LITERACY PEDAGOGIES OF A RECEPTION CLASS IN ENGLAND: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis:

In memory of my beloved father,

Her zaman bizimlesin, biliyorum. Seni çok seviyorum, canım babam.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years England's education system has experienced interventionist, neo-liberal educational reforms focused the everyday literacy pedagogies of early years teaching staff. These reforms, which have included high-stakes accountability measures, have given rise to contentious political debates regarding their impact on values and practice in primary schools. This study focuses on exploring these debated practices through an in-depth exploration of the literacy pedagogies in one reception class within a maintained primary school in order to answer the research question: 'what matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England?'.

Embracing socio-cultural approaches and understandings of literacies and literacy pedagogies, the ethnographic case study is developed from the data collected from over nine months of participant observations, interviews with teaching staff, six children and their parents and a play-like attitude scale with children in the class. Cultural-historical Activity Theory is utilised as the analytical framework to represent the coded data.

The study found that a shared purpose determined the nature of the literacy pedagogies in the reception class. The teaching staff set an object of reaching the 'expected' level for literacy in the EYFS for all children, and for as many as possible to achieve beyond the EYFS Framework. The object was formed by the need to meet the demands of people and organisations outside the class. This finding signalled the invisibility of the class members (teaching staff, children and parents) in the formation of the shared object and therefore in the literacy pedagogies that eventuated from it.

The prioritisation of the children deemed 'high ability' in the object had implications for the workforce and the application of literacy pedagogies. The more expert teaching staff taught these 'high ability' children in the schooled literacy skills the school valued most highly. The teacher was mainly responsible for all types of assessment, and the teaching assistants were primarily concerned with the specifics of teaching schooled literacy, thereby establishing the assumption that assessment requires higher expertise than teaching schooled literacy. The study analyses the hierarchies, values and assumptions underpinning these literacy pedagogies and argues that a 'delivery' model of schooled literacy skills was established, which substantially inhibited the recognition and integration of children's funds of knowledge and identities into the literacy pedagogies of the class and which made parents accountable to the teaching staff in conducting activities that were intended to enhance children's systematic synthetic phonics skills in particular. Moreover, even though it was the teaching

staff who created and presented the literacy pedagogies each day, their pedagogical practices were generally in conflict with the staff's own views and values. The study therefore illustrates the powerful impact of interventionist and neo-liberal educational reforms on the day-to-day teaching experience of all members of the class. The implications of the study for educational research, policy and practice are suggested, for England and for other countries tempted by globalised, neo-liberal assumptions to enact similar reforms on their education systems.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Relevance of the Research Focus

This is a thesis about everyday literacy pedagogies of a reception class in England, which takes an ethnographic approach and considers literacy as a social practice. However, the origins of this thesis lie in my own interests in early years education and literacy and the way these have been enacted in my home country of Turkey, as the national policy has developed. To explain, in 2018, the Turkish Ministry of National Education declared that, from 2023, early years education for five-year-old children would be compulsory in the Education Vision 2023 report (The Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). The ministry further aims to legislate objective common quality standards for schools beginning from early years and evaluate the performance of schools by comparing it against other school's results at a local and national level. The results of the school assessments seem to be high-stakes as the government staff will use them for evaluating "the school performance … identification of teachers' professional development needs, measurement of curriculum efficiency, and analysis of physical capacity and personnel needs." (ibid., p.29). The English education system has implemented these school assessments since 2001 via an independent institution (Ofsted). Ofsted inspectors assess the quality of schools against 'common quality standards' as set by the government. The assessment result determines the 'value' or 'quality' of an educational setting (Ball, 2003).

Besides setting common quality standards on a school level, the new reforms in Turkey will bring the standardisation of children's learning and development on a more individual level. The development and learning outcomes of students from the ages of 5 to 18 will be under the scrutiny of the ministry through an e-portfolio system: a technology for school assessment, teacher assessment, the educational policies and education system in practice. England has also launched a new baseline assessment to be applied on entry for 4-and 5-year-old children. Together with the existing national assessments at the end of the reception, year 1, 2 and 6, the government aims to "measure performance in the early years, evaluate pre-school settings or hold early years practitioners to account" (Standards and Testing Agency [STA], 2020, p.4). In light of these measures, it is evident that recent educational reforms in England and Turkey share similarities, with both countries aspiring to monitor and judge the performance of students' learning against pre-defined learning and development standards.

In having a system of national norms against which children in the early years are assessed, Turkey's system is similar to that of England and other European countries. Some critics argue that nation-

states trying to find a place in the global market have created common educational policies in order to better align with more established countries (Ozga and Lingard, 2007). In this respect, England has become one of the 'exporters' of its education policies, including "school-based management, parental choice, information and accountability systems and privatisation", to countries across the globe (Ball, 2008, p.1). In Turkey, plans to standardise curricula, school qualities and accountability measures from ages 5 to 18 are examples that possibly indicate the government aims to contribute and form one of the leading economies in the global market.

The Turkish education system however, needs socio-culturally responsive educational reforms. 'Importing' the education policies of other neo-liberal countries would be ignoring the historical, cultural and social diversity within the country (Urban, 2015; Ozga and Lingard, 2007). In recent years, Turkey has been facing a massive increase in the number of international immigrants escaping war and/or poverty. In 2019, Turkey was hosting 5,876,800 immigrant people (most of which from Syria), with children constituting 22.3% of that population (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [DESA], 2019). That means that more than 1,300,000 children need to be educated and integrated into the education system. Turkey's education system is therefore facing an increasing challenge to adopt culturally diverse children into its structure. The application of 'imported' educational reforms may not be enough to respond to the students' needs coming from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

1.2. The Researcher

The above discussion explains why doing a PhD in England is so significant for me. The Turkish government has sponsored my postgraduate degree, with the goal of working within the Ministry of Education as an educational expert post-completion. Throughout the four years of my PhD, I have had the opportunity of conducting research in an English reception class and seeing what happens in practice in England, where policy-makers share similar motivations to those in Turkey and where the policies have already been in action for many years.

I also hope that my study will contribute to the knowledge regarding pedagogies in England. Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2018) stated that previous studies concentrated on understanding the governance of the data gained from national and international assessments (e.g., Ozga, 2009; Lingard et al., 2013; Sellar and Lingard, 2014; Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016). There is little research, however, regarding the consequence of having performative measures on the pedagogies established

in primary schools (e.g., Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Roberts-Holmes, 2019; Braun and Maguire, 2020).

I have chosen to concentrate on literacy education in the early years due to my interest in this area of research, stemming from my long-term commitment to the subject since my undergraduate years at Boğaziçi University, Turkey. I took part in quantitative research projects related to the literacy development of early years children, with my role varying from reviewing the literature, finding useful resources to collecting data for research studies led by academics.

While engaging in these research studies, I became dedicated to pursue an academic career in early years education, particularly in literacy development. With the scholarship from my country, I moved to England in 2015 and started my master's degree in early years education at the UCL Institute of Education. I chose to research the area of biliteracy development of emergent bilingual children in Turkish and English. Having written my dissertation, I was sure enough that I want to continue my academic career in the literacy development of early years children.

Even though my interest in the chosen research area remained consistent, I experienced a shift in the way I approached research design. I had built a strong quantitative research background during my undergraduate years, studying correlations between independent variables and their effect on dependent variables after literacy interventions.

My master's degree significantly changed my perspective on early years literacy, in that my ontological assumptions about reality shifted from a positivist to an interpretivist paradigm. I was attracted to the notion of subjective realities dynamically changing depending on the situation and the people who construct their own realities (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Ladner, 2014). It is through this that I realised the significance of the subjective experiences of people in supporting nursery children's literacy development. As a result, I formed research questions for my dissertation on understanding the perspectives of both parents and teaching staff in supporting 3- and 4-years old children's phonological awareness (PA) skills in Turkish and English. Furthermore, the relationship between the children's agency in using two languages in their own literacy-related activities and the parents and teaching staff were also investigated.

My dissertation not only assisted my shift in the research paradigm; it also enabled me to decide which topic of research I wanted to work on for my PhD. The findings became particularly influential in shaping my doctoral research proposal: emergent bilingual children did not have similar literacy

learning opportunities to learn Turkish phonological awareness (PA) skills in school or at home compared to English PA skills. This is because the English national framework in early years obliges all children, regardless of their bilingualism, to attain Early Learning Goals solely in English reading and writing (Fırat, 2018). For the doctoral study, I aimed to explore more about literacy pedagogies of a reception class via an ethnographic case study.

1.3. Research Questions

The overarching aim of the PhD thesis was to learn about what matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England. Under this aim, I endeavoured to explore the ways in which teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) worked together and individually to establish their literacy pedagogies in practice. Furthermore, I attempted to investigate the ways in which the class involved parents as part of their literacy pedagogies. I involved the experiences and voices of the children because literature in the research field signalled a lack of children's voices, which should be heard by policymakers, teaching staff and parents. Finally, moving from practice to perspectives, I aimed to learn the views of the teaching staff regarding the literacy pedagogies that they presented in general, which would make it possible to hear the subjective realities of the staff on the topic of the research.

