.*)

In the first part of her talk-turn, Darcy blocks further action by asking Colin to "think about that 'n'". By drawing his attention to the particular letter, Darcy's *Specific Verbal Intervention* "suggests some feature of a task that is needed for the child to continue solving" (Lose, 2007, p. 18). She continues with this Level 2 prompt: pointing at the top page of his

writing book, she further directs him to “Show me. . . a lowercase ‘n’ up there”. (In this case, pointing to the top page is merely a nonverbal reminder of where to practice his writing rather than as a nonverbal support.) Though Colin does not verbally reply, he does break up her talk-turn by responding to the prompt with his writing practice of another backwards ‘n’. The exchange then continues:

Darcy: Uh, just a . . . just a minute. (*Beside his attempt, Darcy writes a model ‘n’.*) Have a look Did you notice something? . . . It goes the other way, doesn’t it?

Employing a *Level 1: General Verbal Intervention* (“Uh, just a . . . just a minute.”), Darcy cautions Colin to “consider an alternative response or action before proceeding” (Lose, 2007, p. 18). She then raises her cognitive support to a *Level 4: Prepares for Next Action*: Darcy writes a model of the letter on the page but rather than immediately confirming its accuracy, she leaves room for Colin to resolve the confusion. She prompts Colin to “Have a look . . . Did you notice something?” When Colin does not respond within the two seconds she waits (i.e., *Pointed Pausing*), Darcy “does for the child what he is unable to do on his own” (Lose, 2007, p. 20)—she confirms the correct orientation of the letter with her final *Level 5* statement: “It goes the other way, doesn’t it?”

Ultimately 14 sub-categories were created within which all four teachers’ dialogue was catalogued. In those instances where a particular comment might have fit within two or more of the categories, the notion of “best fit” (Bryan, 2009) was used to determine the final selection. By re-examining the context in which the utterance was made, by considering the reactions or preceding actions made by both the teacher and the child, and by drawing upon her own understandings of the Reading Recovery protocols and prompts, the Researcher thus made multiple attempts to categorize comments in a conscientious manner.

To highlight this notion of “best fit”, following is just one example in which a teacher’s cognitive prompt seemed to correspond with a number of category definitions (see italicized phrase in the extract that follows). In the transcript of one of their lessons, Jan and Marc work together on writing the word “lick”. Marc is having difficulty identifying the letter name of the final sound he hears in the word. In response to the soft, indiscriminate vocalization he is making, Jan quickly intercedes:

Marc: Ahhhhh//

Jan (*interrupting him*): “Okay, *don’t write anything yet*. Lick. It could be what?”

Her first utterance in this turn (“Okay”) was counted as a *Signal Word*: a word *used by the teacher to prime the child’s attention to the next part of the task* (or, in this case, the next part of her statement). The prompt in the italicized text (“don’t write anything yet”), however could be counted in a number of ways: as a continuation of the *Signal Word* (therefore a Signal phrase), as a *Teacher Directed* statement (where talk is used by the teacher to take control of a situation and/or to direct the child’s attention specifically), or lastly as a *Level 1: General Verbal Intervention*. As a Level 1 prompt, Jan’s phrase “don’t write anything yet” signals “to the child that the teacher is focused on his work and is closely monitoring what is happening in the lesson” (Lose, 2007, p. 18). While the italicized phrase did act as a linguistic gateway to the next prompt, and while it did enable the teacher to brusquely orientate the child’s attention, the statement was eventually classified as a *General Verbal Intervention*—the Researcher ultimately deferring to Wood’s expertise as the final ‘judgment call’. In other words, if the teacher’s talk could conceivably fit within one of Wood’s levels, then this was the determining factor used in coding.

In order to focus understandings and create ease of data management, the larger categories of Cognitive Communication and Affective Communication were divided into sub categories. *Cognitive-based* forms of talk included two types of non-levelled speech (Teacher Directed and Signal Words) and Wood's Five Levels of Contingent Support (Level 1: General Verbal Intervention, Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention, Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with Nonverbal Indicator(s), Level 4: Prepares for Next Action; Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action). *Affective* forms of speech included General Verbal Praise, Specific Verbal Praise, and Verbal Emotional comments. As the third main category of communication, the *Timing Cues* focused on teachers' nonverbal supports. These included teachers' use of Wait Times (Tussle Times, Pointed Pauses) and Teacher Interruptions. As previously discussed, it was necessary to dissect the teachers' utterances into its various idea units (or "prompt types") so as to pinpoint the actual message behind the prompts used.

While teachers' verbal communications was conveniently divided into Cognitive and Affective based, the same organizational principal was not applied to the nonverbal "Timing" category. Firstly, it is the primary purpose of this investigation to examine the teacher's actual *verbal* talk (with subsequent attention given to those accompanying behaviours to provide a richer description of the verbal interactions). Secondly, it was felt that a teacher's application of Wait Time or interruptions ultimately served a cohesively dual purpose in being both cognitively focused but ultimately communicating an unspoken confidence in the child's strategic action—more or less.

Tables 1 through 3 lists each of the 14 sub-categories used for classification of the audiotaped lesson transcripts. Included with each explanation of the talk-type or timing cue are

examples from the transcripts. The specific idea unit being referred to has been italicized for distinction. Any other text included imparts some context to the example.

Table 1

Cognitive Based Speech Categories Used to Code the Transcripts of the Teacher and Student Conversations During the Writing Section of a Reading Recovery Lesson

Category	Description	Examples
Teacher Directed (TD)	Regulatory types of speech, which are used by the teacher to take control of a situation and/or to direct the child’s attention specifically.	<p>Cassandra: <i>Grab yourself a marker.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Darcy: <i>Here. Let . . . no. No, no, no-no-no. Let me erase it this way, okay?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Jan: <i>Go and do it again . . . You can erase it and then come back and we’ll put it in your story.</i></p>
Signal Words (SW)	Words used by the teacher to prime the child’s attention to the next part of the task or to redirect the child’s focus back onto a task.	<p>Darcy: <i>So, what comes next?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Lydia: <i>What a wonderful sentence. Okay. And I’m going to get you to pick a marker.</i></p> <p>Marianne: <i>(She selects a marker.)</i></p> <p>Lydia: <i>Now . . . before we begin . . . Chippy-ch, ch. What do you think that would start with?</i></p>
Level 1: General Verbal Intervention	The teacher’s statements encourage the child’s responding in some way, but no specific strategy is suggested. Least amount of help.	<p>Darcy: <i>Check your word again up here.</i></p> <p>Colin: <i>Cuh- (he stops)</i></p> <p>Darcy: <i>What did you notice?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Marc: <i>The dog! (He’s smiling.)</i></p> <p>Jan: <i>Yeah? Tell me some more about that.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Colin: <i>(writes a reversed lowercase ‘n’.)</i></p> <p>Darcy: <i>Uh. Just a . . . just a minute.</i></p>

<p>Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention</p>	<p>These statements specify what the child should do next by pointing out a specific feature of the task that is needed for the child to continue solving, or reminds the child to use a strategy over which s/he has control.</p>	<p>Lydia (helping Marianne write a word): <i>What's the next sound?</i> * * * Jan: Are we going to write about the bike rodeo, you were telling me? . . . <i>What do you want to tell me about that?</i> * * * Lydia: <i>You say the word "shirt".</i> Marianne: Shirrrr - t.</p>
<p>Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with Non- Verbal Indicator(s)</p>	<p>Used to draw a student's attention to a specific error, the teacher offers a verbal clue and also provides a non-verbal hint that is either tonal (the teacher's slow enunciation and/or stress on certain letter sounds) and/or physical (drawing a Sound Box frame/pushing in counters or using a finger to indicate individual sound boxes).</p>	<p>Darcy: <i>Goldeyes. Why don't we make some boxes for that one (she draws sound boxes on the top page). Let's try Gold first.</i> Colin: gguh . . lll . . . lll (He writes in g, l, l, in the first three boxes.) Darcy: <i>What did you hear in here? G. . ooooooooo . . . lll . . d. (As she enunciates the sounds, she points to each box in turn.)</i> Colin: Go . . o (gasps). O!</p>

<p>Level 4: Prepares for Next Action</p>	<p>At this level, the teacher initiates the solving process for the child, possibly offering the child two alternatives from which to choose: “Is it ___ or ___?”. Talk at this level includes closed-ended or restrictive types of questions to which a limited number of responses can be given.</p>	<p>Darcy: (Colin’s writing is unclear) <i>Now what is that? An ‘o’ or an ‘a’?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Lydia: <i>What do we put at the ‘back door’ of our sentence? (The child then drew in a period.)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Cassandra: Why don’t you tell me all about when Ace Burpee came? <i>What story did he read you?</i></p>
<p>Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action</p>	<p>The teacher takes complete control over the action by demonstrating the next step for the child with or without narration of the strategy.</p>	<p>Lydia: <i>We’re just going to switch those two, right? The K comes first. “Like”. (She puts white cover tape over the last two letters and Marianne fixes them.)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Darcy: (The child has written cacha/catch.) Say that.</p> <p>Colin: Caaaa-ch.</p> <p>Darcy: Do you hear anything in the last box? (she points to it.)</p> <p>Colin: (Shakes his head ‘no’.)</p> <p>Darcy: (She draws an X in dark marker over the letter in the last box.) <i>So let’s take that one out.</i></p>

Table 2

Affective Based Speech Categories Used to Code the Transcripts of the Teacher and Student Conversations during the Writing Section of a Reading Recovery Lesson

Category	Description	Examples
<p>General Verbal Praise (GVP)</p>	<p>Unspecific, positive feedback made in relation to the child’s cognitive based action.</p>	<p>Marianne (reading her story): I like the computer . . . I like the library. Lydia: Oh, let’s look at that again. Marianne (correcting herself): I like - the - books in the library. Lydia: <i>Exactly.</i> * * * Marc: (he is putting together his cut up story) Tooth. ‘tuh’, ‘tuh’. Tooth . . . It’s right here. Jan: <i>Mmm-hmm.</i></p>
<p>Specific Verbal Praise (SPV)</p>	<p>Specific, positive feedback made in relation to the child’s action (i.e., reinforcing the child’s correct or partially correct responses by repeating them; brief reiteration of the effective solving the child has done.)</p>	<p>Jan: ‘Cute.’ What else do you hear? C-uuu-te. Marc: ‘tuh’. T. Jan: <i>You hear a T.</i> * * * James:(writes ‘bump’.) Cassandra: Oh! Good job! <i>There’s another word that you know that I didn’t know you knew!</i></p>

<p>Verbal Emotional (Nurturing forms of talk) (VEmo)</p>	<p>Using sympathy or empathy to help students maintain motivation; using terms of endearment; acknowledging the difficulty of a task; using humour.</p>	<p>Darcy: (The child is working on writing ‘eyes’) <i>You know what? I’m gonna give you that one. That’s a tricky one!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Jan: What’s hard about that word? (The child is working on the word ‘licked’.)</p> <p>Marc: That there’s a C and [[a K.]]</p> <p>Jan: <i>[[It’s kind]] of cool that there’s both!</i></p>
<p>Vocal Changes (VoC)^a</p>	<p>Includes changes in tone, pitch, and vocal accents to indicate excitement, surprise, pleasure, or suspense. Also includes the laughs, gasps/sighs, and whispers made by the teacher. Such prosodic elements of the teacher’s speech serve to acknowledge a child’s problem solving attempts (whether right or wrong) and to encourage a child’s further engagement with the task at hand.</p>	<p>Colin: I didn’t get any candy that was flying through the air (he frowns).</p> <p>Darcy: <i>(She gasps softly)</i></p> <p>Colin: (giggles)</p> <p>Darcy: <i>(She laughs.)</i> I like that flying through the air part.</p>

^a Although the prosodic fluctuations of the teachers’ speech have been indicated in the transcripts as *Vocal Changes* (VoC), they have not been included in the final tables of affective-based speech. This study was specifically concerned with examining the things that teachers *said* to promote their students’ continued activity on a task, not necessarily on how those messages were conveyed.

Table 3

Timing Categories Used to Code the Transcripts of the Teacher and Student Conversations during the Writing Section of a Reading Recovery Lesson

Category	Description	Examples
Wait Time	Measured in seconds, an interval of time and space that a teacher purposely provides so that the child may act upon a problem. Two types of purposeful Wait Time were differentiated in this study: <i>Tussle Times</i> and <i>Pointed Pausing</i> . Wait Times are denoted by a series of ellipses (with one ellipsis equaling one second) or are written in words.	
Tussle Time (TT)	A span of time (2 seconds or more) in which the teacher remains silent as the student acts upon the problem to be solved.	<p>Darcy: So can you check your story one more time?</p> <p>Colin: (<i>11 seconds elapse as he reads his story from his writing book</i>): I . . didn't . . . catch any . . candy . . flying . . through the air. (He adds a period.)</p>
Pointed Pausing (PP)	After giving a prompt/making a statement, this is a span of time (2 seconds or more) in which the teacher remains pointedly silent, allowing the child time to process her request or the new information.	<p>Marc: (Marc writes bog/dog.)</p> <p>Jan: So you're saying d-og but do you know what you actually put there? . . (pointing at the 'b')</p> <p>Marc: Oh!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>Darcy: Should we try candy up here? Candy . . . caaannnndeeee.</p>

<p>Teacher Interruptions (TI)</p>	<p>An instance where the teacher immediately interrupts a child's talk or overlaps a child's talk with her own.</p> <p><i>Overlaps: [[(text)]]</i></p> <p><i>Interruptions: //</i></p>	<p>Jan: And - 'owwwt' - there's actually two sounds. What do you hear? (She draws two Sound Boxes on the top page.)</p> <p>Marc (gasps): Uh!//</p> <p>Jan: Say it.</p> <p>Marc: Only two!//</p> <p>Jan: Say it.</p> <p>Marc: Ow [[wwwww]]</p> <p>Jan: [[Owww -- t]]</p>
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Inter-rater Reliability

To check the reliability of the data, the assistance of a Reading Recovery teacher leader was enlisted to conduct an analysis by coding the data according to the classifications presented in Table 1. The Reading Recovery colleague was chosen specifically as she already had a working knowledge of this investigation's context and familiarity with the application of Wood's Levels in analyzing a teacher's talk. She was provided with a copy of the categories used and asked to code two different sets of transcripts according to the Cognitive and Affective Verbal prompts only. The categories for Timing were not included as it was felt that the conventions used in the typewritten transcripts accurately represented the number of seconds for pauses and occurrences of interruptions already. In addition, due to the protocols involved in gaining approval from the Ethics board no other person besides the Researcher and her advisor had been granted access to the actual audiotaped recordings. Thus it was not possible (nor practical) to have the colleague listen to the audio-recorded version of the two transcripts in order to identify each pause and to count the duration of each gap in seconds.

In total, the colleague coded 12 pages (four from one teacher's transcript and eight from another teacher's transcript) using the categories under the Cognitive and Affective headings. Initially the Teacher Leader was asked to code only the first page of each writing sub-task (The Conversation task, The Shared Writing task, and The Cut-Up Story task) of one teacher's transcript.

Examining the coding decisions made by the Teacher Leader on the first transcript both reassured the Researcher with regards to some of her early coding decisions, but also inspired further reflection and reclassification of other examples of which there remained some prior confusion. In response to the Researcher's aspirations for further diligence, the colleague kindly

agreed to the subsequent request to code a further eight pages from a second teacher's transcript. For the second transcript then, a total of 65 teacher statements were examined. Of those 65 statements, the Reading Recovery colleague and Researcher independently agreed on the classification of 36 of them, for a percentage of agreement total of 55.4 %. It is important to remember that there were 11 possible categories into which each idea unit could have been placed. With so many options and the subjective ruling principle of "best fit", variations of opinion were to be expected.

Where there existed discrepancies (in 29 statements), the Researcher re-examined the rationale for the initial decisions she made by consulting previous readings (specifically Wood, 2003, and Lose, 2007) and reanalyzing the data. Oftentimes it was a matter of re-evaluating into which category a contentious statement best fit. Thus, of those 29 discrepancies, the Researcher agreed with the categorization of a further 17, providing a final percentage of agreement total of 81.5%.

Summary of the Chapter

This study examines the cognitive and affective nature of the instructional conversations that occur between a teacher and child as they co-construct a story during the shared writing session of a Reading Recovery lesson. This fourth chapter clarifies the methodology used in carrying out the investigation. To begin with, a discussion of the procedures used to select participants, including some information and specific data about each teacher and her student was presented. Following this were explanations of the types of data collected and the various phases of analysis used to categorize the data. Lastly, a closer examination into how the Researcher determined the final categories was presented, along with a discussion of how inter-rater reliability was attained.

Chapter 5: Results

This study had two aims: to discern some of the communication types that emerge when teachers engage in didactic styles of conversation with their students, and to gain an appreciation of how these ultimately affect a student's strategic action on a literacy related task. It is only through a sensitive contemplation of the instructive patterns of our speech that we can recognize how our styles of interaction influence (positively or negatively) our students' approaches and attitudes towards learning.

This thesis was designed to examine the nature of the conversations that occurred as Reading Recovery teachers and students worked together to compose a brief message during the 10-11 minute writing session of a Reading Recovery lesson. Of particular interest were the specific types of cognitive and affective-based mediations used by teachers to encourage their students' on-going problem solving efforts during the writing sessions. Each writing session was comprised of three main activities:

- The oral story-eliciting *conversation* that takes place between teacher and student at the start of the writing session.
- The *shared writing* phase in which teacher and student inscribe the story ideas into a complete sentence format.
- The *cut-up story* task in which the teacher records the child's completed message onto a paper strip, which is then cut up word by word. The child rearranges the cards back into his or her original sentence.

To organize this investigation, the conversations that arose between four Reading Recovery teachers and their respective students as they constructed a short message together were firstly recorded and transcribed. All of the teachers' verbal communiqués and specific

nonverbal interactions were then analyzed according to the categories presented in Tables 1 through 3. To get a sense of which communicative prompts and pauses were predominantly used by teachers, Tables 4 through 12 identify the types of talk and timing cues used in accordance with each of the three main activities of the writing session. The findings are thus presented in the order in which these three tasks were completed, with data obtained from the collaborative conversations presented first.

Task 1: The Story-Eliciting Conversations

Tables 4 through 6 specifically present the findings showing the types of talk and timing cues that were used by the teachers during the *Story Conversation* tasks. It was during this stage of the writing session that the teacher and student orally elaborated upon particular ideas in order to devise a specific message for writing. Included after the presentation of the tables and specific examples is one transcript analysis demonstrating how the teacher's talk fostered her student's involvement particularly during this task.

Cognitive Talk Used During the Story Conversations

Table 4 shows evidence of both leveled and non-leveled types of cognitive talk. As previously described in the third chapter, Table 1 describes each of the five levels of verbal intervention as established by Wood (2003). These types of teacher-talk are used to directly propel children's attention towards carrying out a strategic action in an effort to solve a problem.

In addition to the leveled prompts, two other types of cognitive-based but non-leveled talk (*Teacher Directed* comments and *Signal Words*) were determined. *Teacher Directed* comments often appeared as very short but complete sentences in the transcripts, and maintained a somewhat authoritarian tone as they were frequently used to direct the child's attention in a specific manner. *Signal Words* arose as a single word or very brief phrase and functioned more

as a linguistic gateway, shifting the child's attention towards a different aspect of a task. Because the teacher typically employed these two types of speech within the context of any given leveled prompt, they were subsequently classified as a cognitive-based type of communication that supported the conveyance of the leveled prompt.

Table 4 presents the frequency with which teachers used the various types of cognitive-based talk during the Story Conversation tasks. Illustrating these findings are some examples from the transcripts that exemplify the nature of the talk.

Leveled cognitive talk used during the story conversation tasks.

Overall, the leveled types of cognitive-based talk used during the story-eliciting conversations tended to include a large number of comments that strongly steered students' recollections of a specific event. Out of 142 cognitive prompts counted during the collaborative story discussions, interventions at a Level 4: Prepares for Next Action occurred 28.9% of the time, making it the predominant level of support used during this task. Talk of this nature included restrictive questioning procedures from which the child could typically provide only a limited number of answers. As noted in the following excerpt, in each of her talk-turns, Darcy poses a Level 4 type question (italicized) that strongly influences her student Colin's oral contributions to the discussion:

1. **Colin:** I'm going to the Goldeyes tonight!
2. **Darcy:** *Did you get some free tickets?*
3. **Colin:** My big brother did!
4. **Darcy:** *And is baseball a favourite game of his?*
5. **Colin:** He likes Goldeyes.

Table 4

Cognitive Talk Used by Teachers during the Story Conversation Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Level 1: General verbal intervention	3	11.5	2	4.2	1	2.5	2	7.1	8	5.6
Level 2: Specific verbal intervention	6	23.1	15	31.3	8	20	5	17.9	34	23.9
Level 3: Specific verbal intervention with nonverbal indicator(s)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Level 4: Prepares for next action	11	42.3	6	12.5	14	35.0	10	35.7	41	28.9
Level 5: Demonstrates action	1	3.8	8	16.7	7	17.5	0	0.0	16	11.3
Teacher Directed	2	7.7	7	14.6	3	7.5	9	32.1	21	14.8
Signal Words	3	11.5	10	20.8	7	17.5	2	7.1	22	15.5
TOTAL	26	99.9^a	48	100.1	40	100.0	28	99.9	142	100.0

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts.

6. **Darcy:** *Have you seen a game before?*
7. **Colin:** No.
8. **Darcy:** *And who all is going?*
9. **Colin:** My mom, my little brother, and me, and Aiden.

The second most commonly used level of support overall, making up 23.9% of all teachers' cognitive talk, were comments that acted as *Level 2: Specific Verbal Interventions*. During the story conversations, these were the types of talk that "kept the problem-solving action moving forward [by reminding] the child of what he knows that could be helpful" (Lose, 2007, p. 18). Jan's italicized Level 2 comments during her story conversations with her student Marc, for example, often arose as specific reminders regarding previously experienced events:

1. **Jan:** *Now we talked about two things in writing.* We talked about Jason's birthday party on Saturday.
2. **Marc:** Oh yeah.
3. **Jan:** *And, what else did we talk about? (In a tone of exaggerated excitement.)*
4. **Marc:** Um – my tooth [[fell out.]]
5. **Jan** (overlapping him): [[Your tooth fell out!]] *So what were the things you were telling me about your tooth? . .*
6. **Marc:** That my tooth fell out while I was eating something? (His tone rises at the end of his sentence.)
7. **Jan:** What were you eating?
8. **Marc:** Um, some chips?
9. **Jan:** Okay, *so how are we going to put that in a sentence? . .*
10. **Marc:** My tooth fell out while I were (*sic*) eating my chips.