In line with the aims, I formed the research questions below:

1. What matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England?
    - 1.1. How do the class teacher and the TAs work together to promote children's literacy learning?
    - 1.2. How do the class teacher and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies?
    - 1.3. In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies?
    - 1.4 How do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them?
    - 1.5. What are the perspectives of the class teacher and the TAs on their literacy pedagogies?

1.4. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters. The first (current) chapter provides a context for the study. Although my study is not set in Turkey, my perspectives and the questions I want to ask about the English system are profoundly related to my own identity, experience and the work I plan to do in the future. Therefore, I have started with the plans for reforms as well as the current tensions in the Turkish education system. The dominant global and neoliberal ideologies are evident in the Turkish and English education systems and form an important element of the rationale for this research study, as explored in the first chapter. This discussion is important because it reveals the rationale of why I have conducted this particular study in England and why the topic is significant to me as a candidate for the role of educational expert in the Turkish Ministry of National Education. In the final chapter of the thesis, I return to this contextual discussion and the relationship between my findings of the English education system and the reforms in my own country. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of the research questions and the purposes of the study.

The second chapter contains a review of literature on the economic, political and philosophical context and changes impacting early childhood education on an international scale. The literature review focuses on literacies, literacy pedagogies and the history of the English education system, accountability agenda, its measures and the teaching workforce in primary schooling.

In the third chapter, I explain the methodology of data collection methods, data analysis processing and the framework I applied in data analysis, as well as the presentation of the findings.

The fourth chapter introduces the research site and the profiles of participants in the focus class.

The fifth chapter draws upon Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to set out the research findings. I presented the literacy pedagogies of the focus as an activity system. The following components of the system are discussed: the object, workforce division among teaching staff, tools and rules.

Next, I presented the findings regarding the perspectives of parents, children, and teaching staff on the system of the established literacy pedagogies.

The seventh chapter draws upon the existing literature to discuss the findings and extend the context-specific results to put forward more generalised arguments.

Finally, the concluding chapter returns to the broader contexts for my study. It aims to be forward-looking, so opens up a discussion of alternatives in response to the contradictions and problems I identify in the analysis of my findings. Alongside a consideration of these alternatives and of the limitations of my research, I discuss the contribution of this study to the literature and the significance of this study and its findings for Turkey. Then, I provide suggestions and recommendations with which I conclude. These could be applied in both the English and Turkish education systems.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review begins with a discussion regarding the international macro-level factors that influence the literacy learning journey of children from early ages. It moves on to consider definitions, theories and debates regarding literacies, literacy pedagogies and early childhood literacy education, focusing particularly on the position of teaching staff, children and their parents in differing views.

I introduce the context of literacy education in England by discussing recent educational reforms in chronological order. I then consider research studies that have influences on the educational policy in England and discuss the ways in which they resonate with the ideologies of the government in undervaluing the sociocultural discourse in early years education and in the literacy learning of young children in particular.

The last section of this chapter discusses the ways in which policymakers' ideologies may permeate the everyday practices of early years educators through their regimes of high-stakes accountability and measures that encourage performativity. I end the chapter with arguments about alternatives to the current system of education and the teaching workforce debate in primary and early years education.

2.1. International Contexts: Economic, Political, Philosophical Changes in Early Childhood Education across the World

2.1.1. Economic and political changes affecting early childhood education and care (ECEC) in England

Important studies such as Ozga and Lingard (2007) and Hursh (2005) have been the basis of an argument that economical and politically dominant ideologies of governments, namely globalisation and neo-liberalism, shape and change the education systems of differing countries. This section defines and discusses these forces and the educational tools or technologies that enforce how the ideologies infuse into the early years education system of England before discussing their potential consequences.

Giddens (1990, p.64) describes globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." In our globalised world, an economic or social structure of a country could have a shaping force or an inspiration for another country in the formation of new social groups or economic revolutions (ibid.). In considering the economic trends in recent years, producing new knowledge and technologies have become increasingly important in promoting economic growth through selling the latest technologies to different countries (Ball, 2008; Ozga and Lingard, 2007; Urban, 2015). Accordingly, the countries in the European Union clearly state that all of them want to be 'knowledge economies' (Ozga and Lingard, 2007, p. 71).

As the influence of globalisation has accelerated economic development, national governments have started to see the education of their citizens as a priority to develop their human capital and ensure that it is being used efficiently to contribute to the national economy (Lingard et al., 2013). Policymakers, who want their nations to take the lead in the competitive global marketplace, have therefore focused on raising and educating people who can produce new and tradeable knowledge and technologies (Ozga and Lingard, 2007).

Urban (2012) explains that members of the European Union have published a policy report that states their aims, which include accelerating the socio-economic wealth of member countries (European Parliament, 2000). The report pointed out that teaching children in the early years has come to be seen as an investment in the national economy, a means by which to ensure that children will grow up to become valuable human capital for the nation-state (Urban, 2012).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the countries pursuing the aim of being economically powerful were striving to adapt their institutions to meet the requirements of globalisation. In those years, neo-liberal ideology was spread in the internal economy of many countries, including England (Hursh, 2005). Maisuria (2014) states that neo-liberalism started to influence the economy and social structure of the UK after Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979. Harvey (2007) defines neoliberalism as follows:

> Neoliberalism is a theory of political, economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade (ibid., p. 22).

In a neoliberal model, the responsibility of the government is believed to be to provide the conditions

necessary to sustain the economic model described by Harvey. Neoliberal ideology argues that in order to enhance the economic growth of a country, there should be competition between people and organisations. Neoliberal governments, therefore, believe that if every institution (including the educational) becomes a marketplace, people can do business over it and the competitive climate will bring economic growth (Connell, 2013; Maisuria, 2014).

Neoliberal ideology considers the source of inequality in society to be that certain people lack a number of capabilities which are possessed by others (Hursh, 2005). The governments' primary duty is, therefore, not regarded to be ensuring similar welfare levels among the citizens. Even though neo-liberal governments may not want to invest in the education of all of their citizens equally, they do give particular attention to anything which will give them a competitive advantage in the world economy. Here again, the education of individuals is to produce technologies and tradable knowledge that matters in the global world. On the other hand, neoliberal states emphasise and take initiatives to privatise an increasing number of institutions in the country, including all levels of schools. Hursh (2005) notes that citizens can oppose the neoliberal policies of current governments for creating unequal educational opportunities among them. Yet, the governments want their citizens to be highly educated people who will contribute to the knowledge economy.

States have found shared strategies to combat the potential opposition of citizens to their neoliberal policies in the education system. As Hursh (2005, p.5) puts it, a neoliberal government "uses discourses emphasizing increasing fairness in education, such as requiring all students to achieve high standards as measured by objective tests". In this way, states use accountability measures including national assessments, tests and school inspection as a way of waiving their responsibility for providing equal welfare, placing the blame for unequal educational attainment on the children and schools themselves should they fail to reach pre-defined learning goals.

This approach is likely to lead two consequences for some children and schools. Firstly, the accountability system can force schools to try to attract and to register students who have the potential to be successful in high-stakes assessments (Hursh, 2005; West, 2010). That is because schools who have students with disabilities, or who come from lower socio-economic family background, or who speak English as a second language, will automatically fall behind other schools who do not have to deal with such students (ibid.; ibid.). Secondly, schools having children from socio-economically challenging backgrounds and who have special needs would put more pressure on these children to achieve the expected or above levels of learning standards as other children. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that these market forces create pressures upon schools and children

due to contextual factors, which are not necessarily related to the quality of the school itself, that can cause one school to be measured as better than another.

In today's world, Hursh (2005) asserts that the market economy gives value to creative technologies. The English curriculum and its statutory assessment (which I discuss in-depth later on in this chapter) however, encourages educators to plan their teaching programmes and to assess children's learning and development based on a pre-defined set of goals. Under these circumstances, Hursh (2005) argued that children's creativity would not be appropriately supported throughout their education. Therefore, the dominance of global and neoliberal discourse within the education system could ultimately damage it.

The discussion about globalisation and neoliberalism in this section indicated how these ideologies would have a shaping force to the national education systems of countries, including England, pursuing the aim of being one of the knowledge economies in the neoliberal global market. Under these forces, Lingard et al. (2013, p. 552) argue that the education systems turn out schools as "edu-business". Children would then be potential new technology producers who must be assessed, through accountability measures, against national standards. In short, the economic and political discourses and its educational technologies have the potential power of affecting everyday practices of early years teaching staff. However, there is a gap in the literature that focuses on the impacts of neo-liberal ideologies on ECEC (Roberts-Holmes, 2019). To fill this gap, this study seeks to answer the question: 'what matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England?'. Further to this, it aims to investigate the factors that would affect the formation of literacy pedagogies in a reception class, not only on a micro (practice) level, but also on a macro (policy) level.

2.1.2. Philosophical changes in relation to children and childhood affecting early childhood education in England

Heywood (2018) explains that

> "…childhood is a social construct, which changes over time and, no less importantly, varies between social and ethnic groups within any society." (Heywood, p.42).

The suggestion is that there are childhoods, instead of one 'natural' childhood, of which vary within and across societies as well as within the same time frame and across different time points. I do not aim to discuss all possible interpretations but instead the dominant discourses regarding childhoods in England.

Aries' (1962) seminal book, *Centuries of Childhood,* is considered an early form of childhood studies within the west. He argues that between the fifth to the 15th century, children were considered to be little adults and were not educated until certain ages at which point they could be accepted as adults. From the 15th century, adults attributed distinct features to children; therefore, different views of children and childhood started to flourish.

In the western side of the world, the 17th century brought differing perceptions regarding child and childhood, of which were mostly philosophical. For instance, John Locke (1632-1704) argued that children were born with no knowledge or skills, their minds a *tabula rasa* (a 'blank slate') (Bruce, 2015), leading adults to assume that children were not competent, which created a deficit model in adults' minds (Canella and Viruru, 2012). A contrary dominant assumption about Locke's views towards childhood in the western world emerged in the following century (Bruce, 2015). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) proposed that children could learn about the world through their actions and that the teaching of adults may not always be useful for children. However, Canella and Viruru (2012) criticised this assumption as this positions childhood as a primitive or immature period of human life, suggesting that progression over time will give the power to children in their society. Later, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) proposed a broader view, stating that the process of child development occurs both through interacting with the outside world and through the interaction of different parts of the brain (Bruce, 2015). Kant's views regarding children have subsequently been taken up by the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky and the cognitive theory of Piaget (ibid.).

From the 18th century, the lenses on discourses of childhood shifted significantly from philosophical and theoretical standpoints to positivist scientific ones (Canella and Viruru, 2012). The purposes of applying these lenses were not to discover 'the meaning of childhood', the diversity in their life experiences, or the way children perceive their world (Suransky, 1982, p. 31). Instead, at its most extreme, children were turned into entities, of which experts (mostly from developmental psychology) could conduct studies on to find one 'truth' (Canella and Viruru, 2012). These research areas did not have clear borders, exploring children's physical and emotional development. According to this view;

> …scientific knowledge is grounded in the privileging of reason, dualistic thought, and placing human beings into patriarchal hierarchies. Those human beings who accept the knowledge and fit the mold are credited and rewarded, designated as normal and even as the expert. (ibid., p.101).

Adults positioned children and their abilities according to categories and labels formed through their positivist science. Even children from similar ages were ranked in hierarchies; the ones who displayed approved skills became the 'winners' or 'normal' while those who did not became the 'losers', or worse, 'abnormal'.

Approaching the end of the 18th century, two important revolutions occurred which affected Britain: *the French Revolution*, which led to many countries being divided based on nationalities, and the *Industrial Revolution*, which led to child labour under severe working conditions (Hendrick, 2005). Though few voices opposed the notion of using children in demanding factories at the beginning of the century, social attitudes were changing towards the end of it (ibid.). Policy-level interventions established the power of inspecting mills/factories and setting rules regarding the minimum working age for children as well as the hours (Cunningham, 2003). At the end of the 1800s, mandatory 'full-time' education finally came into effect in Britain (ibid.). It is thought that legislation prevented children from working in factories during their education period. This did not wholly eradicate child labour in factories; nonetheless, children were no longer seen as the primary staff of the country's leading industries (Cunningham, 2003).

Hendrick (2005) commented that childhood related to certain time intervals in a life cycle with particular features; there is no doubt that developmental psychology played a big role in this dominant discourse. Furthermore, children needed care, safeguarding, and 'school education' (ibid.). Schoolification became a form of protection against child labour (Hendrick, 2005): "The 'childhood' they wished to promote was one that would be suitable for a civilized and Christian nation." (ibid., p.38).

Suransky (1982) argued that schools underscored the worth of children who would sustain and contribute to the economic and political power of England. Many schools trained children by transferring decontextualized knowledge to their brains that were viewed as a tabula rasa. Children were required to use that knowledge when society expected it instead of incorporating it into their 'ongoing life project' (ibid., p.20). The dominant image of a child at this point was depicted as "a largely middle-class 'domestic ideal', with its emphasis on order, respect, love, duty and clearly defined age and gender distinction." (Hendrick, 2005, p.57). Cunningham (2003) asserts that children who did not fit with this ideology were mostly from low-income families, and females; they usually left school the earliest and were employed in low-income jobs.

From the late 20th century, Elkind (1981) describes the dominant discourse surrounding childhood to be that children should learn academic subjects at a fast pace as there would not be any compensation in later life. Society suggests that life is a competition, and one always need to be better than they are (ibid.). According to Elkind, children who will be 'late bloomers' have no space in such an accelerated life (Elkind, 1981, p.17). They will be considered 'losers' starting from quite early on (ibid.).

Together with the influence of globalisation and neo-liberal ideologies on the education system of England, it seems that the discourse of 'hurried childhood' is being enacted, especially in the areas of academic skills from early years. Yet, there is a growing number of studies indicating that teaching academic skills, literacy in this research context, at an earlier age (4 and 5) do not provide long term significant advantages for academic success in children's late primary and secondary school years (Marcon, 2002; Suggate, 2007; Suggate et al., 2013). Research seems to not support the arguments following 'hurried childhood' discourse.

In all the discourses Canella and Viruru's three ways of constructing childhood (2012) were evident. Those are; (a) discourses differentiating humans as children/adults or needy/superior, (b) discourses asserting human development as a progress from primitive to advanced and (c) discourses conceptualising development through rationalising it (or through finding reason and consequence relation). This suggests that adults have the power and authority to construct ideas of childhoods, especially through forming educational services and pedagogies for children (ibid.). It also proposes the notion that children need particular attention and care as they are not strong enough in their early years of life (Moss and Petrie, 2005). Finally, adults can provide the same learning conditions for all children and expecting the same behaviour from all as there is one 'natural childhood' which all children experience (Canella and Viruru, 2012).

Yet, children are not "deculturated, isolated monads, existing in ahistorical relationships to … [their] era but, rather, … [live] in culture, in language, and …[make] history together with other human beings" (Suransky, 1982, p.32). Children have the ability to show their agency and power, as adults (Canella and Viruru, 2012); Suransky (1982) encourage children to be active members of their social communities, including homes, schools and more.

Similarly, Moll et al. (1992) consider that all children have subjective 'funds of knowledge', "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or

individual functioning and well-being." (ibid., p.133). In other words, the cultural-historical context that children live in form each child's unique and culturally rich body of knowledge, which has an influence on every aspect of their learning, well-being and, more broadly, their life. For instance, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) illustrated the richness in the uses and types of literacies by comparing their ethnographic study findings with the everyday literacies of two influential ethnographic studies' findings (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983). The framework, that Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) authors generated from the three studies, illustrated the cultural uses of literacies by families from ethnically and socio-economically diverse backgrounds. Overall, they reached the conclusion that the children in three researched studies developed culturally specific, functional literacies, which can become some components of their subjective funds of knowledge.

However, 'funds of knowledge' may not elucidate children's voices and understanding of funds of knowledge. Thus, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) developed another term: funds of identities. Children could form their own funds of knowledge and when children describe themselves and explain their visions, that becomes their 'funds of identities'. This concept enables researchers and educators to involve the voices of children and take into account the ways they subjectively use their funds of knowledge (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014b). Listening to children's self-descriptions and looking at the artefacts they produce (drawings, photographs) could enable people to recognise their funds of identities (ibid.).

In this study, I prefer to use funds of knowledge and funds of identities since I believe that children contribute to the co-construction of the shared knowledge in their communities, in that funds of knowledge are unique to each child and part of the evolution of the cultural tools such as languages or literacies. Children have the power to use and express their funds of knowledge and form their own funds of identities. Overall, my research has been structured and conducted on the basis of sociocultural assumptions of childhood and early years literacy education, which I discuss in the next section.

2.2. Literacy Pedagogies and Literacies

As perspectives on childhood and the various meanings that adhere to it change in relation to social, political and economic forces (Moss and Petrie, 2002), the meanings of the terms literacy and pedagogy have also changed. I believe that these meanings can be very different since they contain

our own subjective 'political and ethical' preferences (ibid.). Therefore, I prefer to use the terms in their plural forms, literacies and literacy pedagogies, as in the case of childhoods.

In this section, I start my discussion with the dominant discourses of literacies and literacy pedagogies in the English education system and elsewhere, which I refer to this as 'schooled literacy'. Sociocultural approaches, that see literacy as a 'social practice' and see literacy pedagogies through sociocultural lenses, are, I suggest, an alternative to the current 'schooled literacy' and its pedagogies.