Since Marc had already experienced these events, what was needed now was just a brief comment from his teacher to stimulate his memories of them. While Level 2 types of questions focused children's attention towards a specific topic, they were not as closed-ended as Level 4 prompts. Students still maintained greater leeway in deciding what details to include.

Comprising 11.3% of the cognitive talk applied in this sub-task, the third most used type of leveled speech overall were comments offering students the highest degree of support, *Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action*. During the story conversations, teachers' Level 5 comments (italicized in the following examples) tended to be offered as highly descriptive recounts of past experiences as noted in Cassandra and James' conversation below:

1. **Cassandra:** What can we say about Baby Bear?
2. **James:** Um, I . . . um, Ba- Oh, I like the car one! Um, Bay- Bear-
3. **Cassandra:** *His blue car?*
4. **James:** Yeah.
5. **Cassandra:** *Ohhhh, and he went to the store and he got his blue car?*
6. **James:** Yeah.

In Turn 2 James attempts to recap a favourite part from the story *Baby Bear's Present* (Randall, 1995) but falters a little in his recollections. By specifically naming the colour of car Baby Bear was given in the story in Turn 3, Cassandra efficiently feeds in a distinct story detail that helps anchor James' attention. She uses this level of support again in the fifth turn when she identifies other key points from the story.

The combination of these highly supportive comments seems to be enough to get James' thinking underway in a more focused manner. Having been fed in some key information, Cassandra now pulls back her support in Turn 7 (below). Dropping to a *Level 4: Prepares for*

Next Action, she invites James to consider the final wording of his message based on these key ideas. Having been amply “prepared for whatever is next in that specific solving process” (Lose, 2007, p. 19), James is eventually able to craft the final wording of his message with greater precision in the final turn:

7. **Cassandra:** Okay, what can we say about that?
8. **James:** Um, Baby Bear got a blue new car.

Teachers also used Level 5 interventions to model syntactically correct versions of their students’ messages during the story conversation tasks. In the following example, Marc and Jan discuss how Marc’s tooth fell out. To draw attention to the usage of appropriate language structures, Jan repeats Marc’s story with one small grammatical alteration:

1. **Jan:** So how are we going to put that into a sentence? . .
2. **Marc:** My tooth fell out while I were eating my chips.
3. **Jan:** *My tooth fell out while I was eating my chips?*
4. **Marc:** Mmm-hmm.

Jan’s clarification in the third turn thus spruces up Marc’s sentence into a more syntactically conventional form that is used to guide all subsequent writing activities.

Instances in which teachers used unspecific words or phrases to encourage the child’s recollections, were used minimally during the story eliciting conversations. *Level 1: General Verbal Interventions* were primarily used to keep the momentum of ideas flowing and were typically the “Tell me more” type comments that often arose whenever students’ contributions came to a standstill:

1. **Colin:** I got the . . the best seats in the . . in the . . ‘cause I was in the . . I was at the very bottom so I got to see the whole game.

2. **Darcy:** Really close? Wow! Is that the part you want to write about?
3. **Colin:** No.
4. **Darcy:** No? *Tell me more.*

Jan also used similar comments to urge on her student's commentary:

1. **Marc:** Ummm . . . can we write about the cat?
2. **Jan:** Oh, you want to write about the cat and the dog? Okay. What do you want to tell me about that?
3. **Marc** (smiling): The dog!
4. **Jan:** *Yeah?*
5. **Marc:** It was so cute!

Non-leveled cognitive talk used during the story conversation tasks.

As previously mentioned, non-leveled instances of teachers' cognitive-based talk was tabulated under the Signal Words and Teacher Directed categories. These were the types of talk that supported teachers' conveyance of the leveled prompts—either directly adjusting the student's focus to a new part of the task by using Signal Words, or redirecting the child's attention back to the activity whenever his or her actions denoted more off-task behaviours using more regulatory Teacher Directed commands. Table 4 shows an almost equal representation of both kinds of speech (21 instances versus 22) used overall during the story conversations.

Illustrated in the example below, Lydia uses brief *Teacher Directed* comments in Turns 1 and 3 to specifically control her student's next moves—in this case, to read stories from their earlier writing sessions. In Turn 7 Lydia uses another *Teacher Directed* comment that essentially states to the child *what will be*—directly conveying her position that there is no room for the student's negotiation of the task at this point:

1. **Lydia:** *I'm going to get you to read the ones we've done.*
2. **Marianne:** I like the computer . . . I like the library.
3. **Lydia:** Exactly. *Read.*
4. **Marianne:** I like the monkey bars.
5. **Lydia:** Okay, *and now we're going to start//*
6. **Marianne** (interrupting): That one! (Marianne points to one of the photocopied picture sheets on the table.)
7. **Lydia:** *Well, that's our last page. Remember Mrs. ____ said there's one last one and I'm going to keep that for the end.*

Such regulatory talk was therefore used to adjust students' attention so that it remained directly (and expediently) focused on the task at hand—quite helpful when one remembers that only 1-2 minutes are allocated for the shared story conversations (see Figure 1).

Affective Talk Used During the Story Conversations

Table 5 shows the results obtained regarding the affective-based types of verbal communications used throughout the shared story conversations.

In addition to transcribing what teachers *said* during the course of their conversations, also recorded in the field notes were the more noticeable mannerisms and emotionally centered prosodic fluctuations (variations of tone and pitch) that concurrently arose within the teachers' speech. While Table 2 does list *Vocal Changes* (VoC) as one of the four affective-based communication categories, data from this category is not included in any of the task related affective-based talk tables (i.e., Tables 5, 8, and 11) as the intent of this study was to specifically examine the *talk*-types used by teachers to promote their students' continued engagement, not necessarily the *ways* in which the messages were conveyed. However, while teachers' *Vocal*

Changes are not included in the affective talk tables, specific examples (presented between parentheses) are included within the narrative examples that follow so as to provide a deeper sense of meaning to the actual words being spoken.

Surpassing all of the other types of affective communications used by the teachers during the story conversations, were 40 instances of *Verbal Emotional* talk, making up over half of all the affective based talk-types used during this activity. One possible reason for this may be due to the individualistic nature of the conversations themselves. As the child shares his or her private reflections or recaps a particularized experience, this type of personally reflective talk serves to ultimately expose his or her innermost emotions pertaining to the experience.

In the example that follows, Cassandra's *Verbal Emotional* comments and supportive gestures strongly focus and promote James' engagement as they orally construct his message. So far, James has based the first part of his sentence ("the baby lost her bunny.") On the Mo Willems' book *Knuffle bunny: A cautionary tale* (Willems, 2004). In Turn 1 Cassandra encourages him to elaborate using a *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention* that prompts the student's recollections of a specific event. In response, James attempts to provide a personally singular detail involving the local celebrity who had read this particular story to his class as part of "I Love to Read" week:

1. **Cassandra:** And then what happened?
2. **James:** Um. And Ace Burpee, um . . . um have me like . . . you know people that do (he then makes a hand gesture) together like . . .

Table 5

Affective Talk Used by the Teachers during the Story Conversation Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
General Verbal Praise	1	3.1	3	25.0	2	14.3	5	26.3	11	14.3
Specific Verbal Praise	11	34.4	2	16.7	5	35.7	8	42.1	26	33.8
Verbal Emotional	20	62.5	7	58.3	7	50.0	6	31.6	40	51.9
Total	32	100.0	12	100.0	14	100.0	19	100.0	77	100.0

Throughout the next part of their conversation, Cassandra and James negotiate the specific wording for the name of the gesture of greeting used by the celebrity, with Cassandra varying her support as necessary:

3. **Cassandra:** Did he give you a high-five?
4. **James:** The knuckle.
5. **Cassandra:** Oh, he gave you a fist-bump.
6. **James:** Yeah.

In Turn 3 Cassandra presents her student with a fairly restrictive Level 4 question that names the possible action but still requires the child to respond in some way. When James answers by identifying the particular body part used, Cassandra raises her support to Level 5, directly providing James with the appropriate vocabulary.

In the seventh turn, as Cassandra smilingly performs a “fist-bump” with her student, she also uses a *Verbal Emotional* comment that entrusts James with the final wording decision:

7. **Cassandra:** *A fist-bump? (She smiles as they do a fist-bump together.) Should we call it that?*
8. **James:** Yeah.

Darcy also used *Verbal Emotional* comments during the composing process to encourage her student Colin’s contributions. During one of their story conversations, Colin recounts his experiences at a baseball game that he attended the evening before. Tied up in Darcy’s *Verbal Emotional* comments (see italicized words) are also many instances of those expressive elements of speech (in parentheses)—the laughs, the soft gasps, and astonished tones—that typically characterized her emotionally communicative style:

1. **Colin:** I got the . . . the best seats in the . . . in the . . . 'cause I was in the . . . I was at the very bottom so I got to see the whole game.
2. **Darcy:** (She speaks in a hushed voice) Really close? *Wowwww!* Tell me more.
3. **Colin:** That I didn't get any candy that was flying through the air. (At this point, Colin's expression is a 'pretend frown' as he laments his lack of luck.)
4. **Darcy:** (gasps softly.)
5. **Colin:** (giggles)
6. **Darcy:** (in a astonished tone) Who was throwing candy?!
7. **Colin:** The girl, so kids can have chips and other stuff. And one time, the last bit, um, there was this side and this side (he indicates right and left with his hands), and she only threw it on **this** side.
8. **Darcy:** *Aw!*
9. **Colin:** This side **I** was on. And this side other people were on.
10. **Darcy:** *Aww no.* So that was sad? . . . Disappointing?
11. **Colin:** I never caught any of 'em.
12. **Darcy:** *Oh my!* . . . So is **that** the part you want to write about?
13. **Colin:** (nods his head yes).
14. **Darcy:** Okay, *let's do it!* . . . How are we gonna say that?
15. **Colin:** (in a slightly 'sad' sounding voice) I never got candy . . . I didn't get candy flying through the air.
16. **Darcy:** (Darcy laughs.) I like that 'flying through the air' part.

Through a thoughtful use of speech and actions during the story conversations, the teachers and their students thus become emotionally and linguistically entangled. Like the giggles, gestures, and sad expressions with which the boys accent their talk, both teachers' expressively charged

speech and actions also demonstrate their emotional engagement. As a result, a nurturing environment, one in which the student is encouraged to share his news and present story ideas with alacrity, is fostered.

The second most used type of affective based talk during the story eliciting conversations was speech indicative of a *Specific Verbal Praise* classification. At 33.8%, teachers' specific affirmations (italicized in the example that follows) tended to specifically reiterate the child's responses as a fitting story idea:

1. **Lydia:** What did we notice about your t-shirt and what's on your t-shirt?
2. **Marianne:** A squirrel.
3. **Lydia:** And where is it in the picture? . . .
4. **Marianne:** (**) (Garbled speech - but she indicates the picture on the wall.)
5. **Lydia:** Mmm-hmmm! *Right behind you!* What can we say?
6. **Marianne:** His name is Chippy!
7. **Lydia:** *He's Chippy . . .* Where is Chippy right now?
8. **Marianne:** Chippy is on my shirt.
9. **Lydia:** *"Chippy is on my shirt." What a wonderful sentence.*

Used least often out of the three affective types of talk during this task were *General Verbal Praise* comments. These were the unspecific forms of praise—the "Okay's", "Mmm-hmm's", and "Exactly!" types of speech—that endorsed the child's contributions in an overall manner:

1. **Cassandra:** So what are we going to say about Baby Bear and his blue car?
2. **James:** Um, Baby Bear got a new blue car.
3. **Cassandra:** *Okay.*

Timing Cues Used During the Story Conversations

In addition to presenting the types of verbal talk used by teachers during each sub-task of the writing section of their student's Reading Recovery lesson, also explored were those silent *Wait Times* (Clay, 2013; Rowe, 1972) and *Teacher Interruptions* that occurred as part of the instructive interactions. Table 6 presents the findings regarding the three types of timing cues used by teachers throughout the conversational sub-tasks: *Pointed Pauses*, *Tussle Times*, and *Teacher Interruptions*.

As previously defined in Table 3, the *Wait Times* that teachers used in their lessons were divided by the Researcher into two types: *Pointed Pauses* and *Tussle Times*. Similar to the manner in which the teacher's talk was dissected into its various components so as to determine the talk's intents as closely as possible, so too were the teachers' *Wait Times* analyzed in this way. As an interval of time (measured in seconds) that a teacher *purposely* provides so that the child may act upon a problem to be solved, the difference therein is more concerned with *at which point* during the conversations each wait time was offered—either within the teacher's talk-turn or during the child's processing phase. As noted in Table 6, *Pointed Pausing*, used 44.4% of the time, was the timing cue used more often by teachers during this activity. A third of the timing cues used were counted as *Tussle Times*, while teacher-led *interruptions* occurred least often, at 22.2%.

Table 6

Timing Cues Used by the Teachers during the Story Conversation Tasks

Type of Communication	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Tussle Time	2	22.2	4	18.2	8	50.0	7	43.8	21	33.3
Pointed Pauses	5	55.6	10	45.5	5	31.3	8	50.0	28	44.4
Teacher Interruptions	2	22.2	8	36.4	3	18.8	1	6.3	14	22.2
Totals	9	100.0	22	100.1 ^a	16	100.1	16	100.1	63	99.9

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts.

Pointed pauses.

Offered after the teacher gave a prompt or arising in between her successive prompts, *Pointed Pauses* were those spans of time in which the teacher remained intentionally silent, allowing the child time to process her request or to consider some new information just presented. One reason for the higher number of *Pointed Pauses* during this section of the writing sessions centers on the fact that it was during the story conversations where teachers typically took a more directive role, guiding students' deliberations with their specific questions. With this type of talk occurring during the teachers' talk-turns, the number of *Pointed Pauses* would increase as they waited for their students' responses. The two examples below show how teachers' *Pointed Pauses* either surfaced amid a series of prompts or arose at the end of their talk. (The Reader is reminded that each ellipsis point represents a second's duration.) Regardless of where the *Pointed Pauses* were noted to occur in the teacher's talk-turn, they always provided a reflective moment of time while maintaining a silent expectation that the child was to respond in some manner:

Example 1:

1. **Cassandra:** Are we going to continue with that story, or are we going to talk about, maybe, Ace Burpee today? . . . 'Cause that's exciting . . . Should we talk about Ace Burpee?
2. **James:** I wanna write about, um (He then points upwards to the whiteboard where there is a picture magnet of the character "Baby Bear". James is smiling widely.)

Example 2:

1. **Lydia:** What did you tell me about these animals? What did you say? . .
2. **Marianne:** Ummmmmm. I don't know. I can't remember.

Tussle times.

Tussle Times are described in Table 3 as a: “span of time in which the teacher remains silent as the student acts upon the problem to be solved”. Following is an example from Cassandra and James’ story-based conversation that illustrates the manner in which *Tussle Times* provided the student with both time and space in which to process and act upon the problem under consideration. In the extract that follows, the *Tussle Times* that occur within James’ talk-turn are shown as a sequence of ellipsis points, or reported as a combined total:

1. **James:** I wanna write about, um (He then points upwards to the whiteboard where there is a picture magnet of the character “Baby Bear”. James is smiling widely.)
2. **Cassandra:** Baby Bear? Okay, what can we say about Baby Bear?
3. **James:** Um, I . . um, Ba . . Oh, I like the car one! Um, Bay - Bear
4. **Cassandra:** Ohhhhh, and he went to the store and he got his blue car?
5. **James:** Yeah.
6. **Cassandra:** Okay, what can we say about that?
7. **James** (In a very animated and loud tone, James responds to Cassandra’s prompt almost immediately. As he speaks, he takes *approximately six seconds* to relate all his ideas):
Baby Bear went to the store, on the store, (here he takes a quick but notable breath) and then his, and then, th- the dad said, “Baby Bear, you should buy this train (**unintelligible).” And then he said, um, “The toy’s not for you Father Bear”. Oh and then, and then he says, “Oh!” and then Baby Bear - and then Baby Bear chooses a car and he rides home in it.

An animated talker, James’ speech is fast and garbled in places. He frequently stops and starts his retelling as new ideas come to mind. Rather than interrupting him with a prompt, Cassandra

quietly listens, patiently providing him with as much time as he needs (in this case, six seconds) in order to express the full range of his thinking.

Teacher interruptions.

In general, *Teacher Interruptions* during the student and teachers' story conversations remained the least used timing cue overall at 22.2%. Although counted together in all of the timing cues tables for each of the three sub-tasks, there were actually two kinds of interruptions distinguished in the data. These included *overlaps* (in which the symbols [[]] were used in the transcripts and are used in the examples contained within this thesis to distinguish at which points in the conversation a direct overlap of teacher and child's talk occurred), and *interruptions* (in which the symbols // are positioned after the speech of the person interrupted.) These latter types of interruptions were bestowed by one participant midway through the other speaker's talk, often with an accompanying sense of brusqueness. In the next section, two types of interruptions (*cooperative* and *turn-competitive*) are examined to determine the ways in which they helped or hindered a child's strategic action during the story conversation tasks.

Cooperative and turn-competitive interruptions. Of interest to this investigation are two kinds of interruptions identified by Bogetic (2009)—turn-competitive and cooperative. Although both teacher and child's interruptions have been recorded in the transcripts, only those made by the teachers have been examined with some depth. A highly pertinent area of investigation, this particular line of research lies beyond the scope of this study. It was felt, however, that in light of its potential significance, mention needed to be made concerning the resulting effects that the interruptions had on the conversational atmosphere of the teacher-student dyads. The findings presented in this and the subsequent sections are, therefore, specific only to the four teachers and students involved and are, in no way, intended to be generalizable to a larger population or even

noteworthy outside of this particular investigation. What follows are two examples from the transcripts highlighting the nature of these two types of interruptions.

During her pre-writing conversations with Colin, Darcy had only one instance of interruptive overlap occur in the first visit and another overlap in the second visit. In both situations, the overlaps she make do not appear to be competitive in nature—vying for the right to speak—but rather, as Bogetic (2009, p. 14) affirms, primarily “uttered to support the main speaker's point”. As seen in the following example, intermingled with her use of *Pointed Pauses* (refer to dotted sequences within Darcy’s talk-turns), Darcy’s overlapping comment in Turn 9 (“[[All right.]]”), while interrupting Colin’s talk-turn, is supportive of his final wording decision as Bogetic suggests:

1. **Darcy:** And instead of saying all those names and **liiii**, starting your story with I, how else could we say that?
2. **Colin:** (saying each word distinctly) We are going to the Goldeyes game today.
3. **Darcy:** Uh-huh. That would be one way. What about saying “My family”? . . .
4. **Colin:** (no response during her 3 seconds of Pointed Pausing)
5. **Darcy:** We’ve never done that before, have we? . .
6. **Colin:** (no response during her 2 seconds of Pointed Pausing)
7. **Darcy:** Would you prefer to say ‘We’?
8. **Colin:** [[Yeah.]] (He is also nodding.)
9. **Darcy** (overlapping child’s speech): [[*All right.*]] Well, let’s get started.

The child’s persistent silences in the fourth and sixth talk-turns indicate an apparent disinclination towards his teacher’s suggestion. This leads Darcy to eventually offer up an easier

alternative, which is simultaneously (if not fervently) approved by Colin and confirmed by Darcy in the last turn.

Whereas the example above illustrates the supportive nature an interruption can take, there does remain a *caveat* of which teachers need to be aware. In the next example, two interruptive responses are revealed. While the first interruption in Turn 3 can be interpreted as an example of the more emotionally empathetic verbal overlap, the other interruption in Turn 5 presents as an intrusive instance of teacher-led contemplation that ultimately disturbs the current “flow of interaction and alter[s] the ongoing conversational topic” (Bogetic, 2009, p. 14).

In the extract that follows, Jan and her student begin their story conversation constructively enough, discussing the loss of Marc’s tooth. Jan’s overlap in the third turn, although technically infringing on the child’s speech-turn, remains empathetically supportive of his leading comment. It is her casually emitted but presumably well-meant remark in the fifth turn however that notably diverts Marc’s attention away from what appears to be the start of a focused narration of events:

1. **Jan:** And, what else did we talk about?
2. **Marc:** Um - my tooth [[fell out.]]
3. **Jan (overlapping):** [[Your **tooth** fell out! (In a tone of exaggerated excitement.)]] //
4. **Marc (interrupts):** Well, this morning, while I was eating//
5. **Jan (interrupts):** Maybe that’s what we’re going to write about today, hey? ‘Cause that’s a pretty interesting thing happening to you, right? . . . Yes?
6. **Marc:** Usually they always fall out.
7. **Jan:** I know, but it doesn’t happen very often. It’s like, um - it doesn’t happen every day.
So how am I going to put that information in [[a sentence?]]

8. **Marc** (overlaps): [[Oh! I need. .]]
9. **Jan**: Oh that's right. We need a new book.

When remembering that this is a child with assumed attentional issues, such extraneously ill-timed talk becomes problematic. Overriding the child's relevant contributions with her own reflective musings in the fifth turn directly interferes with the child's active stance towards the task. Furthermore, in contradiction to its intended objectives, the teacher's commentary—imparted just as the child has begun to relate appropriate ideas—brings about an unhelpful shift in the child's thinking.

Clay (2005b) directly advises teachers in her guidebook for Reading Recovery teachers to “Be precise and consistent” (p. 7) when using instructive language with children. Indeed, she openly warns teachers that: “Teacher talk can easily create confusions” (p. 7). As noted by the previous example, the combination of excessive teacher-talk and the more contentious “turn-competitive” (Bogoetic, 2009) interruptions can adversely affect the child's participation in the writing tasks.

Transcript Analysis of One Teacher and Student's Story Conversation

Figure 2 presents one transcript from a child and teacher's shared Story Conversation. In Turn 1, as Darcy and Colin prepare to begin their writing session, she directly focuses his attention onto the Story Conversation task using the *Teacher Directed* (TD) comment “Now let's get to that story!” While her words are regulatory, their conveyance is softened by the excited tone (*Vocal Changes*—VoC) she uses.

Mirroring his teacher's animated mood, the child responds with enthusiasm, running over to his seat and smiling up at her in anticipation of sharing his news. At the outset of their conversation, the teacher demonstrates an empathetic regard for her student's experiences, using

the *Verbal Emotional* (VEmo) comment “I’m so excited to hear about your game!” before prompting him with a *Level 1: General Verbal Intervention* that “encourages responding in some way on the part of the child” (Lose, 2007, p. 18). When he merely answers with a happy sigh, Darcy lifts the level of her prompt in Turn 5, offering a slightly more specific *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention* by asking “What happened?” The increased level of her scaffold serves to re-direct the student’s attention back towards the particular event thus encouraging him to communicate his ideas in a more explicit manner.

Figure 2. Supporting the child’s oral contributions during the story conversation task in one Reading Recovery writing session.

Turn	Wait Time (seconds)	Type of Help	Teacher: Dialogue and Actions	Child: Dialogue and Actions
1		TD VoC	Now let’s get to that story! (spoken in an excited tone)	
2				(The child runs over to the working table. He has a slight smile on his face as he takes his seat.)
3	2PP	VEmo 1	I’m so excited to hear about your game! . . Tell me.	
4				Uhhhhh (He makes a happy, sort of sigh-like noise.)
5		VoC 2	(She laughs) What happened?	
6				At the beginning of the ga[[me]]
7		TI 1	(overlapping his speech) [[uh-huh]]	
8				When you first come in, there’s these rocks and they’re shaped like baseballs. (The child uses his hands to add emphasis to his story; he smiles

				during his recollections; makes intermittent eye contact with the teacher.)
9		VEmo VoC	Really? (She uses a tone of surprise; looks directly at Colin as he speaks; smiles as he relates his experiences.)	
10				(He laughs out loud.)
11		SVP VEmo VoC 4	Right at the entrance! Oh my goodness! (Excited tone) Do they even have the lines on them?	
12				(giggling) Yes!
13		VEmo (VoC) 5 2	Wow! (Excited tone) So that was the first thing you saw. What happened next?	
14	8TT			I got the . . . the best seats in the . . . in the . . . 'cause I was in the . . . I was at the very bottom so I got to see the whole game.
15		SVP VoC VEmo 4	Really close? (In a hushed voice) Wowwww! Is that the part you want to write about?	
16				No.
17		SVP 1	No? Tell me more.	
18				That I didn't get any candy that was flying through the air. (Child does a pretend frown as he talks and he makes his voice sound somewhat petulant.)
19		VoC	(Teacher gasps softly.)	
20				(Child giggles.)

As Colin begins to relate his experiences of the evening before, Darcy overlaps (*Teacher Interruption: TI*) part of his speech with a *Level 1* utterance that, while interjectory, does validate his contributions while signaling him to continue. Spurred on in this manner, the child continues his recount using gestures to add emphasis to his words and smiling at his teacher as he speaks. In Turn 11, Darcy's *Specific Verbal Praise (SVP)*, "Right at the entrance!", endorses the child's previous comment about the positioning of the baseball shaped rocks. She then poses a *Level 4: Prepares for Next Action* question that particularizes the details even further: "Do they even have lines on them?". Her question though still requires the child to determine the final, albeit closed-ended, answer.

In Turn 13, after Darcy enthusiastically acknowledges Colin's previous response with an emphatic "Wow!", she summarizes the first part of their exchange with a *Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action* comment: "So that was the first thing you saw". To turn Colin's attention towards the next part of his story, Darcy imparts a *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention* asking "What happened next?".

In Turn 14, as Colin recounts his experiences of the evening before, Darcy provides him with approximately eight seconds of Tussle Time in which she is observed to remain silent as he speaks.

In Turn 15 Darcy poses a closed-ended Level 4 question, asking Colin if this is the part of the story he wishes to record. Specifically confirming (SVP) the child's decision in Turn 17 ("No?"), Darcy then uses a Level 1 prompt that indiscriminately turns the floor back over to the child ("Tell me more."). Empowering the child thusly, Darcy facilitates Colin's communication of the most significant part of his experience ("That I didn't get any candy that was flying through the air."), complete with a forlorn expression and matching tone. Mirroring the child's

emotive stance, Darcy's soft gasp (another affective based *Vocal Change*) imparts sympathetic appreciation for the child's misfortune.

In being "guided by all you know about the child" (Clay, 2005b, p. 55), a teacher cannot help but arrange instruction that matches her student's needs. In the "genuine but short conversation" (p. 55) noted above, Darcy and Colin achieve their main task objective of devising a short message for writing; but equally important is the manner in which the teacher generates the end product. With her thoughtful use of her talk and timing cues, Darcy effectively arranges her instructive climate so that it also promotes the child's emotional engagement.

Task 2: The Shared Writing Task

This section examines the types of talk and timing cues used by the teachers during the Shared Writing task. Presented first is a general discussion that identifies the types of cognitive talk that were used with more frequency during this task. Of particular interest in this section are the prompts categorized as *Level 3: Specific Verbal Interventions with Nonverbal Indicators* that teachers used. Examined next are the types of affective communications used by the teachers followed by a discussion concerning teachers' use of the timing cues. Concluding this section is a transcript analysis of one teacher and student's conversation showing the ways in which the teacher used her various communicative prompts and timing cues to encourage the student's strategic action during the Shared Writing task.

Cognitive Talk Used During the Shared Writing Tasks

Table 7 presents the results that were obtained after analyzing the teachers' cognitive talk during the Shared Writing tasks.

Table 7

Cognitive Talk Used by the Teachers during the Shared Writing Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Level 1: General verbal intervention	15	11.0	17	5.6	16	10.7	5	4.3	53	7.5
Level 2: Specific verbal intervention	32	23.5	58	19.1	31	20.7	21	17.9	142	20.1
Level 3: Specific verbal intervention with nonverbal indicator(s)	8	5.9	47	15.5	10	6.7	21	17.9	86	12.2
Level 4: Prepares for next action	15	11.0	28	9.2	29	19.3	22	18.8	94	13.3
Level 5: Demonstrates action	16	11.8	30	9.9	11	7.3	13	11.1	70	9.9
Teacher Directed	23	16.9	61	20.1	28	18.7	15	12.8	127	18.0
Signal Words	27	19.9	62	20.5	25	16.7	20	17.1	134	19.0
TOTAL	136	100.0	303	99.9 ^a	150	100.1	117	99.9	706	100.0

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts.

Leveled cognitive talk used during the shared writing task.

Of all the instances of leveled speech used, the type used most often during the Shared Writing task were teacher comments categorized as a *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention*. Used 20.1% overall, these verbal reminders specified the next aspect of the task to be solved or hinted at a particular strategy to use. Verbal interventions at the second level did not teach or show the child how to do something new but rather directed him or her to “search actively his or her known repertoire for a solution” (Lose, 2007, p. 18).

The second most used type of leveled talk included comments characteristic of *Level 4: Prepares for Next Action*. As previously exemplified in the Story Conversation tasks, Level 4 prompts were those fairly closed-ended types of questions that presented a reduced number of options from which the child could choose. Although the support offered at the fourth level strongly guides the child towards the correct response, the teacher does not actually perform the final action. This is left up to the child, thus ensuring his or her continued action with the task.

Used third most often overall and making their first appearance during the Shared Writing tasks, *Level 3* prompts offered the child both a verbal clue and a nonverbal indicator. The higher occurrences of Level 3 talk during this task likely arise because of the specific encoding objectives inherent within the shared writing activities. To assist students’ hearing and recording the sounds in the words they wanted to write, the most typical nonverbal supports teachers used were explicit oral enunciations of the more problematic segments within the words, and/or penciling in the appropriate number of Sound Boxes (Elkonin Boxes) on the top page of the child’s writing book to provide a visual framework of the word being worked upon. However as will be noted later on, the nonverbal aspect of a Level 3 support could take on other forms.

Level 3 interventions in the shared writing task. The third most used level of talk during the Shared Writing tasks was *Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with Nonverbal Indicator(s)*. Level 3 interventions were used more often during the Shared Writing tasks than in the other two sections (i.e., Story Conversation and Cut-Up Story task) of the writing sessions. This is not surprising when one considers that this type of prompt was typically used in relation to helping the child map the appropriate letters onto the sounds they could discern in a word. Level 3 prompts that offered both a specific verbal hint and a nonverbal cue typically occurred when teachers:

- Enunciated certain parts of a word for students and/or
- Drew Sound Boxes in order to provide a visual framework of the word in question.

In Lydia's case, however, to help Marianne with the positioning of words on the page, a penny was used as the nonverbal indicator, guiding the child's attempts to leave an appropriately sized space in between her words. After verbally directing Marianne where to place the penny, Lydia then encourages the child to use it as necessary:

Lydia: *And then use your - put a spacer right here (Lydia indicates where to place the penny by pointing but gets Marianne to actually perform the task.)*

When scaffolding the child's action with a Level 3 intervention, the nonverbal cue supplied by the teacher provides the child with a frame of reference that focuses attention towards what specifically needs to be done in order to problem solve. At Level 3 therefore, "the teacher has begun to solve the problem for the child" (Lose, 2007, p. 18). As will be observed in the examples that follow, similar language and actions were used when employing the Level 3 prompts, but depending on an individual child's understandings, teachers' varied in how much or how little nonverbal hinting was jointly provided.

In the example below, Jan simply states the word to be solved in Turn 3, with no extra stress on any of the sounds within. She also draws in the appropriate number of boxes needed to show Marc how many distinct sounds are within the word “tooth”. Believing that Marc has dealt with this exact word before, she adjusts her Level 3 support accordingly:

1. **Jan:** Now we have had “tooth” before. I’m wondering if you remember.
2. **Marc:** Mmm. I don’t remember that.
3. **Jan:** Well let’s do it in a box, okay then? (*Jan draws three sound boxes on the top page of Marc’s writing book.*) “Tooth” has three sounds. What do you hear?
4. **Marc:** Tuh, tuh . . O. Starts like - toooo.
5. **Jan:** Sure. So what do you hear?
6. **Marc:** (*He writes in the T and an O in the first two boxes.*)

Jan’s Level 3 support in the third turn is ‘just enough’ to get Marc started in a successful manner. Although this level of support is stronger, the child is still encouraged to shoulder a significant portion of the responsibility performing whatever part of the task he can. With her drawing of the three boxes, Jan visually directs Marc’s attention to the number of sounds within the word (t/oo/th) but she leaves the articulation process up to him. Marc confidently says the word, recording the first two sounds in the appropriate boxes.

In Turn 7 Jan uses another Level 3 intervention, slowly articulating the word “tooth” and adding extra emphasis on the final digraph he needs to solve:

7. **Jan:** *Tooooo - th. ‘Th’. What makes that ‘th’ sound?*
8. **Marc:** (*On his top page, he independently writes in both the T and the H inside the last Sound Box.*)

With his teacher's explicit emphasis, Marc's attention is specifically focused on that final "th". He confidently records the T and the H, correctly placing them together inside the third sound box.

In Cassandra's case, James was nearing the end of his series of lessons and was already quite adept at hearing and recording the sounds he heard in words without the use of the boxes as a visual scaffold. For the most part, all that was needed for his Level 3 support was his teacher's specific enunciations of the more difficult sounds within the word:

1. **Cassandra:** *New. Listen to the end. Newwwwuh. What do you hear?* (No Sound Boxes are drawn.)
2. **James:** (He writes in the final 'W')

In the following example from Darcy's lesson, her student Colin is provided with a more explicit application of both his teacher's specific articulations and a box frame showing the number of sounds within the word "candy":

1. **Darcy:** *Candy. . . caaaannndeeeee* (As she slowly articulates the word, Darcy draws five Sound Boxes on the top page of Colin's writing book).
2. **Colin** (in a slow whisper): *Ca-annn . . . d . . eee.* (As he sounds out the word, he records one sound per box writing them as "cande"/candy.)

With the focus at this point on helping the child identify the *sounds* within the word, Colin, in this regard, achieves a measure of success with his writing of "cande".

Non-leveled cognitive talk used during the shared writing tasks.

Although not considered along the same lines as the leveled prompts that more actively supported the child's next strategic action, non-leveled cognitive language like Signal Words

tended to behave more as a linguistic gateway—vocally indicating the end of one task and the start of another.

In the extract that follows, Darcy’s highly supportive (i.e., Level 5) intervention (“You know that ‘h’ can go just as tall as the ‘t’.”) precisely informs Colin *how* he needs to repair the second letter in “the”:

Darcy: You know that ‘h’ can go just as tall as the ‘t’. *Okay*. “Goldeyes”. . . . Would you like to try “Goldeyes” up here?

The adjacent *Signal Word* (“Okay”), as singular as it is, packs an influential ‘punch’: it serves to not only mark the end of the first utterance and activity, but indicates that a new undertaking (in this case writing a new word) is forthcoming. Thus the “Okay” used by Darcy efficiently *primes* the child’s attention to receive her next prompt: ““Goldeyes”. . . . Would you like to try “Goldeyes” up here?”

Another excerpt taken from the same Shared Writing task again illustrates the kinds of words Darcy uses to shift her child’s mindset towards the next challenge. In the third turn below, Darcy praises Colin for his work on writing the word “game”. She then uses two *Signal Words* (“Okay” and “So”) which seem to work concurrently to intensify the effect in adjusting the child’s attention: the first word closes the affective based event while the second one refocuses Colin’s attention back into a cognitive frame of mind, readying him for the potential rigors of the next task:

1. **Darcy:** Where does that ‘e’ have to go?
2. **Colin:** (He writes in the final ‘e’ at the end of the word.)

3. **Darcy:** Wow! You looked at it and you listened for all the sounds and look what you did?! . . . You made that word look just like it is in the book! Good for you. *Okay. So, what comes next?* (She rereads his story so far:) We are going to the Goldeyes game . . .
4. **Colin:** Today! (He says this with some enthusiasm.)

Also considered as a non-leveled type of cognitively focused speech, *Teacher Directed* statements spurred on the child's momentum during a task. *Teacher Directed* statements overall were typically brief and definitive, briskly pushing the pace of the lesson forward as noted in the following examples:

- Try [that word] up top first.
- Erase it. Come and put it in your story.
- Go and write it on the board.
- Stop for a minute.

Teacher Directed comments were also used to reroute a child's attention back onto task as noted in the following example between Cassandra and James (who often got distracted by the smaller details) below:

1. **Cassandra:** What's wrong?
2. **James:** There's some . . . There's a . . . paper clip in my way.
3. **Cassandra:** *Just brush it off.* . 'Kay. *Finish. Practice bunny.*

Thus, while a number of purposes for *Teacher Directed* comments exist, they all maintained particular features of being necessarily brief, somewhat brusque in tone, but effective in preserving the pace of the lesson—quite necessary when remembering there are time limits involved in all parts of a Reading Recovery lesson.

In the next section, the types of affective talk used by the four teachers during the shared writing tasks are examined.

Affective Talk Used During the Shared Writing Tasks

Table 8 displays the findings regarding the types of affective talk teachers typically used to help their students record their messages during the Shared Writing tasks.

Overall teachers tended to use more instances of *General Verbal Praise* than any other type of affective based speech during the shared writing tasks. These were the “Hmm-mmm’s”, the “Okay’s”, or the “Of course” types of expressions used to validate the child’s strategic action after he or she solved words in writing.

Specific verbal praise.

Specific Verbal Praise comments made up approximately a quarter of all affirmations used by the four teachers. While the *Specific Verbal* acclamations teachers offered varied in focal point and in language used, they all served to attend to particular aspects of the child’s solving. During the Shared Writing tasks, teachers used *Specific Verbal Praise* to endorse children’s contributions by: recapping some of the key steps the child used in solving, identifying the child’s appropriate answers, confirming a correct response by repeating it, and acknowledging the leading edge of students’ partially correct contributions.

Recapping key steps taken in solving. In the following example, Darcy helps Colin with the word “game”. The steps leading to his success are later reiterated as part of her *Specific Verbal Praise* for his actions.

While Colin is able to independently hear and record the specific sounds within the word “game”, he neglects to add the ‘silent e’ at the end. In Turns 2 and 4 Darcy offers him Level 2 prompts that attempt to jog his memory of how the word *looks*:

Table 8

Affective Talk Used by the Teachers during the Shared Writing Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
General Verbal Praise	22	40.7	48	47.1	44	50.6	31	53.4	145	48.2
Specific Verbal Praise	18	33.3	29	28.4	14	16.1	17	29.3	78	25.9
Verbal Emotional	14	25.9	25	24.5	29	33.3	10	17.2	78	25.9
Total	54	99.9 ^a	102	100.0	87	100.0	58	99.9	301	100.0

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts

1. **Colin** (sounding out): Guh - ayyy. Ayyymmm. (He writes “gam” on his top page.)
2. **Darcy**: Check it again. [[“Game.”]]
3. **Colin** (overlapping): [[Gaayymme.]]
4. **Darcy**: Is that what it looked like? . . . Check that word again. “Game” . . .
5. **Colin**: Guh - ayyyyy - **mmmm**. Muh - uh - uh.

In Turn 6, using *General Verbal Praise* (“Yeah.”), Darcy confirms Colin’s sound analysis of the fifth turn. She then becomes even more particular in her commentary, offering Colin a *Specific Verbal Praise* for “all the sounds you hear”, before tagging on a Level 4 support designed to help him identify the missing letter:

6. **Darcy**: Yeah. *Those are all the sounds you hear* but when you look at it, does it look right? . . . What’s missing?
7. **Colin**: An E?
8. **Darcy**: Where does that E have to go?
9. **Colin**: (He writes in the final E at the end to make “game”.)

After the child successfully completes the word, Darcy’s *Specific Verbal Praise* (italicized in Turn 10 below) specifically recaps some of the key steps leading to his success:

10. **Darcy**: Wow! *You looked at it and you listened for all the sounds and look what you did! You made that word look just like it is in the book!* Good for you!

By fluctuating the level of her support, Darcy removes some of the barriers that impede Colin’s progress in solving the final “e” on “game”. As a result he remains directly involved in the task. Furthermore, by specifically confirming which parts of the child’s practice were productive, Colin is made particularly aware of how he was strategic. Darcy’s “positive feedback” (Johnston, 2012, p. 47) not only confirms the child’s status as a strategic learner, but

also creates a constructive memory of the learning event that can potentially be referenced in future endeavors to remind the child how he overcame obstacles to be successful. Lyons (2003) emphasizes the important role emotions play in determining to what children attend and how they remember an event. An inseparable part of the learning process, “emotion drives attention, and attention drives learning, problem solving, and remembering” (p. 73). Praise can be a powerful teaching tool, particularly when it is constructive and specific.

Specifying the child’s contributions. Teachers’ *Specific Verbal Praise* was also used to directly confirm independent aspects of a child’s solving. As Marc attempts to write the word “and” into one of his messages, he writes it as “ab” (skipping the middle letter and reversing the final “d”):

1. **Marc:** ‘Aaaaay’ . . . (Marc writes “ab” for “and”. The last letter is reversed.)
2. **Jan:** Say the word.
3. **Marc:** Aaaah//
4. **Jan** (She interrupts him): Aaaannnn
5. **Marc** ‘Duh’. (He adds in the middle ‘n’ and then re-orientates his lowercase ‘d’.)
6. **Jan:** Good. *Now you got your D going the right way.*

In response to his attempt, Jan offers Marc a Level 2 support in Turn 2 that identifies which strategy Marc should use to check his word. As Marc prolongs his pronunciation of the first sound (“Aaaah”), Jan intervenes in the fourth turn, offering a Level 3 prompt in which she distinguishes the missing middle sound. With his attention thusly centered, Marc perceives the missing “n” and inserts it into his word before repairing the final “d”. It is this final aspect of the problem solving though that Jan highlights with the *Specific Verbal Praise*: “Now you got your

D going the right way.” Jan’s specific positive feedback thus commends Marc’s careful monitoring of the word while acknowledging him as an active participant in the learning process.

Confirming a correct response by repeating. Teachers were also observed simply repeating children’s correct responses as part of their *Specific Verbal Praise*:

1. **Cassandra:** What do you make of the ‘duh’ sound on the ends of words? (She covers up the ‘i’ in ‘wantid’ with white tape.)
2. **James:** (He fixes the ending of the word.) E.
3. **Cassandra:** *Yeah, E, D.*

Acknowledging the child’s partially correct responses. Perhaps the most important role of Specific Verbal Praise was how it was used to recognize the leading edge of a student’s attempts even when his or her overall response remained incorrect. Praise used in this manner—confirming the “partially correct” (Clay, 1993) aspects of the student’s thinking—not only encourages the child to repeat the appropriate action(s), but also “asserts the learner’s competence so she [or he] will have the confidence to consider new learning” (Johnston, 2004, p. 13). Much more important in learning then is not so much what the end result might be, but rather recognizing the processes involved in the undertaking.

In the example that follows, Lydia’s student Marianne attempts to write the word “like”. As Lydia enunciates the sounds in the word, Marianne records the first two letters, placing them correctly in the sound boxes on the top, working page of her book. She then, however, confuses the positioning of the last two so that the word is recorded as “liek”. It is the constructive aspect of the child’s perception however that Lydia specifically commemorates with her *Specific Verbal Praise* in Turn 9 below:

1. **Lydia:** Llllllll-ike . . . You have to do some thinking. Lll [[lllllike]].

2. **Marianne** (overlapping her teacher's articulation): [[lllllike.]]. . .L.
3. **Lydia**: Absolutely. I'm going to get you to fill that in here. In that first box. Now: **iiike**.
You say it. Say **lllike**.
4. **Marianne**: Like. (Marianne quickly repeats the word as a whole with no particular emphasis on individual letters.)
5. **Lydia**: What's the next sound?
6. **Marianne**: (3 seconds elapse as Marianne writes in an 'i'.)
7. **Lydia**: That's exactly it!
8. **Marianne**: (Marianne continues to write in the next two letters. She writes liek/like.)
9. **Lydia**: *You have got all the letters*. There are two letters that we need to trade places.

Although the word in its totality remains incorrect, Lydia specifically confirms the forefront of her young learner's attempt ("You have got all the letters"), before drawing the child's attention to the next aspect to be worked upon ("There are two letters that we need to trade places.")

For teachers in general, recognizing the leading edge of a young learner's knowledge is an essential place in which to focus instruction—especially if 'knowing the whole' still remains a long ways off for a particular child.

Verbal emotional support.

Used as often as *Specific Verbal Praise* during the Shared Writing activities was talk characterized as *Verbal Emotional* comments. When examining the nature of teachers' emotionally supportive speech, of interest were the different ways in which these types of commentary were used. *Verbal Emotional* comments during the Shared Writing tasks were used:

To recognize and celebrate a student's achievements, beyond the leveled types of praise.

1. **Cassandra:** What should be there?
2. **James:** Oh, that's - that's an 'O'!
3. **Cassandra:** *Oooh!* (said somewhat excitedly) Good for you, you noticed that! *That's awesome!*

To demonstrate an empathetic understanding for the particular difficulty of a task.

1. **Jan** (helping Marc with the word "eat"): "Eat" actually has two sounds. Eeeaa-t. (She draws two sound boxes on the top page). Eee [[eee.]]
2. **Marc** (overlapping): [[Eee]] eeee. Aw! That's easy!
3. **Jan:** Well, put it down. Eeee . . t.
4. **Marc:** (He writes an E in the first box and a T in the second.)
5. **Jan:** Okay. *The only tricky part about this word, there's an A after the E.*
6. **Marc:** Aw!

To attend to the physical comfort of the child.