Let me start the discussion by defining what 'pedagogy' means and refers to in the current study. The term, pedagogy, involves more than the act of teaching. Alexander (2008) defines 'pedagogy' from a more extended angle and in this research, I employ Alexander's (2008) definition of the term:

> …pedagogy is the act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of definition of which teaching is constituted. Curriculum is just one of its domains, albeit a central one (p.47, *italics original*).

The other three areas or domains, according to Alexander, are children, learning and teaching:

- *Children*: their characteristic, development, motivation, needs and differences;
- *Learning*: its nature, facilitation, achievement and assessment;
- *Teaching*: its planning, execution and evaluation (ibid., p.48, *italics original*).

Further, he clarifies 'curriculum' as: 'the various ways of knowing, doing, creating, investigating and making sense which it is desirable for children to encounter, and how these are most appropriately translated and structured for teaching' (Alexander, 2008, p.48).

Literacy pedagogies, then, relate to the literacy aspect with its four areas of concern. First, literacy pedagogies established in a reception class involve the ways teaching staff consider the nature of children with their above-mentioned individualities. Second, the teaching staff bring their understanding of learning, what contributes to learning, how to facilitate learning and how to assess the children's learning into their pedagogies. Third, the teaching staff plan, conduct and evaluate their teaching as part of their pedagogies. Fourth, the curriculum presents practical possibilities for teaching staff to enrich their pedagogies for the good of the children and to inform their teaching practices most suitably.

When it comes to the 'literacy' aspect of the pedagogy, people's perceptions about the nature and function of 'literacy' matters since it plays a vital role in academic research studies and, more importantly, the literacy learning conditions of people from very early ages to adulthood (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). For instance, depending on their assumptions about literacy, policymakers', teachers' and parents' decisions while educating children will be influenced in terms of their choice of teaching approaches (e.g., bottom-up or top-down approaches) or the type of literacy assessments (e.g. check-list or sociocultural approaches).

Street (2001) categorises the assumptions of literacy into two groups: autonomous and ideological models. The author makes the distinction between those who see literacy as a social practice (sociocultural, ideological) and those who adopt a cognitive (autonomous) approach. It is essential in this thesis to discuss these discourses as Henning (2017) states that England's national literacy education is primarily based on the autonomous literacy discourse. I, as a literacy researcher, stand by the sociocultural discourse of literacy and the educational practices that are based on it.

The autonomous model of literacy assumes that literacy is a universal phenomenon; and therefore its nature is independent of the social context (Street, 2001). The ideological approach to literacy, however, emphasises the importance of the social context in shaping the nature of literacy. As a result, the advocates of the sociocultural approach argue that there are culturally specific literacies instead of one neutral literacy (ibid.). People present their identity, their existence, their subjective way of understanding knowledge through a variety of different literacies (Street, 2001).

These two approaches have contrasting views regarding the literacy teaching of young children. A literacy programme inspired by the autonomous approach primarily encourages teachers to start from teaching phonemes (sound), to a word level, and then sentence level, which is referred to as a bottom-up approach (more discussion on this is provided later in this chapter). On the other hand, a literacy programme inspired by the sociocultural approach assumes, according to Ken Goodman (a supporter of 'whole language approach' to literacy teaching), that learning written language resembles learning a foreign language (Street, 2013). Thus, teachers should concentrate on the meaning of written language, instead of teaching a set of skills and provide social practices for improving children's comprehension of the texts (ibid.). For instance, children could discuss the text they read with their friends. By doing so, children's eager and motivation towards reading could flourish (Street, 2013).

Since the sociocultural approach to literacy promotes the recognition of a diverse forms of literacies, I shall describe the form of literacy I have focused on in this thesis. My focus is on print literacy, having the lenses of literacy as a social practice approach. At the pedagogical level however, I make use of

the philosophical assumptions of Vygotsky and his advocates (as described in the relevant areas of the literature review).

Barton and Hamilton, two authors adopting a sociocultural perspective, list the nature of literacies as described below:

1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
5. Literacy is historically situated.
6. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p.8).

The authors point out that literacies are dynamic culturally and historically sensitive tools. Children, as members of their societies are exposed to written language and observe the functional use of prints from the time they are born (Hall, 1987). However, since early years children are not able to read and write conventionally as adults yet, their literacy skills and knowledge have different jargons in the literacy research area. One of the most prevalent concepts in particular is emergent literacy, which refers to children's literacy learning process before they begin primary school (Rhyner et al., 2009). Emergent literacy is defined by Whitehurst and Lonigan as "characteristics of pre-readers that may relate to later reading and writing" (1998, p.849). The term was introduced first by Marie Clay (1966) in her doctoral thesis (Clay, 1966 as cited in Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Teale and Sulzby (1986) further suggested a sociocultural discourse on children's literacy learning from the very early ages, proposing that reading, writing and language skills develop simultaneously and interdependently. Children's literacy learning journey starts from very early ages in their home. Opposite to the dominant discourse at that time, they looked at literacy learning from children's perspectives and argued that they have agency in their literacy development. Observing and modelling people, interacting with print or independently engaging in written language indicate the existence of their agency.

Researchers interested in emergent literacy developed the concept of various emergent literacy skills, and some researchers developed frameworks encompassing the concepts proposed in the previous studies. Amongst these different frameworks (e.g., Mason and Stewart, 1990; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998; Senechal et al. 2001), the framework of Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) is the most comprehensive. According to the two researchers, children acquire two types of emergent literacy learning skills; the process of inside-out and outside-in, of which are mutually dependent. The outside-in skills refer to children's comprehension of the situation where the print they are attempting to write or read happens. These skills are oral language, comprehending and creating narratives; being aware of print conventions (e.g., starting to read/pretend to read from left to write, and from the first page to the last of the book), and emergent reading (e.g., pretending to read printed words/sentences on the wall). The inside-out skills, however, indicate "children's knowledge of the rules for translating the particular writing they are trying to read into sounds (or sounds into writing…)" (ibid., p. 854). Those skills involve knowing the names of letters; the ability to fix grammatical problems; writing phonetically (emergent writing); having phonological awareness (PA) skills (e.g., recognising rhymes, manipulating sounds in a word) and phoneme-grapheme relationship. Phoneme-grapheme correspondence is the knowledge that graphemes (groups of letters) and letters represent a sound: it is the most sophisticated emergent literacy skill and the least sophisticated conventional literacy skill (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). Therefore, educators starting to teach conventional literacy would start with developing children's phoneme-grapheme correspondence.

Other than these two forms of emergent literacy skills, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) formed the third category, termed phonological memory, rapid naming and print motivation. Phonological memory is the ability to keep phonologically coded information in the short-term memory, such as real and not-real words and/or sentences. Rapid naming is the ability to rapidly say the names of colours, numbers or letters listed on a file. Print motivation refers to children's enthusiasm to engage in print-related activities, such as listening to a storybook or attempting to write their names and more. Children having a print interest would be proactive in improving learning literacy and using it as a part of their daily life practices.

The emergent literacy discourse values sociocultural perspectives on literacy learning, rejecting the assumption that children start schooling without having any previous literacy-related knowledge and skills. The emergent literacy framework of Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) involves whole language (top-down) and cognitive (bottom-up skill-based) approaches. Advocates of the whole language approach prioritise the outside-in part of the framework, such as advising concentration on the

meaning and function of the literacy uses, while advocates of the cognitive approach prioritise inside-out elements in children's literacy teaching, such as the teaching of phoneme-grapheme correspondence (ibid.).

I do not mean to suggest however, that researchers following one approach completely ignore other approaches and their contributions to literacy and literacy learning (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). The majority of literacy researchers in both perspectives do not deny the importance of the other, yet the emphasis in the assumptions differs. In this research, the quotation below from Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) describes my positionality in this debate:

> We reject this implication that the social and the cognitive are independent and incommensurable. We suggest that a more accurate way of envisioning the relationship between the sociocultural and the cognitive is as relating transactionally in a nested relationship, with the cognitive occurring within the sociocultural context. From birth, we perceive objects, learn about them, think about them, act upon them, or forget about them while we are in the world. And the world is organized socially and culturally. In this sense, therefore, it is impossible to conceive of the sociocultural and the cognitive as disconnected (ibid., p.81-82).

Children are born in a world where cultural and social patterns of lifestyles affect every part of their development. Therefore, it does not seem possible to consider that literacy learning constitutes acquiring cognitive skills in a context-free environment. Especially, literacy is one of the primary mediators that facilitate the daily actions of people across different areas. For instance, people use literacy as a memory aid and note items they intend to buy on a paper before shopping. Yet, as Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) argue the acquisition of cognitive skills could be acquired in a culturally meaningful environment. I also support the idea that children should have the opportunity of using both whole language and cognitive approaches as each child has unique funds of knowledge and funds of identities, hence their approach to learning literacy might differ.

Taylor's ethnographic study (1983) illustrated the agency of children, concluding that if children consider that literacy activities that the class offered to them are functional in their lives and socially meaningful for them, children bring these activities to their home. Furthermore, children who have been regularly reading a diverse selection of storybooks at home might approach reading words by looking at the pictures as a clue. In this way, the children could read some of the words or sentences in their favourite books rapidly. When the children begin early years education, they bring their way of approaching reading. Therefore, it is crucial for teaching staff to know the home literacy practices

of individual children in order to provide a similar social environment where children use their funds of knowledge and are enriched by it. I do not mean that teaching staff should never introduce to bottom-up literacy learning approaches to children. Phonics, as one bottom-up literacy approach, constitutes one crucial part of literacy education. However, according to Ellis and Moss (2014), literacy teaching should not be looked at and valued exclusively via the phonics teaching strategy. There are social, emotional, cultural and individual factors influencing the learning process. Therefore, teaching staff should provide all options, observe or discuss the subjective way of learning literacy for each child, and improve further literacy plans according to their funds of identities.

Some governments do not allow that degree of flexibility in their approach to literacy education. Street (2001) asserts that England has firmly constructed their literacy education systems around the premise of the autonomous model of literacy and cognitive model of literacy learning. From this point forward, I prefer to describe this type of literacy as 'schooled literacy', as other researchers such as Street (2001) and Henning (2017) have done. Schooled literacy is defined as "simply a neutral skill, the same everywhere and to be imparted (almost injected in some medically based discourses) to all in equal measure." (Street, 2001, p.13).

Schooled literacy discourse relies on skill-based approaches, particularly phonics teaching, which is also referred to as 'phonemic approaches' or 'breaking the code' (Aukerman, 1972, p.9). Literacy scholars have proposed various methods of phonics instruction. Stahl et al. (1998) divided them into two sections, 'traditional phonics approaches', some of which are linguistics, analytic, and synthetic phonics approaches, and 'contemporary phonics approaches', such as spelling-based, analogy-based, and embedded phonics approaches. It is not feasible or necessary to explore all of these phonics approaches here, only to note the range. In England it is the synthetic phonics approach which dominates schooled literacy teaching, having been the compulsory phonics instruction since 2007.

Synthetics phonics teaching starts with introducing children to each phoneme separately. The sounds are taught systematically from simple to more complex ones every day, such as letters first (i.e., m, n); diagraphs afterwards (i.e., bb, th); then, trigraphs (i.e., sch, pph) and split vowel diagraphs (i.e., a-e, u-e). This teaching approach is called systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). Gardner (2019) pointed out that in the English language, there are around 44 phonemes and 185 graphemes that represent phonemes in print. Children have to learn the written representation/s of an individual sound. For example, the written version of the sound, /b/ would be banana or bubble. The child should know that 'bb' and 'b' make the same sound, which is /b/. However, there are more complex graphemes that have different representations depending on its place in the word. An example would be the

grapheme ‘wh’, which usually represents the sound, /w/ like in the word, wish. Yet, when it comes before the letter ‘o’, its sound turns into /h/, such words can be whom, or whose. After learning the letter-phoneme or grapheme-phoneme correspondence, children are taught how to blend the phonemes and say the complete word (Gardner, 2019). According to this approach, teachers do not offer children books to read until they achieve sounding out the 44 sounds. Instead, children have to read storybooks that are levelled based on the complexity of phonemes, and the words are the ones that children can read using their phonemic knowledge (Marshall, 2012).

Phonics teaching methods are not a perfect fit in literacy teaching for the English language, as not all words can be decoded using the phonics knowledge (Marshall, 2012). Some words are irregular, such as ‘was’, ‘what’ and so on. Also, some words can be read differently depending on the sentence they are used in. For example, Marshall (2012) gives an example of the word, ‘tear’ which has two meanings. There needs to be a context for the reader to read the word correctly. Marshall (2012) also expresses another argument: that children can easily read ‘Once upon a time there was…’ without having phonics knowledge. It happens as they listen and are exposed to the stories from their parents reading to them. Neither ‘once’ nor ‘was’ are phonetically plausible; however, they can read them easily. Fixating on only one literacy teaching method could therefore be erroneous (ibid.).

More broadly, the New London Group argued that pedagogies of schooled literacy for children from very early ages would turn into “a very carefully restricted project- restricted to formalised, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language” (The New London Group, 2000, p.9). The dominant discourse of schooled literacy imposes the governments’ desired culture on their education system through the national curricula and high-stakes assessments; these literacy pedagogies fail to value and take account of the cultures in which children and their families co-construct. Therefore, Moss and Petrie (2002) state that in some contexts, we cannot talk about the plural form of pedagogy: one prescribed pedagogy resembles a ‘technical’ concept that can be ‘delivered’ from the teaching staff to children.

In the ethnographic study by Heath (1983), the implications of schooled literacy discourse delivered by teachers to children with diverse funds of knowledge and identities were internalised very differently. Children coming from the mainstream culture (Black and White culture) smoothly adapted to school culture since their families provided similar sorts of language and daily literacy practices. Those children came “with the skills of labelling, naming features, and providing narratives on items out their contexts” (ibid., p. 352). However, children coming from black backgrounds with low socioeconomic status did not have a similar wealth of exposure to schooled literacy practices.

Therefore, they were often not as successful in their schooling life as children from the mainstream community. In considering the study context, the SSP approach to schooled literacy would disadvantage some children due to their ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Coltman and Whitebread (2008) argue that a 'delivery' model of pedagogy using systematic and structured literacy teaching methods would pose the danger of positioning children as passive learners. The teaching staff would then possess the role of delivering the pedagogy, such as transmitting the phoneme-grapheme correspondence knowledge to children and ensuring its acquisition through skill-based assessments. The delivery model can, however, create a recitational verbal interaction pattern or script between teaching staff and children, of which the nature of the conversation turns into question and answer with the teacher as the decision-maker in the conversation, choosing which children will answer (Gutierrez,1993). To put this another way, the children would mainly participate in the activities by responding to the 'right' answer to the question if asked by the teaching staff. Hence, individual learning is prioritised over cooperative learning (ibid.). Children would not actively co-construct the pedagogies in cooperation with teaching staff and their peers.

When teaching staff use the SSP approach as an exclusive method for teaching literacy the value of parents in supporting their children's literacy education could be undermined. Bottom-up approaches to literacy learning are mainly constructed based on positivist science. The teaching staff need to be systematic to teach each phoneme discretely and develop children's phoneme-grapheme correspondence knowledge step-by-step. According to Hughes and Mac Naughton (2000) however, approaching literacy learning from the scientific angle could merely create 'a binary relationship', with teachers as the authority of the scientific knowledge and parents as the 'other' whose scientific knowledge is unsatisfactory, subjective or even erroneous. This could lead to parents being subordinated to the power of the teaching staff and to start devaluing the funds of literacy knowledge which they share with their children (ibid.).

In reception classes where the SSP method is privileged over the sociocultural aspect of literacies, teaching staff could feel the need to educate parents in the scientific way of literacy teaching. Thus, this attitude would indirectly create a deficit model of parenthood. Mac Naughton and Hughes (2003) argue that parents, perceived to be having less and not appropriate knowledge, are expected to 'conform' to the direction of teaching staff. As is reported in Heath's ethnographic study (1983), the middle-class families become the most advantaged groups of parents since the schools form their literacy pedagogy in line with the middle-class families' cultural way of teaching and using literacy.

Therefore, families from low socioeconomic background and/or different ethnicities become the focus of teaching staff. They prepare their interventionist parent involvement activities that encourage the scientific way of supporting children's development for those groups of families (Mac Naughton and Hughes, 2003).

Overall, societal and political conceptualisations of childhood(s) and literacy(ies) are determining factors in shaping the nature of literacy pedagogies in an early years' class. This ranges from the method(s) of literacy teaching to the ways of involving parents in their children's literacy learning process. In the next section, I discuss the historical evolution of literacy education in early and primary school years in the English educational policy, to elucidate how the 'schooled literacy' ideology of the English government evolved to the point in which sociocultural discourse became subordinated.

2.3. Educational Policy in England

In this section, I discuss the history of educational policy and the current policy context of early years education in England, with the purpose of providing a background for this study.

2.3.1. The history of statutory and non-statutory early years curricula/frameworks in England

Early years education has a recent history of facing philosophical revolutions that have impacted upon various aspects of early years educators' pedagogies. Whitehead (1999) warned readers that the government's reforms, particularly on literacy, could result in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services being more distant from primary 'principles', such as being child-centred and play-based. Similarly, according to Moss and Cameron (2020), ECEC and the roles expected by the English government have been changed. English educational policies, together with pre-set learning goals and assessment tools for testing the learning outcomes, have been progressively imposing interventions that result in early years children being prepared for compulsory primary education from birth to five years old. The authors refer to these changes, which concentrate mostly on academic aspects of learning, specifically in literacy and maths, as the 'schoolification' (which has been used by Clausen (2015) for the first time) of the ECEC system in England. Therefore, the English ECEC system and its purposes have been put in a contentious situation: while the reforms for the curricula involved child-centred philosophies in their contents, the emphasis on 'schoolification' has increased (Trevor et al., 2020).