Cassandra: *Let's tuck you in . . (She pushes the chair that he is sitting on closer to the table.)*

To be humour-based. As Marc makes his way over to the whiteboard to practice writing a word, his teacher Jan triumphantly calls out: "To the board!"

To encourage the child's perseverance with a task using noncompulsory language.

What predominantly set teachers' Verbal Emotional comments apart from other types of directive speech is the especially solicitous manner in which requests for action were made. In the conversational extract that follows, Cassandra's calls for action are notably framed as invitations (italicized comments), implying that the final decision to act (or not) will be up to the

child. With requests made in this manner, it is altogether possible that a child could simply choose not to act. Yet as illustrated in the example below the student is carefully supported by his teacher to take action:

1. **Cassandra:** Okay. Let's read over our story here//
2. **James** (interrupting): That looks like an N. (He is referring to the final letter he has written in 'car'.)
3. **Cassandra:** *Do you want to fix it?*
4. **James:** It's supposed to be up to here. (On the working page, he indicates the letter's topmost height with his marker.)
5. **Cassandra:** 'Kay here. *You can fix it.* (She covers up the final R with white cover tape.)
6. **James:** (He rewrites a lowercase 'r' in an appropriate size/length.)

As teacher and child review the story he has written so far, James notices an inaccuracy in the lettering ("That looks like an 'N'"). In Turn 3 Cassandra responds to his observation with an emotionally supportive comment inviting him to consider the possibility of fixing it himself. When James continues to persevere, ("It's supposed to be up here."), Cassandra shifts his attention towards action with a more authoritative *Teacher Directed* comment ("'Kay here.") yet tempers this with another affectively based assertion that "You can fix it". The end result is that the child does elect to repair the letter and his effort is met with success. Perhaps what is more important is having been provided with an opportunity to take action in the first place (albeit under the watchful guidance of the teacher). Knowing her student's strengths and sensitively perceiving the meanings behind his comments, Cassandra can thus arrange for opportunities in which she knows James will be successful.

In a similar example, Lydia's student Marianne practices writing the word "deer" in her writing book. Remembering that this child has only been in lessons for about three weeks, Marianne already displays some bold intentions—wanting to write a fairly new word into her final copy without any visual support from the conjointly penned model on her top page:

1. **Lydia:** 'Kay. We'll get you to copy down here (Lydia points to the bottom page.) 'Deer'.
2. **Marianne:** I won't even look! (She speaks in a slightly animated tone. This is one of the few times during this particular lesson that her voice sounds excited.)
3. **Lydia:** *You think you'll be okay? Let's try it!* (In this second utterance, Lydia's tone matches the child's; animated.)

Even though the child does, in fact, sneak a peek at the model as she writes, perhaps an important detail is that like James, *she* has elected to undertake this particular challenge. The combination of Lydia's excited tone and verbally supportive "Let's try it!" emotionally upholds the child's decision to venture out of her comfort zone. And, like James' teacher, Lydia remains at the ready should her student require more direct forms of instructional backing in order to be successful.

All teachers, at one point or another in the lessons, interwove emotionally encouraging comments amongst their cognitive based prompts that helped their students strive comfortably as they worked through many of the tasks. Of immense value is recognizing the ways in which a considerate use of language can be used to create a learning atmosphere where such risk-taking ventures become an expected and celebrated part of every child's learning and every teacher's instructional processes. As Peter Johnston emphasizes at the outset of his book, *Opening minds: Using language to change lives* (2012), "As teachers we choose our words and, in the process, construct the classroom worlds for our students and ourselves. The worlds we construct offer

opportunities and constraints” (p. 1). In the examples studied thus far, an attempt has been made to explore how some of those opportunities (and less so, constraints) are created for these four students based on the language teachers used throughout the tasks.

Timing Cues Used During the Shared Writing Tasks

Similar to Rowe’s (1986) “wait Time 1”, (in which deliberate pauses are included after the teacher submits a question), the *Pointed Pauses* counted in this study notably arose within the teacher’s talk-turn. Like Rowe’s “wait Time 2” (in which the sustained silence occurs after the student begins to respond), the *Tussle Times* were calculated during the child’s talk-turn.

Table 9 shows the frequency of timing cues used by the teachers during the Shared Writing task. In the final column, it is noted that out of 331 total timing cues used in this sub-task, *Tussle Time* was the highest occurring type, comprising 51.1% of the total cues used.

Tussle times.

While the shortest length of *Tussle Time* provided by teachers was two seconds long, longer durations certainly were offered as children worked through the various tasks. As this was the longest part of the writing session where the child was the most actively involved, it is not surprising that of the two kinds of wait time counted, *Tussle Times*—used to sustain the child’s attention as he or she directly performed a task—occurred more often than the *Pointed Pauses*.

The following excerpt illustrates the nature of the *Tussle Times* as an uninterrupted interval of time in which the child was observed to fully engage in a writing task. Included in the example that follows is information from field notes describing the actions taken by the child and the duration of the *Tussle Times* (29 seconds total) involved as the child works on writing the words, “I like”:

Table 9

Timing Cues Used by the Teachers during the Shared Writing Tasks

Type of Communication	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Tussle Time	41	57.7	61	48.4	30	41.7	37	59.7	169	51.1
Pointed Pauses	29	40.8	39	31.0	34	47.2	23	37.1	125	37.8
Teacher Interruptions	1	1.4	26	20.6	8	11.1	2	3.2	37	11.2
Totals	71	99.9 ^a	126	100.0	72	100.0	62	100.0	331	100.1

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts

Marianne: (*Eight seconds pass before Marianne begins to write on the page. Because she tends to press heavily on her marker, the sound of her writing on the paper can be distinguished on the audio recording. 21 more seconds elapse as Marianne independently writes “I” and “li” (for “like”) on her bottom page. She then stops and asks Lydia for help.) Is it E?*

In the second example, Colin is provided with approximately 33 seconds of Tussle Time in which he practices writing the word “candy” before recording it onto his bottom page:

1. **Colin:** (** mumbling) (*It sounds like Colin is saying letters under his breath but it is hard to decipher this part of the audio taping. 33 seconds elapse as Colin practices writing the word “candy” on his top page. He then rewrites the word onto his bottom page. From time to time he looks at the model on the top page as he transcribes. When he is done, he rereads the last word from his sentence before identifying the next word to be solved.) Candy. Flying . . .*
2. **Darcy:** Flying. Do you want to try that one up here?

Noted in both cases is a conspicuous absence of teacher-talk and other instructive interferences. Students are simply given *time* in which to consider their next moves.

Pointed pauses.

In examining the effects *Pointed Pauses* had on students’ engagement during the conversations, some understandings can be gleaned about their nature. *Pointed Pauses* provided the child with a modicum of time in which to reflect upon the information or to process the request presented by the teacher. In addition, these deliberate moments of silence provided by the teacher implies that the student’s participation in the task is not only required but that “she expects the child to be able to accomplish it” (Johnston, 2004, p. 56).

In the example that follows, the expectant nature of Cassandra's *Pointed Pause* is illustrated. To help James get started on writing his story ("The baby lost her bunny.") Cassandra offers the minimum amount of support, a Level 1 intervention ("So") that "encourages responding in some way on the part of the child" (Lose, 2007, p. 18).

1. **Cassandra:** Let's start. So

2. **James:** "The" (*He takes three seconds to write "The" directly onto his bottom page.*)

It is the palpable silence that follows her "So" that intensifies her prompt's meaning. By remaining pointedly silent afterwards, Cassandra conveys the message that she is waiting for James to make the next move. James, in recognizing his teacher's intent, confidently responds by recording the first word of his story.

While only *Pointed Pauses* and *Tussle Times* of two seconds or more were included in the final tables, there were other timing lengths not counted in the actual tallies that warrant specific mention. These were the occasional instances that showed a conspicuous *absence* of Pointed Pausing during the teacher's talk-turn—occasions in which the teacher's talk was notably comprised of a continual string of prompts. In addition, *Teacher Interruptions*—including both the overlaps of the child's speech by the teacher's, and the more brusquely occurring intrusions—were noted to occur as the child prepared to speak and/or act upon a task, during what might otherwise be considered as space for the *Tussle Times*. The effects that these types of timing indicators—the persistent questioning practices and the preemptive mediations—had on students' activity are illustrated in the following section.

Competitive interruptions and absent wait times.

In examining the timing cues used during the shared writing tasks, notable was the manner in which both styles of communication—the teacher's instructive speech coupled with

her application of timing cues—did not only guide the child’s cognitive action, but also left an emotive mark upon the learning environment of the teacher-student pairings. Some of the conversational climates, insofar as the specific extracts examined, appeared more conducive to risk-taking, while in others, the teacher’s actions and speech operated in a manner that emerged as more obstructive. While some of the following examples have been slightly edited to condense their lengths, care has been taken to ensure that the general nature of the prompts and timing cues used by each teacher is presented as accurately as possible. Furthermore, whenever extracts of conversation have been extricated from the whole, the Reader is reminded that the emotional undertones purported to arise within each fragment does not necessarily signify the temperament of the entire lesson, or that the teaching style contained within the extract is meant to be examined under a reproachful lens.

In the following case example, teacher and child jointly work upon the same word: “out”. However, there is a discrepancy between the teacher’s *instructional emphasis* and the child’s *observational focus*. As will be illustrated in the extended example that follows, it is this minute detail that is the source of teacher and child’s ensuing miscommunications. Further compounding the issue are the *competitive interruptions* both child and teacher make and a notable *absence of extended Wait Time* amid some of the teacher’s prompts.

In Turn 1 below, Marc recaps the words he has written so far in his story, before emphasizing the next word to be solved (“**out!**”). As Jan articulates the word (“Ouuut”) in the second turn, she elongates the vowel sounds at the beginning before imparting greater emphasis on the final letter. In response, Marc repeats the word but his attention is noticeably captured by the *initial* diphthong (“Ow, out”):

1. **Marc:** “My tooth - fell - **out!**” (He enunciates the next word to be solved: “out”).

2. **Jan:** Ouuut.
3. **Marc:** Ow [[‘out’.]]
4. **Jan** (overlaps): [[‘Out’.]] Okay//
5. **Marc** (interrupting Jan): Ooo! It starts like ‘ow’!
6. **Jan** (agreeing in a low tone): It does! You’re right. And - ‘**owwwt**’ - there’s actually two sounds. What do you hear? . . . (She draws two sound boxes on the top page for ‘out’.)

In Turn 4, Jan not only accentuates the ending of the word again but because of her simultaneous overlap of his speech at this point, it is entirely possible that she does completely perceive Marc’s specific observation in the first place. As Jan then prepares to offer her next prompt using the *Signal Word* “Okay”, Marc interjects in Turn 5 with his jubilant (yet accurate) insight (“Ooo! It starts like ‘ow’!”).

Although Jan’s words in Turn 6 briefly acknowledge the *leading edge* of the child’s discovery (“It does! You’re right.”), she does not go into further detail. Instead she swiftly reverts his attention back towards the identification of the final sound (and the assumed focus of her instruction). The rapidity with which the teacher shifts the child’s attention back to the final letter of the word means that there is no timing opportunity made available in which the specific letters used to record the “ou” sound could have potentially been clarified.

Marc’s confusions seem to become even more pronounced as the conversation moves forward. In what might have otherwise been opportunities for Tussle Times in Turns 7 and 9 below, the teacher’s talk immediately limits the child’s think-time with repeated interjections to “Say it”. Possibly meant to curb any potential exhibition of his “extremely ADHD” behaviours, these types of quick-paced commands also prevent the child from fully revealing his line of reasoning which might further inform his teacher’s instructive intentions:

7. **Marc** (he makes a little gasp-like noise): Uh!//
8. **Jan** (interrupts): Say it.
9. **Marc**: Only two!//
10. **Jan** (interrupts): Say it.

In Turn 11, as the child once more emphasizes the initial part of the word, his teacher is observed to overlap his analysis again with her specific articulation that emphasizes the final letter in the twelfth turn. Interrupting the child again in Turn 14, Jan transmits a continuous string of prompts with no *Pointed Pausing* provided until the end of her turn:

11. **Marc**: Ow [[www]] (He focuses on the “ow”.)
12. **Jan** (overlaps):[[Oww-t]] (She emphasizes the final letter again.)
13. **Marc**: Owwwwt//
14. **Jan** (immediately after): Owwt. What do you hear? Tell me what you hear . . . (3 seconds of wait time provided only at the very end of her turn.)

Eventually Marc does correctly perceive the final sound his teacher stresses in the word “out”, but not before he displays some distinctively emotive reactions in Turns 24 and 26. In both cases, Marc is heard on the audio recording emitting “a thin, somewhat nervous sounding laugh” in response to his teacher’s preceding statements:

16. **Marc**: (verbally breaking up the word): ‘ahh - oo - [[t’.]]
17. **Jan** (overlapping his articulation with her own): [[‘owwwt’.]] What do you hear?
18. **Marc**: “Ah”?
19. **Jan**: Is it **aat** or **owwwt**? . . .
20. **Marc**: Owwwt.
21. **Jan**: Owwwwwwt. Tell me what you hear Marc. (No Wait Time provided.)

22. **Marc:** Um . .

23. **Jan:** Don't write it. **Tell** me what you hear. (No Wait Time provided.)

24. **Marc** (He laughs – a thin, somewhat nervous sounding laugh.)

25. **Jan:** You don't hear anything in the word “out”? (Strong emphasis on the final T.)

26. **Marc** (Speaking with another slight laugh): I **can** hear something there.

In Jan's repeated vocalizations of the word “out” she continues to place emphasis on a particular letter. Although benignly meant to support her student's analysis of the sounds within the word, her instructive focus neglects the child's actual discernments. In addition, it is the hurried conveyance of her prompts—resulting in many synchronized overlaps of the child's communication—that exemplify the more obstructive elements of a *competitive interruption*. As teacher and child vie for conversational space, neither is able to fully attend to the other's message.

As a result, credit for the child's accurate revelation is never fully realized, and the precious time allotted for the story writing session becomes exhausted as teacher and child attempt to re-negotiate understandings in a roundabout manner. Eventually, during the twenty-eighth talk-turn Marc finally identifies the letter his teacher has been prompting for. This “success” however comes at a cost—not only in terms of the excess time and effort that was expended to achieve it, but in terms of the emotional impact it has had on the child.

27. **Jan: Out.** (Louder voice. She emphasizes the final letter.) **Out.** (A little softer this time; emphasis placed on final letter again.)

28. **Marc** (speaks with slight laugh again): A ‘T’.

29. **Jan:** You hear a ‘T’. Put the ‘T’ in there.

30. **Marc** (writes the T in the second sound box.)

31. **Jan:** And the first part *is* a little tricky but - do you hear the /ou/, like you know -

‘owww’? It’s an ‘O’ at the beginning.

32. **Marc** (he breathes out his response): Ohh!

33. **Jan:** And then a ‘U’. . . And then the ‘T’. So that’s a little tricky, that /ou/ sound, [[isn’t it?]]

34. **Marc** (overlapping her final utterance): [[He emits a “thin” laugh again.]]

In the case examined above, the specific timing factors examined were noted to impede *both* conversational participants’ acquisition of information. In addition, as the miscommunications persist, the emotional atmosphere begins to change. Where the child confidently identifies the initial “ou” blend at the start of the exchange, to the “thin laughs” he emits towards the end, it is the combination of the instructive speech used—itsself arising from a predetermined teaching-agenda—coupled with the persistent interruptions and rapidity of prompts offered that is noted to obstruct the teacher’s reception of the significant knowledge the child actually communicates way back in the fifth turn (“Ooo! It starts like ‘ow’!”).

Lyons (2003) describes how “observing body language provides reliable clues from which to interpret individual’s inner emotions—their state of mind” (p. 59). Marc’s expressive response (his laugh) and his tentative comment in Turn 26 (“I **can** hear something there”) denotes a bewildered state of self-consciousness. Although he had correctly identified the initial vowel component of the word back in the fifth turn, his was not the specific differentiation used to lead the instruction. Thus the mislaid understandings that teacher and child both incur coincide with the observance of those noticeable emotive reactions (thin, nervous laughter) on the child’s part.

Time may be of the essence in the 12 minutes dedicated to the writing session of a Reading Recovery lesson, but there is a delicate balance to be maintained between being led by what is scripted in one's daily planner and remaining responsive to the specific understandings demonstrated by the individual. Clay (2005b) cautions that "hard-to-teach children do not follow predictable paths of progress . . . When a teacher expects a child to learn this before that she is forcing a child to move through her notion of the sequence in which change must occur" (2005b p. 2). Thus, one cannot have "too fixed an agenda as a tutor . . . You've got to know where you're going but always maintain an element of flexibility, and you've got to be open to surprise—always" (Wood, 2003, p. 15).

Cooperative interruptions.

Although the remarks made in the preceding extracts highlight the adversarial effects a turn-competitive interruption can have on both teacher and student's understandings, the example that follows illustrates how interruptions can actually be accommodating. Figure 3 provides a broader example of a transcript analysis showing how Cassandra incorporates interruptions among her verbal prompts to direct James' attention as they decipher the onset of the word "train".

As James prepares to write "train", his preliminary pronunciation of the word's onset in Turn 1 is misstated as "ch". As erroneous as his attempt is, rather than emphasizing it as an error right from the start, Cassandra's first comment in Turn 2 (a *Specific Verbal Praise*), essentially endorses the forefront of his attempt (and the perceived accuracy of his elocution). She immediately follows up with a key teaching point—a Level 3 enunciation of the specific sounds within in the onset: "t - r- aiiin". Before this support is offered though, Cassandra first captures the child's attention with the *Signal Words* ("but here") that direct his focus to her next (*Teacher*

Directed) request to “look at me and watch me say the word”. After she enunciates the sounds for him, Cassandra uses another *Teacher Directed* prompt that instructs his next move: “Now you try it.”

In Turn 3 James copies his teacher’s modeling (“**T-r-aiiin**”) and Cassandra confirms his action with a *General Verbal Praise* (“Yeah”). In the midst of her next prompt however, James enthusiastically interrupts her with his accurate interpretation of the first sound (“T!”). Spurred on by his accomplishment, James calls out what he logically assumes is the next letter in any onset beginning with “T” (“H”). Reacting with a quizzical “Mmmm?”, Cassandra’s Level 1 prompt cautions James to “consider an alternative response” (Lose, 2007, p. 18). Cassandra then primes James’ attention using a *Signal Word* (“Kay”) that is intended to focus his attention towards her next (*Teacher Directed*) command to “Look at me again”.

Figure 3. Supporting the child’s correct identification of the onset “tr” in the word “train” during one shared writing task in one Reading Recovery writing session.

Turn	Wait Time (seconds)	Type of Help	Teacher: Dialogue and Actions	Child: Dialogue and Actions
1	4tt 2tt			A ‘ch’ ‘ch’. Mmm. (He is sounding out “train”.) C, H . . (He names the first two letters.)
2	1pp	SVP SW 3 TD	It sounds like ‘ch’ but here - look at me and watch me say the word: t-r-aiin . Now you try it.	
3				T-r-aiiin .
4		GVP	Yeah. What do-//	
5				T! (James interrupts)

6		GVP	Yeah.	
7				H.
8		1 SW TD	Mmm? 'Kay. Look at me again.	
9				(He begins to record the H beside the T.)//
10	TI	TD 3	(Cassandra interrupts) Stop. Trrr-aiiin.	
11				(James ignores her and carries on writing.)//
12	TI	TD	(She interrupts again.) No. Stop. Say that.	
13				Rrr! (He enthusiastically and immediately responds.)
14		2	You say it slowly now.	
15				Trrr//
16	TI	2	(She interrupts him.) What do you hear next?	
17				(He writes down the lowercase T and R directly onto the bottom page: tr/train)
18		GVP	There you go.	

In Turn 14 Cassandra uses a Level 2 support (“You say it slowly now”) that encourages the child’s independent application of a known strategy. As James accurately pronounces the “tr” onset, Cassandra interrupts him again in Turn 16—but rather than to discontinue the practice of an unwanted behaviour, this time her interruption elevates his attention towards distinguishing each sound for himself. As she offers a Level 2 support that prompts him to consider what sound comes “next”, James pulls together all he now knows about this onset and, forgoing a trial on the top practice page, he confidently records the letters “tr” directly onto his bottom sheet.

When consideration is consciously given to one’s own patterns of communication, and an on-going awareness is maintained for those thin laughs, brief hesitations, and other nonverbal

body cues that arise as meanings are negotiated, one becomes more equipped to gauge whether the intended message is being accurately conveyed. Recommendations have already been presented by Wood (2003), Clay (2005b), and Johnston (2004) advising teachers to base their instructive practices on students' observed understandings in order to achieve the best gains. As the previous examples and transcript analysis illustrate, when interruptions are offered in a conscious and purposeful manner, when the consequences of incorporating an expectant pause into the conversation are understood, and when teachers use instructive language that attends to the partially correct aspects of their students' understandings, a distinct conversational climate emerges—one that complements the unique needs and strengths of the students involved. This supports the teacher to not only determine whether messages are being accurately received but the degree to which the child remains confidently engaged in the instructional activity.

Task 3: The Cut-Up Story Task

This examination now turns towards the final task of the child and teacher's story writing sessions—the Cut-Up Story. After the child's message has been written and reviewed for clarity and correctness, the teacher now records it onto a paper strip and, typically with the child watching, she snips off each word as the child reads aloud. The child rearranges the word cards with as much or as little support as needed from the teacher to position them accordingly. As a final check, the child reads over the completed story making changes as needed, and practices reading the message in a phrased and fluent manner. The cut-up story is finally taken home where it is to be reconstructed as part of the child's homework tasks.

Table 10

Cognitive Talk Used by the Teachers during the Cut-Up Story Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Level 1: General verbal intervention	4	12.1	3	8.8	10	16.9	1	16.7	18	13.6
Level 2: Specific verbal intervention	9	27.3	9	26.5	15	25.4	3	50.0	36	27.3
Level 3: Specific verbal intervention with nonverbal indicator(s)	2	6.1	4	11.8	8	13.6	0	0.0	14	10.6
Level 4: Prepares for next action	1	3.0	0	0.0	9	15.3	0	0.0	10	7.6
Level 5: Demonstrates action	0	0.0	1	2.9	1	1.7	0	0.0	2	1.5
Teacher Directed	7	21.2	8	23.5	7	11.9	1	16.7	23	17.4
Signal Words	10	30.3	9	26.5	9	15.3	1	16.7	29	22.0
TOTAL	33	100.0	34	100.0	59	100.1 ^a	6	100.1	132	100.0

^a Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts

Cognitive Talk Used During the Cut-Up Story

Table 10 presents the findings in relation to the specific types of cognitive talk used by the teachers during the Cut-Up Story section of the writing sessions. In total, 132 types of cognitive talk were used during this section of the writing sessions. Of that total, 60.6% of the cues used were level-based with the remainder of the talk being comprised by non-leveled *Signal Words* and *Teacher Directed* statements.