Since 1997, early years education has been prioritised in England and children have been encouraged to attend early years provision. In the same year, the new Labour government published the white paper, *Excellence in Schools*, which aimed to provide quality education for children at age 4, for those whose parents were willing to send them (Chitty, 2014). In the white paper, they described their priority for early years education "to ensure that every child is taught to read, write and add up. Literacy and numeracy matter so much because they open the door to success across all the other school subjects and beyond" (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE], 1997, p. 9). The white paper continued that in order to have well-educated citizens who can contribute to the economic and social development of the country and enable the country to compete with other knowledge countries, such as Germany, USA and France, there needs to be state-funded mass education for all children across all socio-economic backgrounds (ibid.).

In order to achieve these purposes, quality nursery education was to be provided by the government for the families who wanted to send their 4-year-old children; the new Labour government emphasised the necessity of assessing children based on pre-set learning standards, and the accountability of schools via inspection by independent organisation Ofsted. In this way, the government wanted to observe the results of their investment in education services starting from early years, and to control it through an accountability regime. A striking term used in the paper is 'zero tolerance of underperformance' (DfEE, 1997, p. 12), highlighting the government's intention to ensure schools worked in line with the government's quality standards.

Before the establishment of the current compulsory early years curriculum, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework, in 2008, there were three non-statutory curricula for early years education. Providers of early years education for children under five years had to know about three distinct frameworks; the Foundation Stage, *Birth to Three Matters and Full Day Care National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding* (Brodie, 2013). The year, 2003 was the year that the English accountability system had a new assessment tool, the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) for 4-5 year olds, for early years children for the first time (Bradbury, 2012).

Having multiple frameworks with different guidelines would have been confusing for educators. Therefore, the need for one curriculum encompassing care and education for all early years children from birth to age 5 was recognised. Two influential research projects funded by the government formed the new curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage (the EYFS) in 2008 (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DfCSF], 2008). These research studies were the 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project' and the 'Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY)'. Finally, in September 2008, the statutory framework for the EYFS became compulsory for all

early years settings under the control of Ofsted. Successive governments have made revisions to this in 2012, 2014, 2017 and 2020, although changes in 2014 and 2017 were minor.

With the establishment of the EYFS from birth to 5 in 2008, the education department introduced a new version of the national assessment, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), to be conducted at the end of reception year (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 2008). This 'summative assessment' required Reception teachers to assess children against 117 learning and development statements (scale points). Bradbury (2012) asserts that the EYFS Profile was a symbol representing the intrusion of neo-liberal performativity culture (individual assessment against the pre-defined standards) into the early childhood education level.

The details of the first (2012) revision in the EYFS are essential to discuss since the aims and the EYFSP were significantly revised (Department for Education [DfE], 2012). In 2008, there were six areas of learning and development (DfCSF, 2008). With the revision, these increased to seven, splitting 'Communication and Language' from 'Literacy', and areas were specified as either prime or specific (DfE, 2012). The separation of literacy indicates the government's increasing emphasis on the literacy learning area at reception level and interest in testing children's literacy attainment in the newly introduced EYFS Profile.

Likewise, Hutchin (2013) pointed out that for the first time, the policymakers used the term, 'school readiness' in the revised framework. However, no clear definition of school readiness existed in the framework, which, in turn, led to heated debates in the area (ibid.) without clarity for teaching staff. According to Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016), additional emphasis was placed on children's maths and English skills, and the raised expectations in these two areas from children between age 3 to 5 increased in the EYFS and its Profiling. Therefore, school readiness could refer to readying children for primary education through concentrating on literacy learning from early years.

The 2012 revision also brought a decrease in the number of targets stated in the EYFSP from 117 scale points to 17 early learning goals. Teaching staff had to report that reception children in each ELG, relying on their observational assessment, were at the 'exceeding', 'expected' or 'emerging' (below) level of development. Furthermore, teaching staff were required to write a summary of effective learning areas for each child. Some researchers, such as Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2018) believe that the revisions made the framework and its assessment more narrowed, leading to teaching staff focusing on the children achieve 17 learning goals, coupled with a 'reduction' of curriculum and assessment, shifting in priority towards schoolified content.

Lastly, the year 2020 (after the data collection for this research) seemed to bring more changes towards the further 'schoolification' of early years education in England. The introduction of a baseline assessment of literacy and mathematics at the beginning of reception (following an aborted attempt using different assessment providers in 2016 {STA, 2016}), focuses statutory assessment on a small number of literacy and mathematics tasks. The aim of the first baseline assessment was said to not be for assessing children's progress – rather, its purpose was to assess schools' quality. By comparing children with the same scores in the baseline assessment and in the Key Stage 2 assessment, they thought they would clearly assess the progress made in the school (Lynch et al., 2015). According to Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017), by adding the baseline assessment into education, the testing regime starting with children at age 2 to the end of Year 6 creates a system where education resembles an 'input/output model', assuming that learning and development are linear and steady.

The year, 2020 also saw the publication of a revised EYFS curriculum for 2021 (or 2020 for 'early adopters') where the literacy demands in the ELGs were heightened (DfE, 2020). They became more specific in the process of teaching with the SSP approach and have increased the number of ELGs from two (writing and reading) to three (comprehension, word reading and writing). Progressively increasing the standards for learning and development, especially in the literacy area with recent revisions, has the purpose of "ensur[ing] children's 'school readiness' … provid[ing] the right foundation for good future progress through school and life." (ibid., p.5).

As a consequence of successive governments' emphasis on school readiness, the reforms have made literacy an area to be divided into different sub-areas of learning, to be more specific with increased targets. According to Coltman and Whitebread (2008, p.63), having topic-based learning areas may damage early years practices, causing "an 'artificiality' or lack of coherence in the educational experience offered to the young children." In turn, it may hinder having a contextually meaningful learning environment. Therefore, the 'schoolification' of early years education with more and more complicated and divided ELGs, especially in the literacy area, creates the danger of artificiality in daily literacy learning at school and/or at home.

2.3.2. Non-statutory guidance documents in early years education

In addition to statutory guidelines, since 1999, the government published non-statutory guidelines aiming to support staff in their pedagogical practices in line with the statutory frameworks. During the 2017-2018 academic year, - the year I collected data at the research site, the early years settings were using another guideline called 'Development Matters', which was published by Early Education (2012)

in cooperation with the DfE, to be used together with the statutory framework. This document offers teaching staff practical suggestions in three prime and four specific areas of learning and development as well as three characteristics of effective learning. At the same time, it describes what kind of behaviour practitioners should expect from a child in a certain age band. Between the age bands, there are overlaps in months, which would be good not setting sharp age borders. The age range is as following; Birth-11 months, 8-20 months, 16-26 months, 22-36 months, 30-50 months and 40-60+ months.

Brooker et al. (2010) however, argue that categorising children's learning and development against developmental age phases leads to the risk of 'labelling', which is opposite to the notion of the 'Unique Child' in the EYFS. This was investigated as the guideline was used as a checklist by early years teaching staff, which in turn could place pressure on children to meet the statements for their age band (potentially devaluing some, including those with disabilities). Similarly, another study found that the parents of reception children were also aware that the document served as a 'map' for teaching staff in identifying the developmental level of children within a specific age range (Luff, 2014). Thus, the guideline may lead the categorisation of children and their abilities against the statements or standards in the guideline.

In 2020, the government revised Development Matters to support the delivery of the 2020 EYFS Framework (DfE, 2020). Different from the previous one, the age bands decreased from six to three: Birth to 3 years old, 3 and 4 years old and children in reception year. The new guideline could decrease the use of documents as a checklist by teaching staff and encourage them to use their professional expertise in their pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, the literacy expectations from reception children in the guideline and the pedagogical suggestions for teaching staff were raised in line with the new EYFS Framework. The new guideline therefore has the potential of further increasing the risk of 'schoolification' in reception classes.

2.3.3. From possibilities to exclusive use of one literacy teaching method in English primary schools: a systematic synthetic phonics method

In the previous two sections, I examined the evolutionary changes of national frameworks for early years children and concluded that the school readiness discourse seems to be more effective on early years education with the recent revisions. Here, I concentrate on the successive governments'

initiatives relevant to everyday literacy teaching of the reception classes (the focus of this study) beginning from the year, 1998.

The reforms of particular relevance to this study began in 1998 when the Labour government established the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) Framework for Teaching, which proposed a literacy teaching model for schools to use, including with reception classes, called 'Searchlights' (DfEE, 1998a). Even though the framework was non-statutory it had a significant impact on the nature of literacy teaching in primary schools as it involved professional trainings and recourses for teaching staff's use (DfEE, 1998b).

The model, as shown below, has four literacy teaching strategies: phonics, knowledge of context, grammatical knowledge, and word recognition and graphic knowledge. This model directs teachers to use these teachings techniques concurrently. The model assumes that some children learn literacy better through one of the specific teaching methods, therefore offering various teaching strategies so that all children can find a particular way that they can learn easily and efficiently.

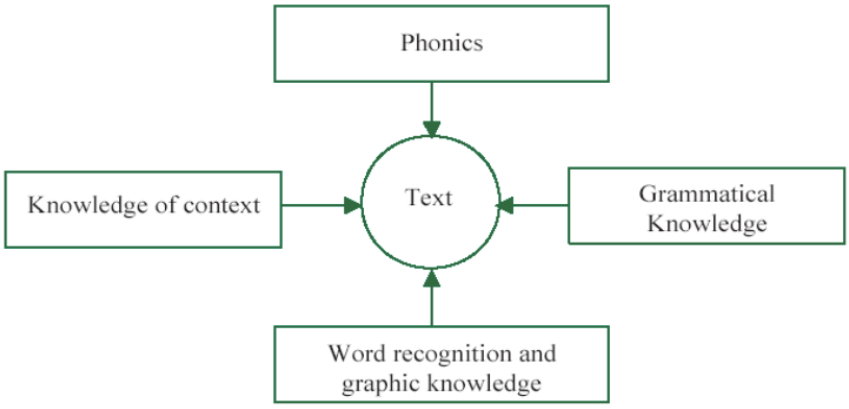


Figure 1: Searchlights model, illustrated in the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching (UK Parliament, 2005).

While the model supported teachers in using their own chosen method of teaching literacy, Whitehead (1999) criticises the literacy teaching methods as they rely on the linguistic bases of literacy learning and ignoring the social aspects. Whitehead (1999) also pointed out that the NLS introduced 'a literacy hour' which encouraged teaching staff to spend one hour, divided into 15-15-20-10 minutes of whole class and small group slots, literacy teaching in their daily teaching routine, together with professional education to in-service teaching staff. Papen (2016) also stated that although the model gives the flexibility in the application of different teaching strategies the NLS proposed that 15 minutes

of daily literacy hour would be for teaching phoneme and letters exclusively. According to Papen (2016), phonics teaching strategy therefore became an important part of literacy teaching technique. Overall, Whitehead (1999) argued that the NLS forced schools to have a generic adult-led literacy education, including in reception classes, which devalued the agency of children and made teaching literacy a technical job.

Alexander (2010) commented that with the establishment of the NLS, the government began to intervene in almost every aspect of the literacy pedagogies established in every school of England. This explains why Whitehead (1999) considered that the fine-grained policy document would impede the teaching staff's use of their own professional judgements and pedagogical insights in their literacy pedagogies. Instead, they may mechanically teach the way the government advised, which would, in a way, de-professionalise the teachers, according to some other critics (e.g., Alexander, 2010).

Different from the views of Whitehead (1999) and Alexander (2010), some commentators (e.g., members of the Reading Reform Foundation) in 2004 criticised the searchlights model for providing teachers too much choice in regards to how intensely they teach the four literacy skills (phonics, knowledge of context, grammatical knowledge, word recognition and graphic knowledge), which could cause phonics to be less valued in some classes (Ellis and Moss, 2014). They instead proposed synthetic phonics to be the only reading teaching strategy that should be used. This argument received political power when raised in parliament by a member who backed up his argument with the results of an experimental study conducted by two psychologists, Watson and Johnstone (1998), indicating that synthetic phonics is the most effective literacy teaching strategy. The study has been repeatedly used as a justification of how synthetic phonics is the best strategy for teaching literacy, even though the study was not peer-reviewed (Marshall, 2012) and has design issues. Ellis and Moss (2014) explain that the experimental study is not an application of pedagogy and that the report does not provide the details of the study context with the description of the participant students and teachers at all. In addition, the presentation of the study was problematic in itself. One finding - that the experimental group children at the age of 11 were 3.5 years ahead in decoding - was presented and emphasised in the study. However, the group were only 3 months ahead in comprehension, and this was not discussed, as Marshall (2012) points out. More importantly, Ellis and Moss (2014) argue that over-emphasis on psychological studies in the literacy strategy of the country damages education and, indeed, literacy practices in schools. In short, to change the curriculum of a country, there need to be more interdisciplinary studies including educational and psychological (ibid.).

Despite concerns, in 2006, Sir Jim Rose (senior Ofsted inspector) proposed synthetic phonics teaching as the literacy education policy of the country and made use of the 'simple model of reading' in supporting the importance of synthetic phonics at the word reading level (Rose, 2006). These conclusions were set out in his report titled The Rose Report (ibid.). The simplicity of the reading (SVR) model provided a good basis for the supporters of SSP teaching. The model implies that reading comprehension occurs as a result of the interaction between word decoding and listening comprehension. Word decoding refers to the capability of reading an individual word and language comprehension refers to understanding the meaning of passages, or words (Oakhill et al., 2015). The importance of word decoding was prioritised in the report, and SSP teaching was presented as the exclusive way of teaching literacy, moving away from the four literacy teaching approaches to one.

In 2007, in order to support the daily synthetic phonics of early years and primary school teaching staff, non-statutory guidance specifically for literacy, namely *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High-Quality Phonics,* was published by the DfES. The document includes a phase-by-phase teaching guide for phonics through the systematic synthetic phonics method. It prescribes how long, which sounds and which non-decodable (for the grapheme-phoneme correspondences taught) words can be taught in each phase, including lists of example words that include target letters/graphemes. Overall, every detail in planning, teaching and assessment of sounds was mentioned. All phonemes in English are divided into six phases from one to six, from differentiating environmental sounds to reading confidently and knowing the majority of phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Children at the end of year two are assumed to reach the level where they do not stick to sounds and read for learning new information. In comparing the guidelines on NLS and the *Letters and Sounds* document, it seems that the government has attempted to intervene in literacy pedagogies, prescribing fine-grained details of daily teaching.

Three years after the 2006 Rose Report, Sir Jim Rose released a new review, which was a review of the primary school curriculum (Rose, 2009). Different from the Rose Report in 2006, he emphasises the language (receptive and expressive) aspect of literacy education, even though he repeated his support for the synthetic phonics teaching and the simple reading model in the curriculum (ibid.).

On the other hand, the discussions on the primary curriculum in the 2009 review had a more educational perspective rather than a psychological one, in that he suggested ideas on how to improve children's communication through play-based, child-led activities, developing eagerness of learning in children, being aware of children's special needs and approaching them based on their needs.

Nevertheless, the suggestions of this report were not negotiated extensively (Ellis and Moss, 2014) and the journey towards the exclusive use of SSP in England continued through different policy level initiatives, including accountability measures (I discuss the accountability and its measures in section 2.4).

2.3.4. Government-funded research studies having impacts on the policy and early years education

The English government has been financially investing in academic research studies, which have been used as a tool for their further reforms in revising or producing the curricula and other supportive documents since the 1990s (Whitty, 2007). Investing in academic studies enables governments to base their political decisions on the research evidence and establish the reforms based on 'what works' (ibid.) or what is 'effective'. It is essential to discuss the nature and the findings of the most influential studies impacting the everyday teaching practices of reception classes in England as well as in the focus reception class.

According to Wood and Hedges (2016), government-funded comprehensive studies share a commonality in the topics of research and the research paradigms they follow. The authors state that:

> Developmental Psychology became established as the dominant discourse [of the government-funded studies], and the means for providing scientific evidence for what had previously been observed intuitively namely what and how development occurs, how children learn, and how their experiences and activities lead to more developed or mature forms of cognition, behaviour, and competence (ibid., p.389).

For policymakers, approaching education from a positivist angle rather than a socio-cultural angle could provide objective evidence for generalised assumptions about 'what works' across all educational levels. The best example of a longitudinal mixed-method study supported by the government from 1996 to 2003 would be the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education (EPPE) project. Researchers on the project reported that they would work collaboratively with policymakers and had 'knowledge exchanges' (Sylva et al., 2007). The mixed-method study results of the EPPE projects had important contributions in the formation of the EYFS Framework, early years pedagogy as well as education of children with special needs (ibid.). There have been many policy documents that make reference to the EPPE project (e.g., Delivering for Children and Families: Inter-departmental Childcare Review, 2002; Choice for Parents, The Best Start for Children: A Ten-Year Strategy for Childcare, 2004; Support for Parents: The Best Start for Children, 2005).