Leveled cognitive talk used during the cut-up story tasks.

As one of the shorter tasks in duration (i.e. 1-2 minutes, see Figure 1), a reduced number of talk-types is reflected in the final totals. Overall teachers tended to position their instructive speech within a *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention* category. Within the Cut-Up Story tasks, Level 2 comments typically hinted towards the next course of action students might take as they reassembled the cut-up sentence strips. Particular statements used to encourage students' construction of the cut-up sentence included comments like:

- How does your story start?
- Check your word again.
- Does it look right now? (Said after the child switched two word cards around.)

Sometimes the teacher simply repeated the word being sought by the child:

- **Marc:** My tooth - fell . . out.
- **Jan:** 'Out'. Where's 'out'?

Or to remind the child of where he had left off in his story:

1. **Cassandra:** Okay, "Father" . . (She repeats the last word he has solved.)
2. **James:** Bear. (He looks for the next word in the sentence.)

When considering that the teachers and students have already spent a large proportion of their writing session time on both the creation and the inscription of the message, it is not surprising to consider that of all the leveled prompts to choose from, teachers generally made comments that were intended to simply jog their students' memories of these most recent activities.

The second type of leveled speech used most often during the Cut-Up Story task were *Level 1: General Verbal* prompts at 13.6%. Illustrated in the example below, Cassandra's Level 1 interventions encouraged her student's ongoing examination of a troublesome word but in a minimal way:

1. **James:** The baby lost her bunny . . . Ace Burpee gave me a fist bump. (His story actually reads: "The baby lost her bunny. Ace **bump** gave me a fist **Burpee**.").
2. **Cassandra:** Okay, I want you to read this one starting at "Ace" and look really hard and check the words.
3. **James:** Bur .
4. **Cassandra:** *Mmmm.*
5. **James:** Bumping . .
6. **Cassandra:** *Mmmmm. What are you noticing?*
7. **James:** Ace bump . . (He repairs the error, swapping the "bump" with the "Burpee" card. Then he laughs.) That's like Ace Bumpy!

As he checks over his story, James recites the message as it *should be* rather than attending to the actual words he has arranged. To help him make the repairs, Cassandra uses a Level 2 support in Turn 1 that both identifies in which sentence to focus his attention ("read this one starting at 'Ace'") and specifies what he needs to do in order to check more carefully ("and

look really hard and check the words”). Beyond her specific suggestions though, she does not take over the solving process but leaves the application of the strategies mentioned up to the child.

In Turn 2 James successfully monitors the first of his errors (“Bur . .”). Now that he is actively searching, Cassandra decreases the level of her support even further. In Turns 4 and 6 her Level 1 comments “Mmmm” and “What are you noticing?” confirm to the child that he is now on the right track.

Out of all the leveled supports used during the Cut-Up Story tasks, Level 3 interventions, combining a verbal with a nonverbal indicator, were used third most often at 10.6%. When teachers used the Level 3 supports in this task, it was observed that the nonverbal indicator used in conjunction with the specific verbal prompt were the usual articulations of the specific sounds in the word:

1. **Jan:** What about the ending? . . **Whennnnn.** What do you hear on the end?
2. **Marc:** (*He finds the correct card and places it in order.*)

However, rather than drawing in sound boxes (as was noted during the Shared Writing tasks), other gestural indications, more suited to the demands of this task, were used instead.

In the following example, James is assembling the sentence: “Baby Bear got a new blue car and Father Bear wanted a train.” At James’ request Cassandra has cut the words “Bear” and “Father” into two parts as: Be/ar and Fat/her. When James has difficulty finding the correct pieces of “Bear” among all the cards on the table, Cassandra uses a Level 3 support (italicized) that directs his attention back to his recorded story sample so that he can use this as a comparative reference point:

1. **James:** B - eh - eh - ear. What is this? (He has put two different word parts together, making “Be/her” for “Bear”.)
2. **Cassandra:** *Do you want to check back? (She opens up his writing book so that he can take another look at the story he has just written.)*

As James locates the word “Bear” on his story page, he visually compares this printed version to the word cards arranged on the table:

3. **James:** Oh . . B-E-A-R. E-A-R. (He takes the ‘her’ chunk off of ‘Be’, then looks on the table for the ‘ar’ chunk.)

Cassandra’s Level 3 support thus puts James back on track—hinting that he could reread his original sentence, which will not only help him recall the full extent of his message but should then stimulate him to actively search for the visual model of the tricky word in question.

Non-leveled cognitive talk used during the cut-up story tasks.

Of the non-leveled cognitive talk used during the Cut-Up Story tasks, *Signal Words*—Lydia’s “Now” in Turn 1 of the following example—were used to switch the children’s attentive ‘gears’, priming children’s attention so that it was ready to receive the next command or prompt whereas *Teacher Directed* comments (“I’m going to get you to put that together” in Turn 5) generally stipulated students’ next actions:

1. **Lydia:** *Now*, what’s that say? (Italicized: *Signal Word*)
2. **Marianne:** Chippy
3. **Lydia:** Mmm-hmm.
4. **Marianne:** Is - on my shirt
5. **Lydia:** Mmm-hmm. *I’m going to get you to put that together.* (Italicized: *Teacher Directed* comment)

Table 11

Affective Talk Used by the Teachers during the Cut-Up Story Tasks

Type of Talk	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
General Verbal Praise	4	30.8	4	20.0	14	60.9	5	62.5	27	42.2
Specific Verbal Praise	4	30.8	7	35.0	3	13.0	2	25.0	16	25.0
Verbal Emotional	5	38.5	9	45.0	6	26.1	1	12.5	21	32.8
Total	13	100.1 ^a	20	100.0	23	100.0	8	100	64	100.0

^b Because the percentages have been rounded to the 1st decimal points, the totals are not necessarily the expected 100.0% that would represent all the prompts

Affective Talk Used During the Cut-Up Story

Table 11 presents the findings regarding teachers' usage of Affective Talk during the Cut-Up Story task. Overall *General Verbal Praise* had the highest number of occurrences counted comprising 42.2% of all affective speech. As previously mentioned, as the Cut-Up Story is the culminating task, everything involved with completing it has been experienced before. Thus the general murmurs of praise used by Jan in the example below would have been the most expedient type of praise to use in confirming Marc's strategic action:

1. **Jan:** So what's it say now?
2. **Marc** (reading his word cards): The dog licked . . mmeee!
3. **Jan:** *Mmm-hmm.*

Specific verbal praise.

During the Cut-Up Story task *Specific Verbal Praise* statements made up a quarter of all the affective speech used by teachers during this task. As previously observed in the Shared Writing tasks, teachers' specific contributions of praise were noted to:

Identify a successful aspect of the child's problem solving.

1. **Colin:** (As he reads over his cut-up story, Colin uses his finger to point underneath each word. His reading is slow.) We . . are . . going . . to . . the . . Goldeyes game . . to . . day. I feel happy.
2. **Darcy:** Now. You did that with your finger. This time I want you to do it just with your eyes, okay?
3. **Colin:** (Whispering): Okay. (He then opens his eyes very wide as he rereads the story. He uses a louder voice and incorporates some smoother phrasing:) We are going to . . the . . Goldeyes game. . today. I feel happy.

4. **Darcy:** Beautiful. *That sounded so nicely put together.*

Confirm a response by repeating the word or phrase the child had just solved.

1. **James:** “The baby lost her bunny. Ace Burpee gave me a fist bump.”
2. **Cassandra:** “*Fist-bump.*” *Good.*

Affirm the leading edge of the child’s solving.

1. **Colin** (As he checks over his cut-up story, Colin finger-points to each card as he reads):
I . . can’t . . catch . . any . . flying candy through the air. (He has however arranged the word cards as: “I didn’t **candy** any **flying catch** through the air.”)
2. **Darcy:** Mmm-hmm. (Her tone is fairly neutral.) ‘Kay. *You did some checking there*

Verbal emotional talk.

During the Cut-Up Story, the *Verbal Emotional* comments offered by teachers were typically provided at the end of the task. Such comments were not necessarily used to praise a specific response but were rather used to commemorate the students’ participation during the day’s writing process.

In Darcy’s case, her *Verbal Emotional* comments openly celebrated her student’s creative thinking—“And you know if we had more time we could write a whole long story about your game, couldn’t we? . . . I bet you have another great story in there!” In a similar manner, Lydia’s reflective musings endorsed Marianne’s contributions to the story writing session:

1. **Marianne** (*reading her story*): “Chippy - is - on . . my - shirt.” Period.
2. **Lydia:** That’s a very good sentence . . . *I wonder if Chippy is also in that painting on the wall? . . I wonder?* Very good.

Jan’s Verbal Emotional comment, also offered towards the end of the writing session, affirmed her confidence in Marc’s ability to attain his goal of reaching 90 words on his Writing Vocabulary chart by the end of his lesson series:

- 1. **Jan:** Okay, So I’m adding “it” and “licked” to your list and that makes 70 words!//
- 2. **Marc** (interrupting): //Whoa! Ahh haa-ha! (in a laughing voice). I wish it was 90 words.
- 3. **Jan:** Oh, you’ll get 90 by the time you are done.

Interestingly it is the way that Jan reacts to Marc’s divergent behaviours on one occasion as he makes his cut-up story that demonstrates the emotional connection a teacher can foster with her student and the ways in which both cognitive and affective forms of speech can be used to alter the ensuing emotional climate.

Figure 4 presents one transcript analysis highlighting the ways in which Jan uses both cognitive and affective forms of speech to stabilize Marc’s anxiety when he discovers a *teacher-made* discrepancy in his cut-up sentence.

Figure 4. Using affective and cognitive talk to support the child’s construction of his cut-up story during one cut-up story task in one Reading Recovery writing session.

Turn	Wait Time (seconds)	Type of Help	Teacher: Dialogue and Actions	Child: Dialogue and Actions
1		SW TD	Okay. Go ahead dear.	
2	9tt 21tt			(Marc works silently for the first 9 seconds, sorting the word cards on the tabletop. When he is done, he starts to recheck his story. After about 21 seconds, Marc starts “singing”.) It It . . . was la-la-laaa.

				(OC: There is an error on the last card. Jan has written <i>nice</i> instead of <i>cute</i> . Marc has put it in the correct place as ‘cute’. Does his singing indicate his observation of the error? Jan calls his attention to it.)
3		1	Oh, you know what I did?	
4				What?
5		5 SVP	I wrote the wrong word. I wrote “nice”! You told me “cute”, didn’t you?	
6				(Laughing) Yah!
7		VEm o	For goodness sake Mrs. _____. What am I thinking?!	
8				(Marc laughs again.)

In this example, Marc is rearranging the story: “The dog licked me and it was cute.” Jan however has mistakenly recorded the word “nice” on one of the cards, including it among the others on the table. As Marc works on the last part of his sentence, specifically the final word, an abrupt change in his behaviour is observed.

In Turn 1 Jan instructs Marc to get started on the task with a Teacher Directed (albeit emotionally seasoned) comment “Go ahead dear”. Marc works silently and steadily for the first nine seconds of his Tussle Time in Turn 2, rearranging the cards. He then takes another 21 seconds to check over the order of his words, rereading the last part of his sentence out loud. It is at the close of the second turn that Marc begins making random vocalizations (“la-la-laaa”) as he examines the final card in his sentence. Marc’s singing, at odds with his focused performance only moments before, seems to indicate awareness that “something” is not quite right with his sentence.

In Turn 3 Jan detects in Marc's intermittent "la-la-laaaa" the possible source of his apprehension. Her *Level 1: General Verbal Intervention* in Turn 3 ("Oh, you know what I did?") not only identifies the error but with her purposeful use of "I", she subtly assumes its source thus alleviating any agitation the child may have been feeling.

In the fifth turn Jan elaborates on the error she has made using a *Level 5: Teacher Demonstrates Action* intervention, effectively describing in words what Marc may have only loosely perceived: "I wrote the wrong word. I wrote "nice"! By explicitly admitting the error as her own Jan tactfully validates the likely source of Marc's apprehension. Using *Specific Verbal Praise* in the second part of Turn 5, Jan reiterates Marc's original wording of the story ("You told me 'cute', didn't you?") that not only acknowledge his ideas as central to the story but positions him as the greater authority in the task itself.

In Turn 7 Jan uses a *Verbal Emotional* comment ("For goodness sake Mrs. ____, what am I thinking?") to humorously chastise herself, thereby alleviating any residual tension Marc may have been feeling over the error. Indeed, Marc readily laughs out loud in response to both of Jan's affective based comments in Turns 5 and 7; and in comparison to the "thin" laughs of before, the giggles he makes this time, sound much heartier.

Timing Cues Used During the Cut-Up Story

In total, 76 instances of timing cues were counted during the Cut-Up Story tasks. Table 12 highlights the findings concerning teachers' general application of the three timing cues during this task, including *Tussle Times*, *Pointed Pausing*, and *Teacher Interruptions*.

Tussle times.

As observed in Table 12, teachers' usage of *Tussle Times* equaled the combined totals of the other timing cues, making up one half of all the timing cues used during the Cut-Up Story

Table 12

Timing Cues Used by the Teachers during the Cut-Up Story Tasks

Type of Communication	Total Darcy's prompts	% of Darcy's prompts	Total Jan's prompts	% of Jan's prompts	Total Cassandra's prompts	% of Cassandra's prompts	Total Lydia's prompts	% of Lydia's prompts	Total All teachers	Total %
Tussle Time	11	57.9	9	50.0	16	47.1	2	40.0	38	50.0
Pointed Pauses	7	36.8	7	38.9	10	29.4	2	40.0	26	34.2
Teacher Interruptions	1	5.3	2	11.1	8	23.5	1	20.0	12	15.8
Totals	19	100.0	18	100.0	34	100.0	5	100.0	76	100.0

tasks. As the cumulative activity of the writing session, the Cut-Up Story is perhaps the one task in which the child is the most prepared to take a greater lead. He or she has not only talked about the story, shaping its structure and wording together with the teacher during the story conversations, but he or she has written it with the teacher's watchful support during the Shared Writing tasks. Words have been sounded out and letterforms recorded, phrases have been extended, and the final sentence having been reread many times over, has been edited for clarity and precision. Therefore as the child's attention now turns to reassembling the word cards originating from his or her story, he or she will likely need less directed prompting and pausing from the teacher and more time devoted to tussling out the particulars of the sentence.

Depending on the length of the story, the complexity of the sentences and the child's capabilities, the *Tussle Times* used by the students varied. Colin took 43 seconds as he independently searched, sorted, and correctly rearranged the cards to remake one of his stories. James worked for 36 seconds before asking for his teacher's support in putting back together a word that had been cut into two parts. Marc worked persistently on rearranging his story for 30 seconds until an apparent change in his behaviour (i.e., his singing) indicated difficulty. Marianne, who only completed the one cut-up story during the second observation, took 23 seconds of *Tussle Time* to sort her story before confidently declaring to her teacher: "I'm done!" Thus, as long as students remained engaged with the activity, teachers patiently waited in the "wings", offering support only after children asked questions, displayed more openly distracted behaviours, or after they definitively declared completion of their task.

Pointed pauses.

Teachers also adjusted their *Pointed Pauses* as students worked on their cut-up stories. In Figure 5, one conversational extract is presented showing how Darcy not only fluctuates the

levels and types of her verbal supports as Colin remakes the sentence: “I didn’t catch any candy flying through the air”, but how the lengths of her *Pointed Pauses* (PP) and her *Tussle Times* (TT) are governed by her student’s behaviors. As long as Colin “intelligently perseveres” (A. Matczuk, personal communication, November 12, 2014) with the task, Darcy suspends more direct forms of support until absolutely needed.

Figure 5. Supporting the child’s construction of the cut-up story during one cut-up story task in one Reading Recovery writing session.

Turn	Wait Time (seconds)	Type of Help	Teacher: Dialogue and Actions	Child: Dialogue and Actions
1	27 TT			(As Colin sorts, he rereads the cards out loud, varying his volume.) Didn’t . . . caaatch . . . anyyyy . . . fllyyying . . . cannnnn . . . dy (whispers) through. I couldn’t catch any flying candy (then slightly louder) through . . (back to a whisper) through . . (slightly louder) the . . (whispers) air.
2		2	What do you do when you’re done?	
3	8 TT			(Colin finger-points to each card in turn as he reads them with a steadier volume): I . . can’t . . catch . . any . . flying candy through the air. (His actual word arrangement reads: “I didn’t candy any flying catch through the air.”)
4		1 SW SVP 2	Mmm-hmm. (neutral tone) ‘Kay. You did some checking there.	

			And I want you to check that second word again.	
5	4TT			Didn't . . catch . . (He now resolves "can't" for "didn't".)
6	2PP 7PP	3	You said 'catch'. Now look at that one carefully . . (she points to the card showing "candy") Catch. What would you see at the end?	
7				(Colin makes no response.)
8		4	(Pointing at the card showing "catch") What do you see at the end of "catch"?	
9				C-H.
10	4PP	GVP 2	Mmm-hmmm. I didn't catch? (rising tone.)	
11				Any candy flying through the air.
12		GVP	Mmm-hmmmm.	

In Turn 1, Colin takes approximately 27 seconds of *Tussle Time* to sort and read over his cards. As he finishes reading, Darcy uses a *Level 2: Specific Verbal Intervention* that encourages him to use what he knows to check over his sentence one more time (“What do you do when you’re done?”). Colin responds to her prompt by using his finger to track each word card as he rereads. However, as noted in Turn 3, he fails to notice the errors he has *said* (saying “can’t” for “didn’t”) and the errors he has *constructed* with his word cards (“I didn’t **candy** any **flying catch** through the air.”).

In response, Darcy initially provides Colin with a perceptive “Mmm-hmm (*Level 1: General Verbal Intervention*) in Turn 4 that demonstrates her close observation of the task (Lose, 2007). She then follows up using a *Signal Word* (“Kay”) that primes his attention to receive her *Specific Verbal Praise* that supportively lets him know he has worked hard to do “some checking

there”. In the last part of her turn, Darcy uses a Level 2 intervention that specifically tells Colin to recheck “that second word again”.

Taking a total of four seconds of Tussle Time in Turn 5, Colin accordingly repairs the word, correctly reading “didn’t” instead of “can’t”. He still, however, requires more direct support to notice the other discrepancies printed on the third, fifth, and sixth cards.

In order to help the child discern his other errors, Darcy will have to help Colin attend more closely to the visual information printed on the cards, specifically looking beyond the first two letters in each of the words “candy” and “catch”. Accordingly in Turn 6, Darcy increases her support to *Level 3: Specific Verbal Intervention with a Nonverbal Indicator* that attempts to focus Colin’s attention towards these endings. As she articulates the word “catch”, Darcy points at the third word card in his arrangement (“candy”) saying: “Now look at that one carefully . . . catch. What would you see at the end?”. Throughout the seven seconds of *Pointed Pausing* that she offers, Colin makes no response. It is the child’s silence during those seven seconds that imparts a clear message to his teacher—he needs *more* help.

In the eighth turn Darcy intensifies her support, scaffolding his attention with a *Level 4: Prepares for Next Action* prompt. She not only becomes even more specific with her choice of example (i.e., she now points *directly* at the sixth card on the table (“catch”), but she also changes the wording of her question, making it more direct: “What *do* you see at the end of “catch”?” (emphasis added). Providing these two specific pieces of information Darcy thusly prepares Colin for the next action. He is now able to distinguish between the two words, directly noting how “catch” ends with the letters “C-H”.

Now that Colin has been helped to discriminate between the two cards, he is able to make the appropriate switches. Darcy, in response to the child’s correct actions, drops her support in

Turn 10, using a Level 2 prompt to recap the first part of his sentence: “I didn’t catch”. The four seconds of *Pointed Pausing* that follow impart her expectation that the next move belongs to the child.

Encouraged in this manner, Colin rearranges the rest of his sentence, correctly relocating the three erroneous word cards before orally confirming them as: “any candy flying through the air.” Darcy’s simple verbal assent in Turn 12 (“Mmm-hmmm”) culminates this exchange.

Teacher interruptions.

Concerning teachers’ interruptions, these were the least used timing cue at 15.8%. In analyzing the nature of these verbal intrusions, these were sometimes noted to be quite helpful in maintaining the flow of the lesson. When a student is noted to have a particularly strong pattern of response that blocks learning, Clay (2005b) advises Reading Recovery teachers to be alert for children’s erroneous responses. She even gives teachers permission to “Interrupt it, sharply if necessary. Don’t be polite about it. Don’t let it occur” (p. 171).

Teachers are “advised to control the possibility of the unwanted behaviour from occurring [by staying] one jump ahead” of their student (Clay, 2005b, p. 171). If the child has particular issues with hyperactivity or impulsiveness, is dominated by a learned strength, or whose emotional response to making errors negatively overrides the learning of more efficient approaches to reading and writing, the child “will not engage in thinking and learning processes” (Clay, 2005b, p.169). Thus, attention towards an economical application of teaching time along with an efficient use of words reinforces the child’s focus, supports his or her activity, thereby establishing a more effective learning environment overall. As noted in the examples that follow, all of Cassandra’s interruptions (noted by // in the extracts) were typically made in response to

her student's inattentiveness and were used to quickly terminate his more inappropriate behaviours.

In the example that follows, James works steadily on rearranging his word cards for the first 12 seconds (Tussle Time). In the midst of his work, however, his attention notably swings back to a debate he had previously attempted to have with his teacher—a frivolous discussion concerning a yellow marker he had wanted to use for writing:

1. **James** (sorting and reading his cards): The . . . “Ace” . . . the . . . “Ace Burpee . . . gave” . . . I want . . . I want you to write it on yellow right there. I-If-if-if -you can write it on yellow down here too! . . . Or pink. You could write it //
2. **Cassandra** (*interrupting firmly*): No. Okay. Keep your story going.
3. **James**: Gave . . . me . . . a . . . fist . . . bump.

In Turn 2, Cassandra firmly interjects James' inappropriate suggestion using an abrupt “No” that ceases his further discussion. Her tone, however, does soften slightly as she redirects her student's attention back to the task. In the final turn, James goes back to his cut-up story, concentrating on the task for another eight seconds.

On another occasion, James's focus becomes diverted by the enjoyment he gains from practicing one of his words on the whiteboard. Cassandra physically and verbally has to interrupt James' actions as he prepares to decorate the word he has recorded on the whiteboard:

1. **Cassandra**: Read your story here . . . Ready? . . . James?
2. **James**: They have eyes! (James has decorated the word ‘bump’ on the whiteboard by adding in little dots on the insides of the letters.)
3. **Cassandra**: Yeah.

4. **James** (continuing): And it's . . . (He has written the word "bump" on the whiteboard again. He then prepares to decorate it using the whiteboard marker still in his grasp) //
5. **Cassandra** (*Interrupting his gesture, she physically takes the whiteboard marker out of his hand*): *Let's put that away.* Here we go. (She sits poised with the scissors and sentence strip in her hand.)

Thus, in her efforts to direct James' attention appropriately during the Cut-Up Story tasks, Cassandra oftentimes had to abruptly interrupt the offending action and stipulate a more helpful one. Her *Teacher Directed* comments "Let's put that away." and "Here we go." both signal to the child that, at this point anyway, the teacher is indeed the one "calling the shots".

Summary of the Chapter

In the first chapter of this thesis, two research questions were identified that would provide the impetus for this investigation:

1. How do the teacher's interactions affect the child's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the teacher do and/or say to scaffold the writing instruction?
 - b. What things does the teacher do and/or say that potentially provide affective support for the student's learning?
2. How do the child's interactions affect the teacher's participation in the writing task?
 - a. What things does the child do and/or say that potentially influence the teacher's instructional decisions?

To the extent that the four teacher-student pairings are involved, the data that were presented throughout this chapter provides some information in response to both research questions. To provide a deeper understanding of the data displayed in the tables and figures, narrative extracts and descriptive explanations were interspersed throughout the sections.

Together, the data and descriptions attempt to offer the Reader a particular insight into the unique literacy event setting of each dyad, at particular points throughout the lesson.

This chapter presented the findings concerning the types of cognitive and affective verbal scaffolds used by teachers to promote their students' active engagement during the various writing activities. Also examined were three types of nonverbal communications that comprised the teachers' Timing Cues. These included two types of Wait Time (*Pointed Pauses* and *Tussle Times*) and *Teacher Interruptions*.

While the majority of the results presented focused on examining how the talk and timing cues used supported students' activity, some consideration was also given to how certain types of teacher-made interruptions could lead to misunderstandings arising between participants. When teachers were observed to intersect their students' more digressive comments or actions with short yet specific commands, these were noted to support the child's activity. However, whenever both participants repeatedly competed for conversational space, the quality of the conversations notably diminished as misunderstandings escalated. As a result the emotive nature of the learning environment was adversely affected.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Teachers characteristically exhibit a high degree of awareness for the ways in which a *learner's* behaviors potentially affect his or her management of a task. Often of less attention are the ways in which a *teacher's* style of interaction shapes the conversational climate of the instructional arena and ultimately affects the child's level of engagement with the learning task. The focus of this study then has been to firstly discern some of the communication types that are used as Reading Recovery teachers work in close collaboration with their students, and secondly to examine the subtle ways in which these types of speech influence students' strategic activity in completing a task.

Three main classes of talk were considered: (1) cognitive-based speech, predominantly based on Wood's (2003) five levels of contingent support; (2) affective-based speech, particularly how teachers used praise and more nurturing forms of talk to direct and encourage the children's participation; and (3) the timing cues, including the teachers' interruptions and calculated silences. In this chapter, the findings from the previous chapter are summarized and discussed. The first section of this chapter discusses the major findings. The second section discusses the implications of these findings for teachers' pedagogical practice. In the third section suggestions for further research are presented, and in the final section, the study's limitations are acknowledged.

Summary of the Findings and Discussion

As a result of the observations, some key factors, related to the ways in which teachers' communication was constructive, emerged.

Talk's Interconnectedness

Lyons (2003) cites research in neuroscience (Greenspan, 1997; LeDoux, 1996; Levine, 2002) that points to the significant role emotion has on one's learning. A child's ability to "think and problem solve is heavily dependent on positive affective experiences with others" (Lyons, 2003, p. 68). A child who experiences negative emotions in response to his or her performance in a particular task is not likely to enthusiastically engage in a similar type of task anytime soon. Conversely a child who is made to feel safe in his or her learning environment by being supported in his or her approximations of learning, is more likely to recognize the value involved in making mistakes—as a natural and necessary part of the process, rather than something to fear, ignore, and avoid.

While the intention of this study was to pick apart teachers' spoken commentaries so as to understand the academic intents bounded within each utterance, also of interest were the ways in which teachers' communications affectively promoted students' ongoing engagement with a writing-based task. While teachers' talk was undoubtedly instructive, specially positioned to direct the child's attention to the cognitive features of a particular task, it was also "relational and emotional" (Johnston, 2004, p. 2). This was particularly noted in the ways that teachers' interwove their cognitive and more nurturing speech forms to encourage their students' continued participation during the Story Conversation tasks.

Nurturing the child's strategic activities.

Within the shared story-eliciting conversations teachers notably positioned their instructive talk within Wood's fourth level of support, *Prepares for Next Action*, to promote students' recollections of events. Level 4 talk incorporated restrictive questioning procedures, from which the child could typically provide a limited number of answers. When considering the

time limits involved for this task (i.e., 1-2 minutes only), it is not surprising that the teacher has to position her instructive commentary in a restrictive manner in order to retrieve the most amount of information in a minimum of time. In addition, Verbal Emotional commentary was the most used type of affective speech in this task. Because of the emotionally distinctive nature of the story conversations, the forms of talk teachers used had to thoughtfully persuade the child to personally engage—to enthusiastically reveal those personally singular details related to his or her particular experiences upon which his or her story was usually based. By reacting directly to the child's specific story contributions with expressions of sincere interest (i.e., Darcy's "Wowwww!" in response to Colin's dramatic narration of events; the demonstrative "fist-bump" Cassandra offers James when she invites him to consider "Should we call it that?"), teachers validated each student's role as a joint-collaborator in the tasks, thereby sustaining his or her attention and more so, his or her participation.

The cognitive dimensions of praise.

During the lessons, the types of praise the teachers imparted varied from more to less specific acknowledgements of the child's success. Though classified in the tables as affective speech types, at its core, each type of praise offered always had a cognitive intent—to confirm the strategic activities used by the child to resolve a problem. Teachers provided praise in response to the students' strategic resolution of a piece of text (i.e., for a successful writing of a word) but they also used praise to acknowledge a child's active attempts to problem solve even if he or she did not fully remedy the situation. Teachers also focused their praise on the efforts students expended in response to a task—even if what was demonstrated was only a rudimentary awareness that 'something' was amiss. After Colin partially corrected the arrangement of his cut-

up story, Darcy praised, “You did some checking there,” recognizing his active attempt to participate in the activity in any way he could.

Lyons (2003) asserts that teachers “must learn how to create effective contexts and shape instruction to facilitate children’s understandings of reading and writing processes” (p. 143). As children are always in the process of ‘becoming’ more literate (Johnston, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978), they not only need to know *how* to solve the problems they encounter, they need to understand *when* their approximations are sound. By basing one’s praise on a child’s demonstrated effort and on the strategies he or she has successfully used, teachers “show the consequence of a process, making it into a [cognitive based] tool that the child can use again on another occasion to accomplish a similar end” (Johnston, 2012, p. 42). Thus “praise”, especially more clarifying forms of confirmation that focus on the partially correct aspects of a child’s attempts, imparts to the child “which part of a not quite successful strategy was productive” (Johnston, 2012, p. 47). When praise is used in this manner—“finding the edge of students’ learning and helping them to take up possibilities for growth” (p. 49)—it becomes a type of formative assessment that not only informs teachers’ interactions, but shapes students’ learning in positive and specific ways.

Practicing “Self-Inhibition”

Lose (2007) defines self-inhibition as “leaving space for the learner to do what he [or she] can to problem solve, inhibiting the inclination to do for the child what he [or she] can do for him[her]self” (p 21). Teachers involved in this study effectively practiced self-inhibition whenever they varied their talk-types and fluctuated the levels of cognitive support in response to students’ demonstrated needs. By also offering the different wait times, students were encouragingly persuaded by their teachers to maintain a participatory stance towards the learning tasks. Teachers were also noted to keep the majority of their teaching demonstrations clear and

their commentary concise, speaking only when necessary so as to induce students' continued action.

Teaching contingently: Fluctuating the levels of support.

Throughout this study the teachers strove to respond contingently to each of their student's needs, adjusting a task's difficulty by fluctuating the levels of their support to offer more or less help as needed. In addition they intentionally provided "space" for students to act by offering Wait Time. As a result, students were able to retain a participatory stance in the learning, contributing whatever they could towards a task's final resolution. The teachers thus practiced what Lose (2007) identifies as *Self-Inhibition*—"inhibiting the inclination to do for the child what he can do for himself" (p. 21).

In order to ascertain at which points during a task children needed support and when they needed space, the teachers in this study had to become "especially observant" (Lose, 2007, p. 30) of:

- Children's nonverbal behaviours: (e.g., Colin's reluctant silences during the Story Conversation task).
- Children's divergent behaviours (e.g., James' "They've got eyes!").
- Distinctive sounds or actions produced by children that potentially indicated their awareness for a problem outside of their control (e.g., Marc's "La-la-laaa").
- The leading edge of children's emerging understandings and their persistent difficulties: (e.g., In response to Marianne's recording of "liek" Lydia confirms the correct aspects of the student's solving: "You're got all the right letters. We just need to switch these two around.").

Only when a sensitive attunement to their child's ways of responding was deliberately maintained could teachers astutely consider the possible meanings contained within. As previously discussed in the fourth chapter, Jan, as a careful observer of her student, quickly noticed the disengagement signaled by Marc's "la-la-laaaaa" as he made his cut-up story. When children react emotively to a learning task, Clay (2005b) urges teachers to consider the child's point of view—to regard more digressive behaviours as indicators of frustration and that perhaps he or she has monitored 'something' puzzling in the task. Rather than rebuke Marc for his singing, Jan shrewdly observes the source of his apprehension—the teacher-made error written on one of the word cards—and she uses a mix of both cognitive and affective forms of speech to resolve the dilemma. Her responding comment ("Oh, you know what I did?") indirectly demonstrates to Marc that his tuneful monitoring of the situation has been significant, as it has drawn her attention to the 'something' as well. Jan's explanation ("I wrote the wrong word! I wrote "nice". You told me "cute", didn't you?") not only openly distinguishes that there is an actual problem, but the nature of her praise confirms Marc's previous contribution while sensitively assuming ownership of the error. Her continuing jocularity ("For goodness sake Mrs. _____! What am I thinking?") further lessens the child's unease. Marc's cathartic laugh, in response to his teacher's playful tone, releases tension. As Jan rewrites the word onto a new card and hands it over to him, Marc is able to confidently carry on with the task, completing and reading his sentence aloud, without displaying further indications of unease.

When a child experiences difficulty with a task, there are a number of instructive responses from which a teacher can choose. She can immediately present the student with greater degrees of verbal support or she can retreat, providing the child with a few seconds of *Wait Time* in order to observe his or her next action. When offering more precise forms of help, the teacher

may fluctuate the level of her verbal supports—perhaps directly demonstrating a task’s intended resolution, or providing a minimalist clue that merely hints at what aspect to consider next. As the child succeeds with this portion of the task, he or she eventually comes face to face with a new problem and, as before, the teacher has to decide upon the next move: continue offering the child various degrees of verbal support or fade it altogether. Whatever the case may be, the teacher has to be flexible—basing the instructive language upon the student’s ever-changing understandings—and especially observant, actively looking for those indications that highlight the child’s particular understandings as well as his/her confusions.

Incorporating wait time.

Sometimes too much teacher talk and a gratuitous application of “helping moves” get in the way of the child’s smooth processing of information. Simply sitting back and waiting can be powerful teaching actions. When the teachers delayed further commentary after presenting their prompts or after the child began to engage with an activity, they freed *themselves* up to listen to and closely observe their students’ actions. As previously revealed, by intentionally supplying intervals of silent time, teachers created conversational spaces wholly dedicated to the child’s communications. When students were given ‘time’ to act and think without interruption, they could demonstrate their understandings or exhibit frustrations (i.e., Marc’s “thin” laugh; James’ long-winded, but accurate account of how “Baby Bear got a new blue car”). As a result, the teachers were better able to discern what part of the activity was occupying students’ attention and driving their efforts.

Research by Rowe (1972, 1986) examines the significant effects that Wait Time has on the learning outcomes for students. Waiting “3 seconds or longer . . . after a [teacher’s] question and after a [student’s] response” (Rowe 1986, p. 48) was found to noticeably improve the quality of

both students' responses and teachers' instructive patterns of discourse. For students the following positive outcomes were noted:

- The accuracy and length of students' responses increased.
- Students asked more questions and gave less "I don't know" responses. In addition students maintained a more confident tone when speaking.
- Students took risks by making speculative guesses; they also made more logical inferences supporting these with other forms of evidence.
- Students' motivation and engagement with the task increased. As a result, teachers' disciplinary moves decreased.

Teachers' extended pausing thus demonstrated to students that the teachers "cared about what [they] really thought" (p. 44) rather than just what they said.

Significant changes in teachers' patterns of communication were also observed:

- Because of the increased wait times, students' ideas could now be heard in their entirety. As a result, teachers' questioning practices changed, becoming more varied, flexible, and cognitively complex as they focused on inviting students to offer further clarification or elaboration on their ideas rather than just recalling the "right" answer.
- When the lengths of the wait time were increased, teachers' expectations for the performance of certain students improved. Because teachers offered more time in which to respond, more students could respond, increasing the proportion of student talk overall.

Thus "some previously 'invisible' people became visible" (p. 45).

In considering the teachers and students in this study, similar effects were achieved when appropriate Wait Times were offered.

An economical use of language.

Clay (2005b) puts an emphasis on teachers using “an economy of words” (p. 87) when instructing students in the lessons, stressing that *too much* teacher-talk interferes with the child’s processing of information. Whenever the child’s attention veers off-track from an activity—either because of his or her own inner contemplations or the teacher’s excessive explanations—valuable time becomes exhausted as the teacher’s attention has to first close the contravening issue, and then work to redirect both her and her student’s attention back to the original task.

As previously illustrated in Chapter 4 (p. 19), Jan’s continued verbal encouragements during her and Marc’s story eliciting conversation, (“Maybe that’s what we’re going to write about today, hey? ‘Cause that’s a pretty interesting thing happening to you, right? . . . Yes?”) although kindly meant to help Marc devise a story for writing, only serves to distract his attention from the task. Combine the extraneous nature of her speech with the fact it was abruptly provided just as the child’s narration was underway, and it is understandable that teachers, though having the best intentions to help, sometimes unwittingly create the chaos that their children experience.

While “conversations in the lesson should be warm and friendly. . . when the child must attend to something, or must pull several things together, the prompt should be short, clear and direct” (Clay, 2005b, p. 202). Considering there is only 10-11 minutes in which to orally compose, record, and remake the child’s special message, and that children in Reading Recovery are typically the ones with the most confusions about learning to read and write texts, every moment of that time must be used expediently.

Use of Regulatory Talk and Competitive Interruptions

While the term “interruption” might quickly elicit more negative impressions of turn-competitive types, interruptions can be useful when used thoughtfully and for a particular purpose. When a child repeats the same unhelpful behaviour over and over, he or she eventually “forms a rapid neural response” (Clay, 2005b, p. 167) that interferes with his or her ability to learn new skills. Thus, a delicate balance must be thoughtfully maintained between encouraging a child’s helpful approximations and preventing “old error patterns” (p. 167), that get in the way of learning more productive behaviours, from reoccurring.

As illustrated in the conversational extracts from Chapter 4, Cassandra, to ensure her student’s attention remained focused on a particular aspect of a learning task, was often observed to use cooperative interruptions and Teacher Directed comments that quickly thwarted James’ less helpful behaviours.

Authoritarian in nature, *Teacher Directed* comments essentially worked to preserve the teacher’s “power” over the lessons. But sometimes these more domineering forms of teacher-talk, like the competitive interruptions described by Bogotić (2009), were needed to maintain the child’s attention and ultimately to preserve the pace of the lesson. Clay (2005b) herself directs teachers to “butt in with a demand” (p. 171) whenever they notice the child is attending to less appropriate details or whenever his or her attention becomes compromised by more external influences. When the child’s attention is disrupted—either by his or her own reflective musings, a noisy setting, or because of some perceived difficulty—the child is not able to attend to the more salient features of a task and will not gain any new learning. As the more experienced participant in their community of practice, the teacher sometimes has to be “The Boss” externally regulating the child’s attention at certain points so that learning can proceed. Once the

child's attention has been reestablished though, the teacher can fade these more direct forms of support and, by varying the levels and types of her communication, she can adjust the level of a task's difficulty once again to encourage the child to take on his or her shared role in the solving process.

Observing the Child's "Partially Correct"

Throughout her guidebook, Clay (2005b) repeatedly reminds teachers to "Use the child's association (not what helps you)" (p. 175) when arranging effective instruction. As noted throughout many of the examples presented in Chapter 4, when teachers based their instructive commentary on students' *demonstrated* understandings, they automatically ensured their students' active participation, which subsequently set them up to experience a measure of success. When instruction however, notably embraced the teacher's agenda at the expense of the child's (Jan's emphasis of the last sound in "Out" versus Marc's detection: "'Ow', out . . . Ooo! That starts like 'Ow'."), Marc not only had a very difficult time determining his teacher's particular focus, but as a result, his emotional state became negatively affected (i.e.: his "thin", nervous laugh).

Wood (2003) insists that in order to provide helpful assistance with any learning task, teachers first have to "see a situation from the learner's point of view" (p. 8). Perspective taking is a valuable quality to develop: it not only encourages teachers to actively look for evidence of the child's "close approximations" (Lose, 2007, p. 21), but to consider these as legitimate sources of information when planning learning events for the child. When instruction can begin with a "joint focus of attention" (Johnston, 2004, p. 18), the child is already attending to the task, thus less time is wasted in making attempts to bring him or her to the teacher's level. In addition, because he or she already has some idea of how to work with the information, the child already

maintains a sense of ownership over the learning. Every prompt the teacher uses in relation to this *joint focus of attention*, will inherently be more meaningful to the child and ultimately, the child will have a better chance of completing the task successfully.

Lyons (2003) maintains that when a teacher teaches her student “how to use multiple strategies for reading and writing text and *sees to it* that [he or] she is successful in [his or] her attempts, *the child will learn how to learn*” (p. 72, emphasis added). To achieve this goal, teachers have to become “especially observant”, sensitively maintaining an awareness of the child’s particular ways of responding. As Clay (2005b) affirms, “Things will go faster if the teacher can pick up clues from the child of what is beginning to catch his attention” (p. 139).

Implications for Educational Practitioners

In examining the communications used by teachers that more notably encouraged students’ strategic activity, some insights into beneficial teaching practices have been gleaned. Above all, teachers, in order to develop their communicative competence, need to become “especially observant” (Lose, 2007) of their students—noting which behaviours indicate understandings or frustration. To become especially observant, presented next are four instructional suggestions for teachers to consider when working with their students.

Becoming “Especially Observant”

Working together in a one-on-one setting with a learner affords the Reading Recovery teacher a uniquely specialized opportunity to customize her instruction to the particular needs and strengths of the child with whom she is working. It is a tricky task indeed to arrange instruction that continually meets the specific needs of one child in an individualized setting (Wood, 2003), let alone an assembly of children within larger venues. Even Clay speaks to the complexity involved in accurately interpreting a child’s significant understandings: “Reading

Recovery procedures . . . provide a *misty window* on the perceptual and cognitive working of the brains of young readers and writers who are tussling with the complexity of messages” (Clay, 2005b, p. 117, emphasis added). Yet by closely attending to a child’s patterns of responding, a teacher can begin to distinguish between the understandings over which the child truly has control, the leading edges of the child’s newer understandings, as well as the ideas the child does not yet grasp.

Consider the child’s point of view.

To develop one’s observational competence teachers need to first consider the child’s point of view when assessing learning situations. This is not to say that adult perceptions or mandated curricula are unwelcome—indeed, both are essential to the organization of effective instruction. Teachers (and those who write curricula), in comparison to their young charges, have a greater amount of experience and instructional expertise. If children are going to be regarded as active members of their learning community though, what also needs to occur is a thoughtful awareness for the child’s point of view. By examining learning situations with the child’s eye, teachers gain a deeper appreciation for the particular understandings children actually maintain. In arranging any student’s learning journey, it certainly helps to see where you are going, but it is also important to know at which point you already are on that path. Only then can you successfully determine how far you need to travel.

Consider the emotive nature of your learning environment.

Lyons (2003) speaks to the critical role that emotion plays in one’s literate development stating that: “Recent neurological research proves that emotions are central to learning. They impact what children learn, how they learn it, and how they feel about themselves while engaged

in the learning process” (p. 72). By taking stock of the conversational climate within their particular learning settings, teachers can begin to improve their communicative competence.

“Teaching”, and the talk that is used in its management, inherently centers on illuminating the cognitive dimensions of a learning task. Yet teachers must also strive to build sincere relationships with each of their students; to become emotionally responsive with each child in genuine ways. Authenticity in teaching means that the learning-centered conversations that occur need to not only come from the head, but “from the heart as well” (Lyons, 2003, p. 142). For optimum learning to occur a genuine sense of “shared joy” must exist between a teacher and the child (Holdaway, 1979 and Lose (1991, 1997, 2005) in Lose, 2007, p. 30).

To develop this state of shared joy (and the sense of trust it implies), collaborative relationships must be forged between children and their teachers. Teachers can achieve this by openly “sharing themselves and risk revealing themselves and their thinking” (Johnston, 1999 and Lindfors, 1999 in Lyons, 2003, p. 142). As previously illustrated, Jan attempts to do this when she openly assumes ownership of the error on the word card. Not only does she demonstrate to Marc that noticing mistakes are crucial to learning, but her lighthearted reaction to it also shows him that they are nothing to fear.

In order to begin to gauge the emotional atmosphere of their learning setting, teachers can ask themselves the following questions:

- At different points throughout the lesson, consider “Who’s in charge?” or “Who’s leading the learning?”. Does the teacher make most of the instructive decisions, following his or her personal notions of what learning should entail? What kinds of opportunities are made available for children to take an active role in the learning experience?

- Who does more of the talking within the learning environment? What kinds of opportunities are provided in which students are able to voice and/or demonstrate their understandings? What might be the ratio of talk (student: teacher) within the learning environment?
- How do children typically communicate in this learning environment? How are they supported to share their understandings and to “step out of their comfort zone” in order to take risks in learning?
- What is the physical layout of the learning environment? Is furniture arranged in such a manner that logistically encourages collaboration between teacher and student? Between students themselves?

Once we start to think about a topic, we begin to develop a more open awareness for that topic. As teaching practitioners, we work towards positioning “children’s attention to the significant features . . . of learning in different domains” (Johnston, 2004, p. 11). As teaching professionals, we need to follow suit. “Noticing and naming is a central part of being a communicating human being . . . it is also crucial to becoming capable in particular activities” (p. 11). If teachers truly are interested in developing their communicative competence, examining their instructive learning environments then, with a considerate eye, is a key starting point.

Intentionally examine your patterns of communication.

While Wood’s work on contingent tutoring specifically offers Reading Recovery teachers a constructive framework within which to evaluate the efficacy of the instructive language they use with children, his levels of intervention can be applied to the instructive speech used by teaching professionals in any domain. Furthermore, the affective categories and the timing cues

that were used to classify the Reading Recovery teachers' communications can also be used to examine one's speech.

Within each of Wood's levels of support, a myriad of responses exist. In addition, there is no hierarchical manner in which to present the verbal prompts. Rather, as the examples presented throughout Chapter 4 attempt to illustrate, teachers fluctuated the levels and types of support in direct response to their child's needs. All of the types of talk examined can be used "in any interaction, in any lesson activity, at any point in the child's literacy development" (Lose, 2007, p. 28). For teachers interested in examining the efficacy of their instructive speech, what is key then is figuring out in which category their different types of talk *more or less* reside. As one examines his or her patterns of interaction, some questions can be considered:

- What types of talk are predominantly used? Do they vary in type and level of support? Are some levels of support used more often than others?
- What sort of conversational "space" is provided for students to display their understandings? Are there occurrences of cooperative interruptions? Competitive interruptions? When do these arise in the conversations?
- What kinds of Wait Time are children provided with? For how long do they usually last?
- What kind of praise-based speech is typically used? What kind of constructive feedback is provided? At what point in the conversations do either of these types of talk arise? Directly after an event? Are they used prior to an activity to remind the child of his or her past successes? How are they offered? Are they used indiscriminately or for a specific purpose? How much of the teacher's affective talk is "praise-based" versus "feedback-based"? (see Johnston, 2012). How do children respond to each of these speech types?

Again, as Johnston (2004) affirms, “Once we start noticing certain things, it is difficult not to notice them again” (p. 11).

Teachers can follow the approaches used in this study, specifically, audiotaping the verbal interactions that occur as they work with one student, a small group, or even the entire class. For the conversations in this study, a small handheld, digital audio recording device was employed, as it was the least obtrusive. Prior to engaging in such an approach, teachers might wish to notify parents and administrators of their intent and rationale.

Keep records of the child’s ways of responding.

The teachers in this study notably kept detailed records of their students’ demonstrated and partial understandings in a variety of ways. The teachers involved in this study were observed to frequently record their specific observations of students’ strategic activity on the Daily Lesson Records they kept in the child’s binder. In addition, successfully solved words were included on each child’s Writing Vocabulary chart, and their numbers tracked on an accompanying graph. All of this data provided teachers with a valuable record showing the child’s strategic activity for that day.

Perhaps most valuable though was the top page of students’ writing books. An valued source of evidence, the top page provided teachers with a record of each day’s strategic activity, illustrating students’ developing understandings about writing over time. As a separate *thinking space* from the bottom (“publishing”) page, students were always encouraged to “Try up top first” when first attempting to write a new word. In addition, teachers could use this page to offer more explicit forms of support—drawing in the sound boxes or providing models of words and letters that the child could then copy onto his or her bottom page. Having an actual physical space in which to puzzle out one’s thinking meant that some of these top pages became messy—

cluttered up with evidence of the teacher and child's shared endeavors. The benefit of the top page though is what it ultimately signifies—that learning in any form is both communal and oftentimes a little bit messy.

Developing a Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Reading Recovery teachers are explicitly supported in their endeavors to explore the effectiveness of their communication patterns through their collegial cohort and Teacher Leader. Within the group meeting times, specific texts and instructional themes are used to guide the discussions.

Teachers, administrative leaders, and other professionals, if they are to effectively sustain a mindful awareness of the efficacy of their communication patterns, should consider the establishment of a *Professional Learning Community* (PLC) dedicated to the examination of and reflection upon efficient communicative practices within whatever context they engage. Many of the resources listed in the final pages of this thesis—particularly Peter Johnson's (2004, 2012) books on using language—would be excellent sources of information that teachers in particular, might find useful to explore in the format of a book study or in their personal reading.

Implications for Further Research

Conducting this study points to the need for further research in the following areas:

1. To obtain data for this study, the Researcher visited each teacher on two separate occasions only. Given the brief nature of the collection period, it would be useful to obtain results from a similarly designed study conducted over a longer period of time—perhaps visiting teachers with their respective student once a month for the entire duration of the child's programme. This would allow a Researcher to note the evolving ways in which a teacher's talk changed in response to his or her student's changing needs.

2. Each teacher involved in this study had been a Reading Recovery teacher for varying lengths of time. One teacher was in her second year of Reading Recovery teaching while another had eight years of Reading Recovery teaching experience. A similar study might examine the talk and timing cues used by teachers with similar years of experience or might purposely compare the patterns of communication between the more and less experienced teachers of Reading Recovery in order to determine the ways in which talk was used effectively. One old saying tells us that experience is the best teacher. Are more experienced teachers better able to use talk and timing cues for the benefit of their students? Has their teaching experience taught them to be better teachers?
3. Examination of the *students'* speech, hesitations, and interruptions and how these affect the teachers' involvement in the learning task.
4. Examination of the *gestural forms of communication* used by teachers and how these are typically used with the spoken word to convey a message more clearly.
5. Examination into the competitive versus cooperative nature of *interruptions* and how these can help and hinder the child's learning.
6. Examination of teachers' specific use of *Wait Time*. Following on from Rowe's work with "wait times", Stahl (as mentioned in Dhindsa, 2010) created the concept of "think-time", defining this idea as a "distinct period of uninterrupted silence . . . that allows for the completion of appropriate information-processing tasks, feelings, oral responses, and actions" (p. 75). Whereas Rowe (and this study) examined only two types of Wait Time, Stahl describes eight categories of "think-time" which arise depending on the moment at which they occur and by the primary function they perform during the instructive conversations. These include:

- Post-Teacher Question Wait Time,
- Within-Student's Response Pause-Time,
- Post-Student's Response Wait-Time,
- Student Pause-Time,
- Teacher Pause-Time,
- Within-Teacher Presentation Pause-Time,
- Student Task-Completion Work-Time, and
- Impact Pause-Time.

Using Stahl's framework, investigations could consider when and how these silent periods occur in a Reading Recovery or classroom setting.

7. The findings from this study also raise the question of how might a classroom teacher's style of discourse, when faced with a larger group of diverse learners, affect the social nature of the classroom environment as well as influence individuals' intellectual development? Classroom studies of conversational interaction (i.e., teacher-students; students-students; teacher-educational assistant; educational assistant-students, etc.) as well as studies of the social and learning interactions among educational colleagues would greatly contribute to furthering our understandings of how language affects one's cognitive and social development within that particular context.
8. While beyond the scope of this study, in light of some of the findings and in recognizing alternative learning perspectives, further investigations are needed that examine the power structures inherent within the types of talk promoted by and within various learning settings. Schooling programmes, for the most part, are divided into grades that are predominantly based on age divisions. These grade level groupings are then divided into classes, which are

further divided into particular time lengths, and discrete chunks of curricular learning time (D. Wallin, 2015, personal communication, February 7, 2015). As organizational structures, the school setting (on a grander scale), and the Reading Recovery setting (on a smaller scale), inevitably obliges its learners and teachers to perform according to their structural parameters to some degree. When learning of any type must be packed into specific blocks of time and at certain points in the day, does this adherence to the structural format of a learning system serve more to compel or create the types of learning students of the 21st century need? In other words, as an organizational structure, does a programme ultimately determine which kinds of learning and talk are most important?

In order to address these particular questions, investigations into the ways that conversation is used as an instructional tool in different types of settings is necessary. What would instructive-based conversations look like in more organic settings (i.e., the home environment) and in alternative educational environments? In addition to investigating the kinds of language that are used, what types of literacy learning are prioritized within these different settings? How do the communicative practices used within a particular context stimulate a progression of thought and promote the development of the learner's sense of agency?

Limitations of the Study

Particular limitations of this study have been acknowledged throughout this thesis. In addition to these, further limitations are presented below.

One of the biggest limitations of this study is the lack of video graphic evidence that could be used to visually corroborate and clarify some of the findings, particularly as they relate to the more action-based interchanges that occurred whenever student and teacher physically worked upon a task. While the Researcher made attempts to capture as many of these behaviours

as possible in the field notes, there were indisputably some moments in which the audio recorded information and written records did not always provide sufficient clarification of a particular verbal exchange. As such, the Researcher had to rely on her memory of the event, consult the teacher-participant's written reflections, reread the transcriptions, consult the child's photocopied story sample, and listen to the audio recordings repeatedly in order to classify the final context of the exchange. Furthermore, the gestural indications, facial expressions, and tonal inflections that typically accompany a person's verbal speech are an integral source of information in the determination of another's meaning. Oftentimes it is the more subtle (nonverbal) manifestations of behaviour that signify the true intent behind the verbally produced message. Signifying his or her emotional state, a person's posture, facial expressions, eye movements, use of space, and bodily gestures all provide clues as to that actual intent. While attempts were made to record as many of the nonverbal communications that occurred between teacher and student as often as possible, the fact remains that these types of behaviours were not consistently captured in the Researcher's field notes. As a result, the Researcher may have erroneously analyzed some of the comments made by the participants.

As previously noted in the Methods chapter, audio tapings of the teacher-student conversations was felt to be the least intrusive and most simplistic way in which to gather the necessary information. While video-taping the conversations was considered, the idea was discarded because of the complexities involved with having participants under the age of 18 years involved in the study. Not only would extensive guidelines have to be in place to protect the identities of the participants, but specific permissions would also have had to be obtained from the teachers, children, parents of the children, the school administrative team, in addition to divisional administrative personnel, and the university's ethics board. In addition, in order to

effectively analyze and incorporate the findings from these visual forms of data with the transcribed data and the field notes, a particular sub-set of data analysis and organizational skills would have been necessary to contend with the added volume of information. At this point in time, this was deemed beyond the Researcher's capabilities.

Because this study sought only to observe and analyze what *four teachers* said in the course of their instructive conversations with students, the findings thus gained are not generalizable. As Bryan (2009) observes, "The goal of case studies and small-n research is not one of generalizability" (p. 264). While the four cases examined during the course of this study offer some insights into the nature of the teachers' cognitive and affective based talk and use of the timing cues, "Generalizability. . . can only be achieved over time, through study replication with different participants in different settings" (p. 264). The very fact that the teachers in this study, while all Reading Recovery trained, all had been Reading Recovery teachers for different lengths of time, also impact the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation of this study concerns the status of the Researcher herself—a Reading Recovery teacher since 2004. During the analysis of the conversations and the accompanying field notes, it became difficult at times to make a distinction between the self as Researcher and the self as Reading Recovery Teacher. As a result, many preconceived notions were harbored concerning the types of talk and timing cues that would be found. Granted, having a background in the subject matter under investigation was certainly helpful with the tasks of gathering and interpreting the various data, but this working knowledge of the teaching procedures and prompts undeniably influences which types of data will be recognized over others. For example, *knowing* beforehand that a Level 3 intervention in writing typically entails that sound boxes will be drawn and/or vocal enunciations of the sounds within the word under analysis will be offered by the

teacher, meant that the Researcher anticipated these two types of nonverbal cues—possibly to the exclusion of others. Again, with the assistance of video graphic evidence or another observer in the room, perhaps other types of nonverbal support would have been discerned.

Although efforts were made to achieve a measure of inter-rater reliability, the results do show a relatively low percentage of agreement. In reflecting upon the reasons for this, two factors came to light that might offer at least a partial explanation.

First, and most importantly, because the data—the teachers' mediatory commentaries—are a socially created construct, *many* meanings can essentially be attributed to an individual comment. In addition, with only a typewritten copy of the verbal transactions to guide the Inter-rater, more external elements of communication (i.e., the tonal changes in inflection, the accompanying gestures, the “feel” of a weighted pause) accompanying the speech were not present during her analysis. To combat these issues, external frameworks for categorizing teachers' speech (i.e., Wood's Levels of Contingency in Table 1 and the affective talk framework from Table 2) were provided to the Inter-rater. However, unless a thorough familiarity is maintained with the framework used, *and* that level of familiarity is in tune with the other observer's degree of understanding, there undoubtedly remains an element of subjectivity when two different people interpret data of this nature.

Secondly, the Researcher must take ownership of any and all oversights, unintentionally made as they often were. As a novice investigator, the learning curve has been steep. At times, implementing the various procedures involved in this study, as thoroughly as possible, has been a challenge in itself, but perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of wearing the “Researcher hat” is learning to become especially reflective of the learning process. Although an attempt was made a second time to achieve a higher degree of inter-rater reliability, this was not necessarily

gained to the satisfaction of the Researcher. Thus an even more thorough approach to conducting this particular undertaking would be needed in future endeavors.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Wood's five levels of intervention determined the ways in which the majority of the teachers' cognitive based leveled talk was to be analyzed. The other types of communication—the cognitive-based but non-leveled categories of *Teacher Directed* speech and *Signal Words*, the three types of affective talk, and the three specific timing cues—were differentiated more so after the data was obtained. These categories, though still strongly shaped by the work done by Cromley and Azevedo (2005), Rowe (1972, 1986), Thompson (2009), and most importantly by Wood (2003), were fine-tuned in response to the deeper insights gained by the Researcher as she reexamined the data with a more experienced eye.

Although the conversational exchanges were audio recorded, having only one person directly writing down the things that the teacher and student said or did during the writing sessions meant that some of the participants' less visible behaviours might have been missed. Again, other recording strategies, such as video taping the lessons or having another observer in the room, while improving the consistency of the data, would have also meant greater distraction and more chance of a "reactive arrangement" (Bryan, 2009)—in which the behaviours of a study's participants become influenced simply because of their "awareness of involvement in a study" (p. 264)—taking place. In reflecting upon the attentive natures of some of the student-participants, there is little doubt they, particularly, would have found the extra devices and personage very diverting.

While the Researcher is very grateful to the four teachers who elected to participate in this study, the fact does remain that she previously knew most of the teacher-participants prior to occurrence of this study. It therefore remains a possibility that some of the teachers may have

behaved differently than if an unknown Researcher had been doing the observations. In addition, because of these previous associations, the interpretation of the conversational extracts and field notes may have been affected by the amiability felt towards the teacher-participants. Certainly the Researcher was aware of these interpersonal connections as she composed the final chapters, striving to portray each teacher's contributions as accurately and as objectively as possible. Conceivably a more impartial stance would have been achieved if the teacher-participants had been previously unknown to the Researcher. Finally, it also remains a possibility that Researcher's physical presence in the Reading Recovery room had some affect on the social interactions that occurred between the teachers and their students so that teacher and student felt some pressure to behave in particular ways.

Concluding Remarks

Rodgers (2000) notes that what seems like a casual conversation between a student and teacher in the context of reading and writing "is actually an excellent example of a highly skilled adult moving a child through his [or her] zone of proximal development" (p. 79). Reading Recovery teachers, in working closely with their struggling students, must make important "on the spot decisions" (McVee & Pearson, 2003, p. 66) about the best ways in which to support and promote the literacy development of their most vulnerable learners. The helpful conversations that transpire between learner and teacher as they collaborate on shared literacy tasks provides a genuine context in which the teacher helps the child work through her/his zpd by providing prompts that "guide him [or her] from one step to the next" (Lyons, 2003, p. 155). As teacher and child engage in talk to negotiate their way through the lesson, the teacher's *loan of consciousness* (Bruner, 1986) supports the student's efforts to "articulate or illustrate metalinguistic and metacognitive knowledge" (McVee & Pearson, p. 67). As a result the child,

through his/her active participation gains “some version of, ‘Yes, I can do this’” (Dyson, 1999 in Johnston, 2004, p. 29). In regarding him/herself as a *figuring out sort of person* (Johnston, 2004) the child can now begin to “imagine new possibilities” (p. 29), thus identifying him/herself as a capable learner with a sense of control.

The successful conversations noted in this study arose when the teachers continually endeavored to understand the meanings behind their students’ words and actions. When teachers considered their students’ perspectives, when they gave them cognitive space to think, speak, and act, and when they designed literacy activities that centered on children’s demonstrated understandings, they ensured their students had a “reasonable chance for success either from their own attempts or with support from the adult” (Lyons, 2003, p. 73).

While this study was specifically concerned with exploring the types of communication Reading Recovery teachers used as they worked in close contact with their student on a shared story-writing task, it is the hope that the overall import of the study might be considered beyond this particular leaning context. While Reading Recovery teachers necessarily engage in intentional self-reflection upon their didactic procedures as part and parcel of their practice, a number of researchers (Johnston, 2004, 2012; M. Rowe, 1972, 1986; D. Rowe, 1998) support the notion that teachers, in general, consider the ways in which their own verbal and nonverbal communicative patterns sets the “boundaries” (D. Rowe, 1998) for learning. Thus the understandings that have been gained by this study, while obviously pertinent to a Reading Recovery teacher’s continuing practice, are relevant to teachers who wish to examine their discursive practices with a keener eye, regardless of the setting. Again, results here are not generalizable, but those same results—and the study methods—might prove of value in opening minds to new ways of thinking about teaching and learning in a variety of contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Transcription Conventions

1. Pauses:

- One second: denoted by a single dash (-)
- Two or more seconds: are indicated with a series of dots, with one dot equaling one second: (. . . .)

2. Interruptions:

- **Interruptions:** denoted with two backslashes (/ /). These are placed directly at the point where the speaker's discourse has been interrupted by the other person.
- **Simultaneous utterances (Overlaps):** Overlaps between participants' contributions are marked using brackets ([[]]). Wherever overlap markings are noted in the transcripts they indicate at which point and for how long both speakers share the same conversational space.

3. Emphasis or Loud talk: Where teacher or child vocally emphasize a word or a letter, these are indicated in the text using a **bolded** font (i.e., too**ooth**)

4. Indecipherable or doubtful hearing: Using the symbols (**), these denote instances where the Researcher was unable to precisely determine what was being said.

5. Speaker's statement of letter names: Whenever a teacher or a child spelled out words using letter names, these are denoted in the transcripts using uppercase letters. (i.e., "Oh it's B, E, A, R.")

6. Researcher's Commentary and Observations: Within the field notes and transcripts, these are displayed within parentheses and sometimes accompanied by the abbreviations "OC".

(Adapted from: Thompson, 2009, p. 449; Van Bramer, 2003, p. 39.)

Appendix B. Reading Level Correlation Chart

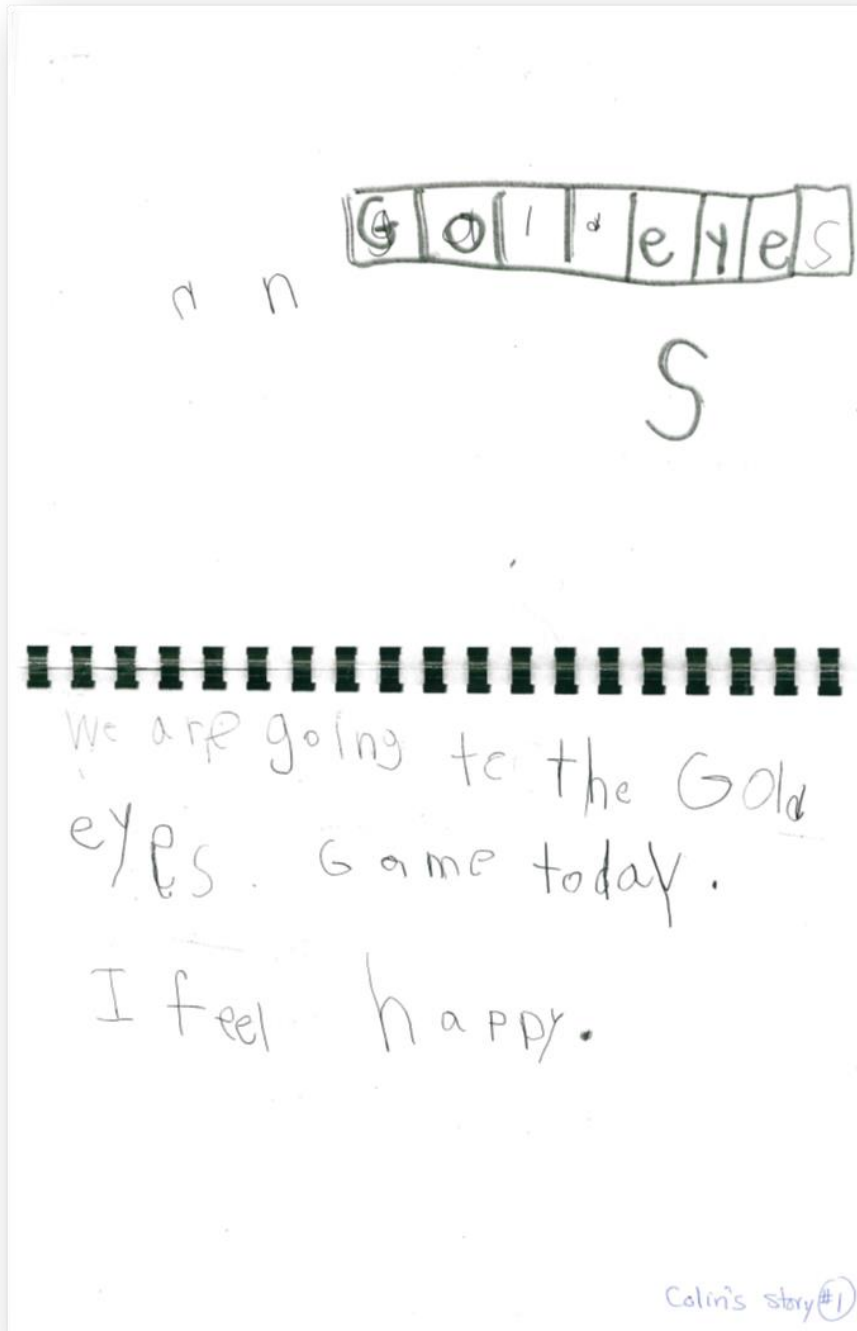
Reading Level Correlation Chart

Grade Level	Reading Recovery	Fountas-Pinnell Guided Reading	DRA	Basal Equivilant	Lexile Levels	
Kindergarten	A, B	A	A	Readiness		
	1		1			
	2	B	2	PrePrimer 1		
	3		3			
Grade 1	4	C	4	PrePrimer 2		
	5		6			
	6	D	8	PrePrimer 3		
	7					
	8					
	9	E	10	Primer		
	10					
	11	F	12	Grade 1		
	12					
	13					
	14	G	14	Grade 1	200-299	
	15					
	Grade 2	16	H	16	Grade 2	
		18				
Grade 3	20	I	20	Grade 2	300-399	
	22		28		400-499	
	24	J, K	30	Grade 3	500-599	
			34			
26	L, M	38	Grade 3	600-699		
28		40				
Grade 4	26	N	40	Grade 4	700-799	
Grade 5	28		44	Grade 5	800-899	
Grade 6	30	O, P		Grade 6	900-999	
Grade 7	32		44	Grade 7	1000-1100	
Grade 8	34	Z		Grade 8		

Source: <http://www.pennsaukenlibrary.org/ReadingConversionChart.pdf>. Used with permission.

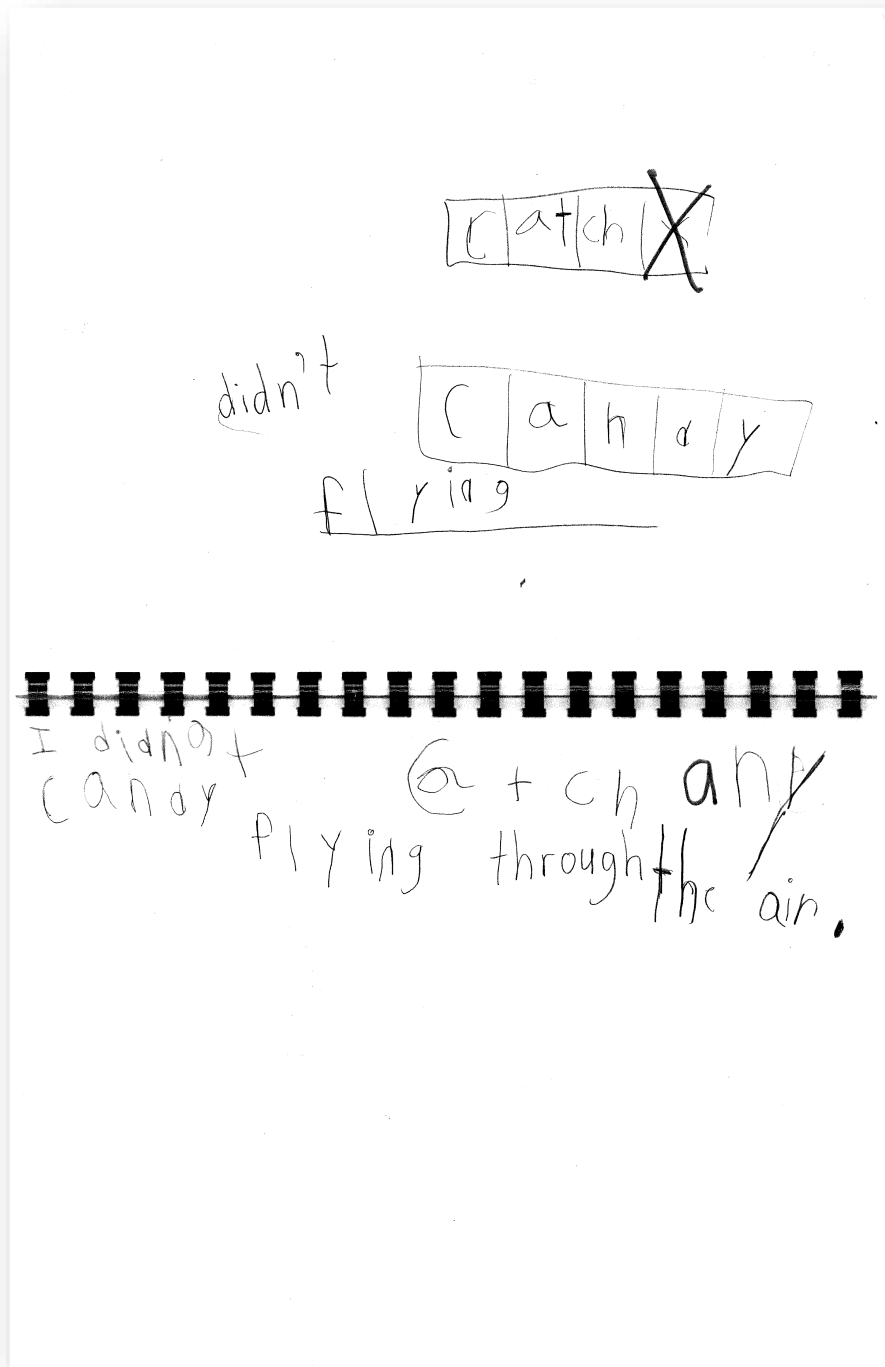
Appendix C. Darcy and Colin's Story #1

Top and bottom pages: "We are going to the Goldeyes game today. I feel happy."



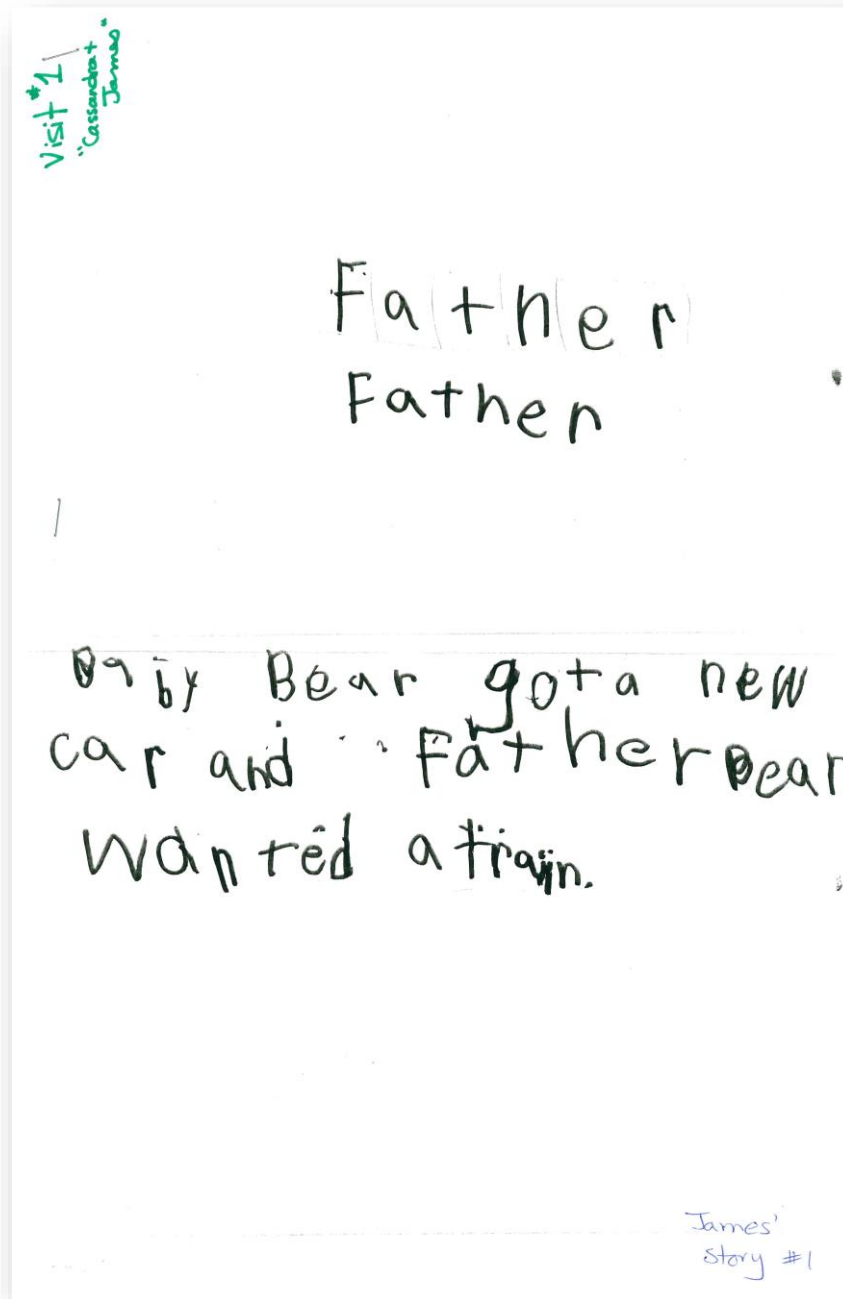
Appendix D. Darcy and Colin's Story #2

Top and bottom pages: *I didn't catch any candy flying through the air.*



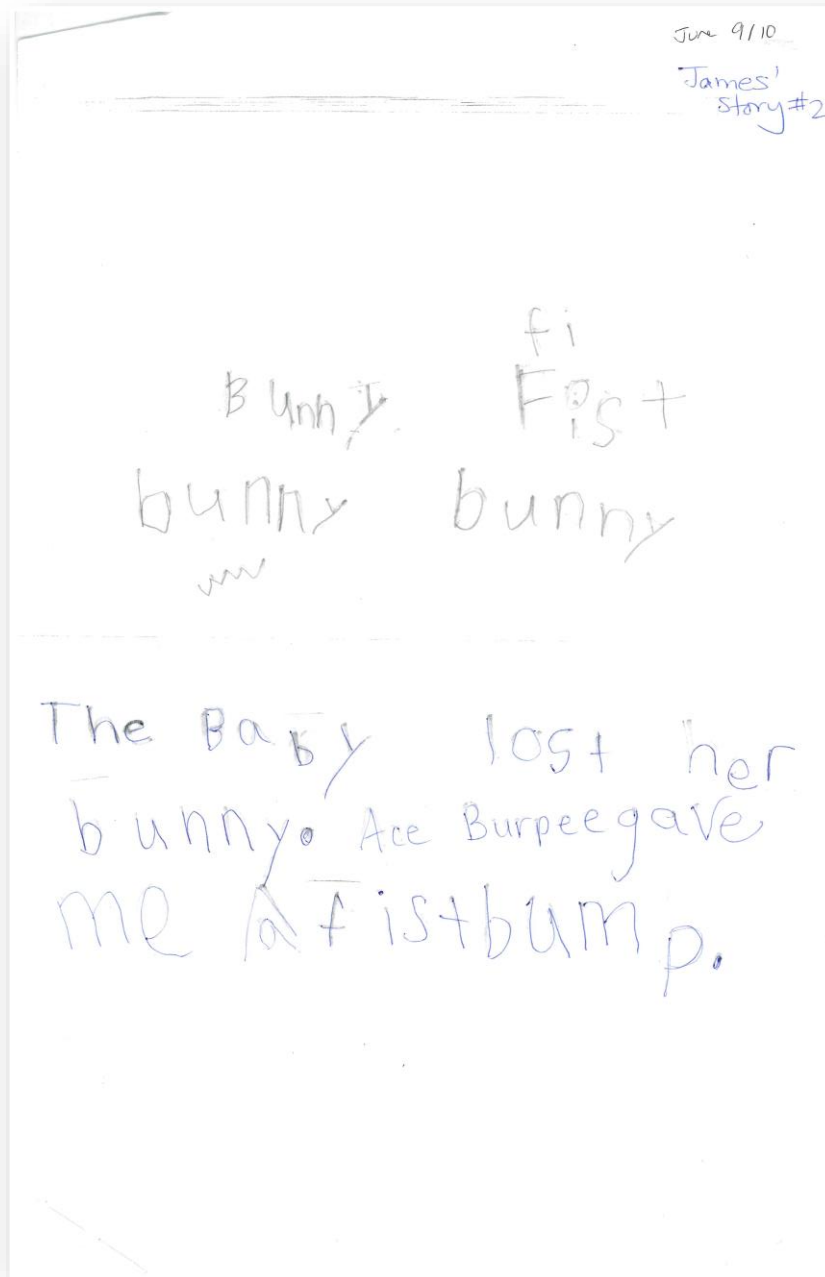
Appendix E. Cassandra and James' Story #1

Top and bottom pages: "Baby Bear got a new car and Father Bear wanted a train."



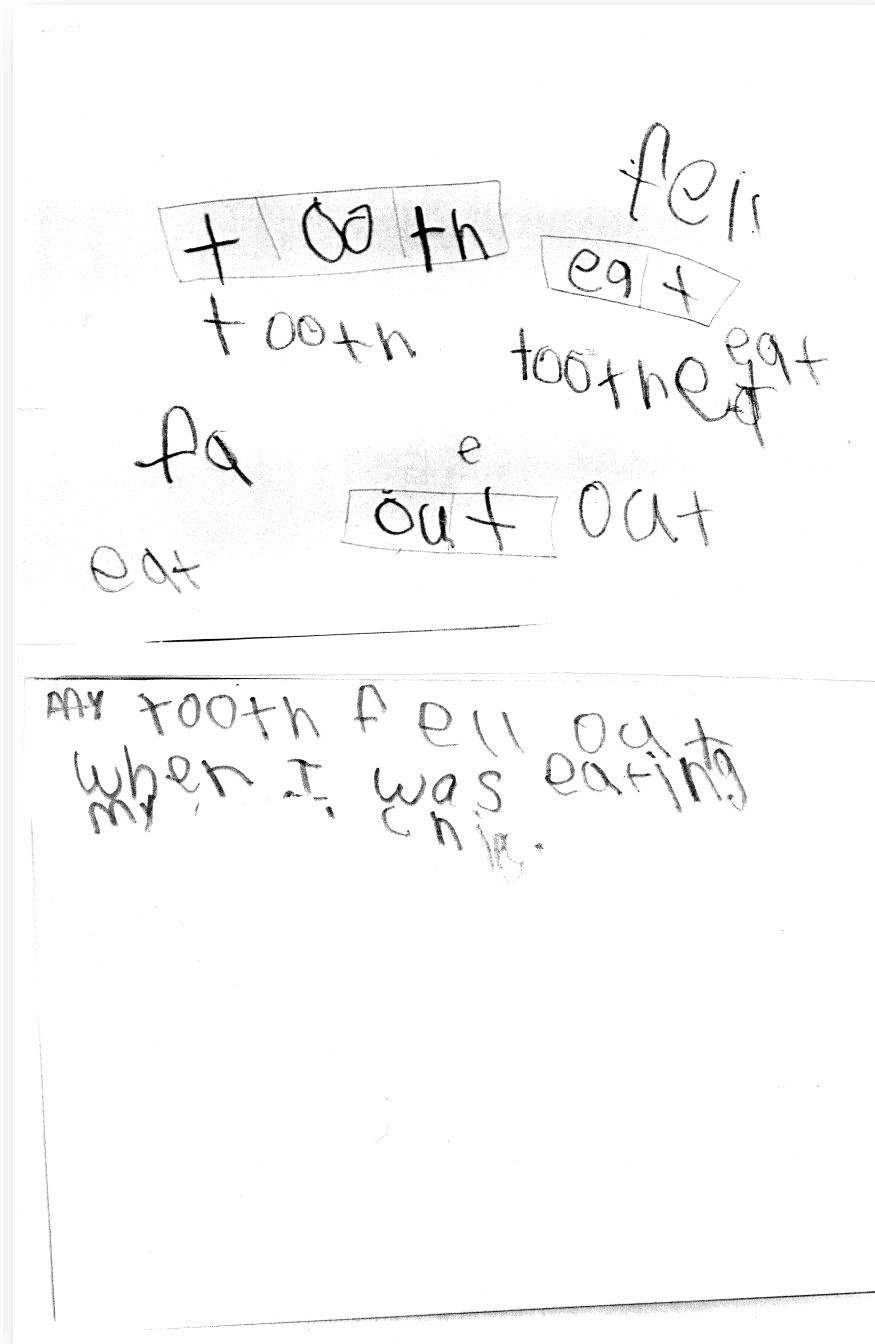
Appendix F. Cassandra and James' Story #2

Top and bottom pages: "The baby lost her bunny. Ace Burpee gave me a fist bump."



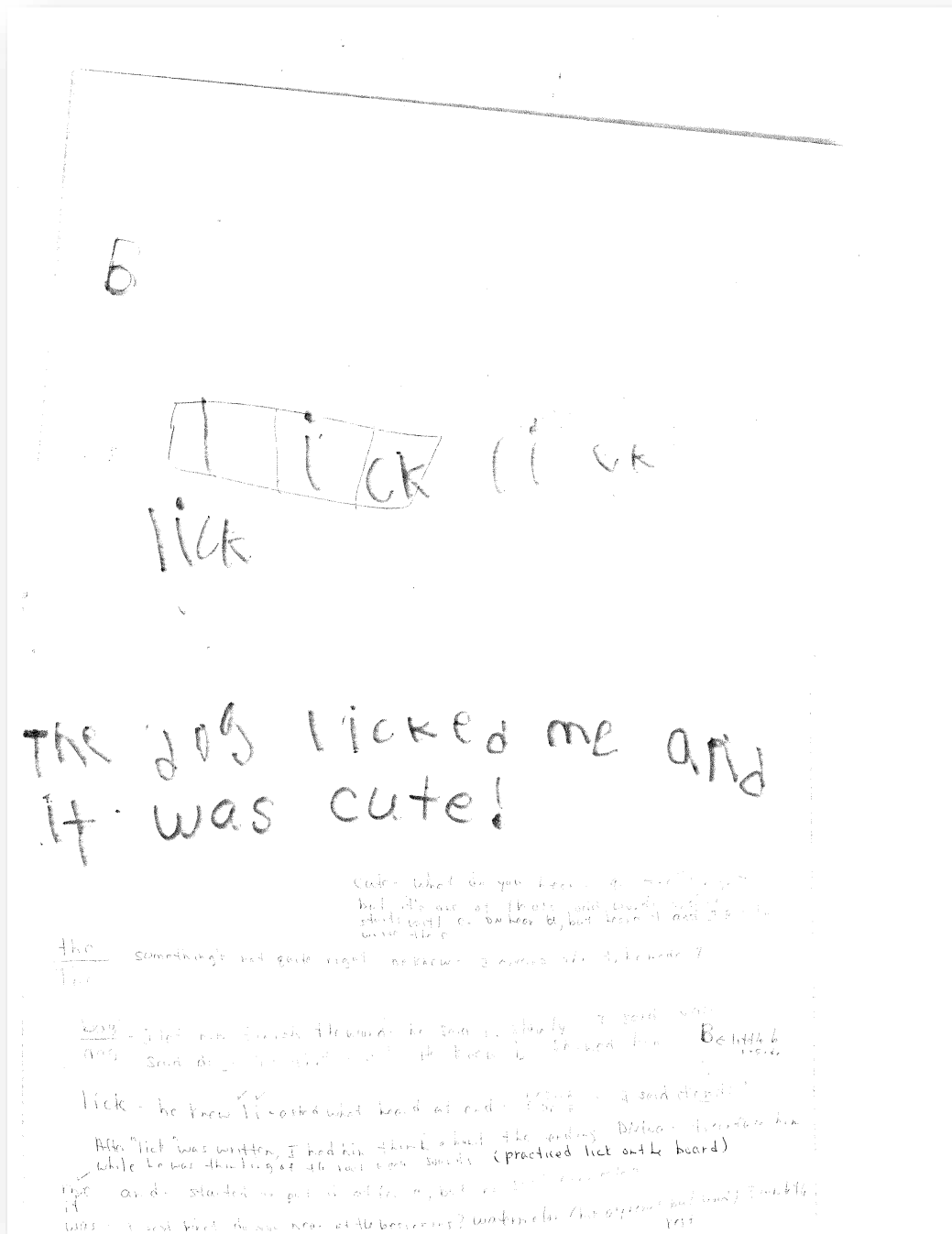
Appendix G. Jan and Marc's Story #1

Top and bottom pages: "My tooth fell out when I was eating my chips."



Appendix H. Jan and Marc's Story #2

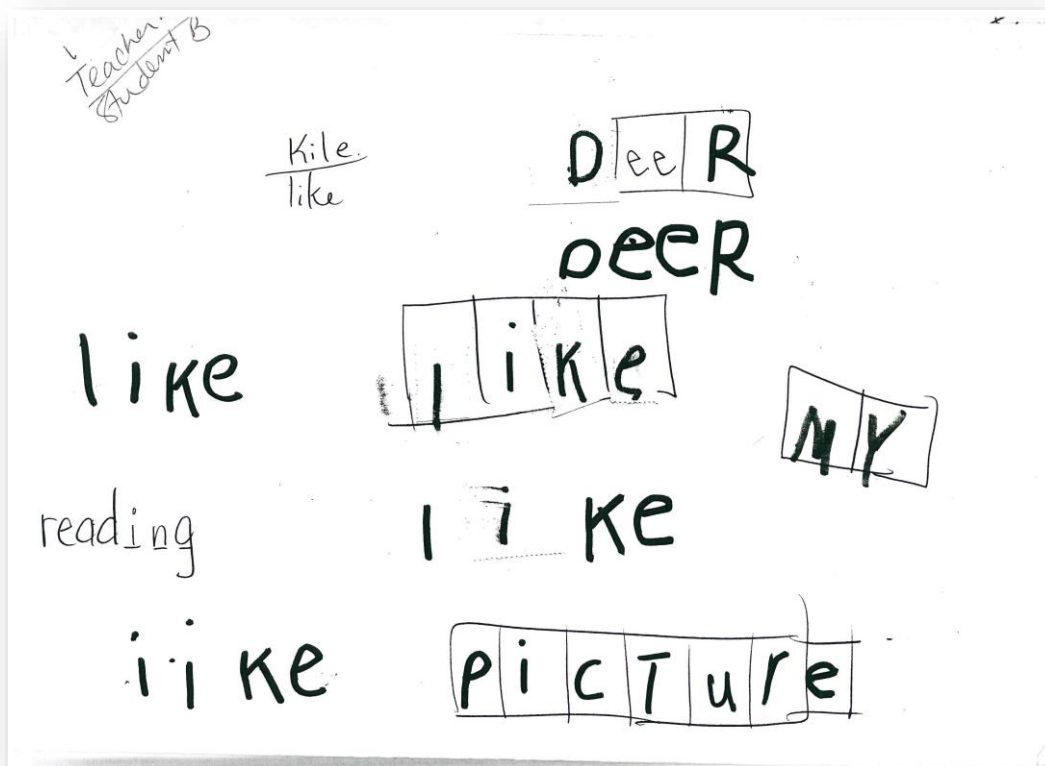
Top and bottom pages: "The dog licked me and it was cute!"



Appendix I. Lydia and Marianne's Story #1

Top page only: "I like the deer."

When asked to submit the story-writing sample after the observation of the first session, the teacher sent the appropriate top page to the Researcher. The bottom page was not included. Of interest is that Lydia seems to have used the same top page for more than the one story sentence.



Appendix J. Lydia and Marianne's Story #2

Researcher's notes and child's bottom page only: "Chipe (Chippy) is on my shirt."

As indicated in the field notes, all writing was done directly onto the bottom page of the child's writing book. The top page remained blank.