The general aim of the study was to learn about the influence of early years settings and primary schools on the social and academic development of students. The nature of the purpose of the EPPE determined the nature of the findings. In other words, the results were generally about which type of school (the qualification of staff, learning environment, type of pedagogies) is more 'effective' on which aspect of development to which children. For example, the study found that:

- Teachers with higher qualifications create more efficient learning environments, activities that encompass the curriculum (pedagogical content knowledge), and more interactive dialogues through benefiting from 'sustained shared thinking'.
- Schools provide a higher quality of provision when the qualified teachers are managed by a highly qualified leader.
- Schools keeping the balance between children's academic and social development in their provision create better environments for enhancing their developmental skills.
- Effective schools ensure children start their own initiated activities, besides adult-led activities. There is a balance between two different types of activities during the day.

The researchers produced two further reports analysing the data and collecting some more in the areas of special education and early years pedagogy. The one searching for effective early years pedagogy was named the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) Study (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). The findings of REPEY were generally based on the qualitative data produced via case studies. Therefore, children's funds of knowledge (e.g., children's interests, their individual needs) and its importance were signified in their findings. By observing child-adult oral interactions, the study concluded that children learned best when they are eager and active in their learning processes. Viewing learning as a 'cognitive construction', Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) argued that:

> The cognitive construction … is mutual, where each party engages with the understanding of the other and learning is achieved through a process of reflexive 'co-construction'. A necessary condition is that both parties are *involved*, and, for the resultant learning to be worthwhile, that the content should be in some way *instructive*. (ibid., p.10, emphases in the original).

This interactive learning process was named 'sustained shared thinking'. Another conclusion of the study was that it is crucial to realise children's specific learning requirements and then respond accordingly as the activity goes on. The best schools were the ones that encouraged parents to cooperate in discussing and determining what to teach their children next and had a shared understanding of the curricular content.

Thirdly, in the early years settings where there are not always regular high-quality learning activities, if the school staff have strong cooperation with parents in regard to the learning targets for their children, they may even reach the target learning outcome. Thus, the study indicated how parent involvement could compensate for the insufficient aspects of the teaching staff's pedagogical practices.

Moreover, the government-funded study called the Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning (SPEEL Project) between 2000 and 2001 had research objectives similar to the EPPE project's aims. The primary purpose of the project was to search for the 'effective' features of pedagogy in English early years settings serving children aged from 3 to 5 through conducting an ethnographic study (Moyles et al., 2002). Since the EPPE project extensively focused on children-related components in providing 'effective' pedagogy, the SPEEL project's direction was to focus on the teaching staff, their perspectives and pedagogical practices at the Foundation Stage. At the end of the project, they created a framework to be used together with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (CGFS).

The framework consisted of three aspects: practice, principles and the professional dimension. Each of which have three components to create 'effective' pedagogy as a result.

- Practice includes context, interaction and planning
- Principles involve entitlements, roles and teaching and learning
- Professional dimensions include knowledge, thinking and qualities.

The researchers concluded that pedagogy is a complicated phenomenon, and the framework encompasses this view. To consider that pedagogy is 'effective', all areas need to be 'effective'. Moreover, they reported the significance of qualification levels with regard to teachers who can assess their own skills and attempt to find ways to improve themselves. Next, parents, teachers and headteachers in this study explained that the most significant skill to promote quality teaching is figuring out children's world and having knowledge about them, for which I use the term 'funds of knowledge and identities' in this study. Then, content knowledge comes as the second important characteristic. Lastly, they found that:

> Developmental records are more common than formative or diagnostic records and these show minimal links to planning for individual children. The links between planning>assessment>recording and the cyclical process of using records to inform planning

> and assessment of progression, appear not to be well understood or well used in many settings (Moyles et al., 2002, p.132).

In the literature, the purpose of formative assessment is defined as a tool "to inform continuing planning and teaching" (Sargent, 2011, p.6) throughout the year. In order to understand children's ongoing learning and interests and plan their learning further, the use of formative assessment via ongoing observations and verbal interactions is necessary (ibid.). The study, however, revealed that teachers could not internalise the use of formative assessment in ECEC settings and apply it into their practice. This could lead to offering activities that were not in the interest of children, or that cannot respond to children's needs. All in all, among the findings of the SPEEL project across different aspects of 'effective' pedagogy, their findings on the needed characteristics of teaching staff particularly affected English educational policy (Anglia Ruskin University, 2014) together with the findings of the EPPE and REPEY studies (see e.g., Key Elements of Effective Practice, 2005).

Particularly, the professional dimension of the framework guided further policy reforms in the early years teaching workforce (Anglia Ruskin University, 2014). The ethnographic aspect of the study contributed to highlight the complexity in the nature of 'effective' pedagogies and the need to perceive the 'effectiveness' concept "as a whole rather than particular aspects taken in isolation from each other" (Moyles et al., 2002, p.130). For instance, according to Cameron (2020), inspired from the findings of the researchers, a Green Paper titled the 'Children's Workforce Strategy' in 2005 was released, creating hope in the process of having a holistic English early years education workforce. The researcher especially highlighted that the future reforms stated in the Green Paper focus on increasing professional development, the number of early years workforce as well as the professional status of the early years workforce.

The reforms were not put into practice however, and there still appear to be deep problems in the early years workforce from 2005 to 2020 (ibid.). Further workforce policies were established and led different job descriptions and status for the early years education sector. For instance, in 2008, the government established a new type of teaching status, Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), for private, voluntary and independent schools, accepting the children from birth to age five in 2008 (DfE, 2012). The EYPS encompassed teaching in every aspect of pedagogy as well as working as a lead and cooperating with other teaching staff in the settings (ibid.). The EYPS, nevertheless, did not have equal professional rights (e.g., monthly salary, pensions, holidays) in comparison to the rights that the existing teacher qualification, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), has for teaching in maintained primary schools (Roberts-Holmes, 2013). Roberts-Holmes (2013) critiques that although the EYPS and the QTS

entail to follow the same EYFS Framework, the terms and conditions specified for the status of early years professionals placed them in a contentious situation. According to Roberts-Holmes (2013), the care aspect of early years private sectors predominates; therefore, the workforce in such schools generally becomes women accepting to work with lower salaries.

Several years later in 2013, as a response to independent and government-funded studies, including the EPPE (Sylva et al., 2007) and the Nutbrown Report (Nutbrown, 2012), the government proposed a new qualification, Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) (DfE, 2013). The preconditions to register to the EYTS educational programmes and the learning expectations from the students became similar to the QTS educational programmes (DfE, 2013). However, the problems that Roberts-Holmes (2013) pointed out still remain (Kay et al., 2021). This literature regarding professional status of early years teachers indicated the policy context which could influence the professional experience of participant early years teacher in the focus reception class.

The SPEEL project and other studies elegantly point out the issues related to early years workforce and its significance in the provision of 'effective' pedagogies. However, Cameron (2020) argues that the policy reforms in that area did not come to fruition and have instead been replaced with 'ineffective' reforms. Wild et al. (2015, p.238) argue that "similar words did not necessarily have similar meanings." for the policymakers and academic scholars. As a result, the way the policymakers perceive the early years workforce and the issues related to it could be different from what researchers and early years teaching staff perceive. That could possibly stem from their political interests of the governments and lead to confusion regarding the roles of teaching staff and what constitutes 'effective' pedagogy.

A more recent government-supported study is the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED Project), which is a comprehensive longitudinal mixed-method study of 6000 children from the age of 2 to 7, the end of Key Stage 1 (Callanan et al., 2017). The study began in 2012, with the overall purpose to learn the practices of the best or good quality early childhood centres that can provide good learning and developmental outcomes from the perspective of teachers and parents. I should note that the researchers divided the settings into three groups; early childhood and care (ECEC) having government funding in a non-domestic setting as formal group ECEC, ECEC having government funding in a domestic setting as formal individual ECEC, and ECEC in a domestic setting without government funding provided as informal individual ECEC.

In their reports, Melhuish and Gardiner (2020) highlighted the importance of home environment (e.g., well-being of parents, activities done between parents and children, the physical features of home

environment), parenting styles (e.g., permissive, authoritarian, authoritative) and its significant impacts on children's development across diverse areas (ibid.). The researchers did not find a significant correlation between attending formal ECEC settings and higher expressive language in Year 1. Yet, it was found statistically significant for groups of children who had the lowest level of quality in respect to home learning environment (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2020).

Additionally, the EPPE Project and the SEED study used the same scales to evaluate the 'quality' of ECEC settings and children's educational gains (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018b). They found that there was a visible decrease in the number of poor 'quality' ECEC schools. I therefore consider that the SEED Project looks like a post-test study of the EPPE project at a national level. The EPPE project formed reports relating the current conditions of the early years settings to children's outcomes. Then, the government took into consideration the particular findings and established educational reforms accordingly. After the application of their reforms across the country for some time, they funded other researchers to evaluate the 'quality' of schools using similar objective scales, which to some extent made the SEED project a post-test study of the EPPE.

Nevertheless, it seems that children's fund of knowledge evidently interested researchers and were reflected in the study results, which may be due to the impact of education reforms fostering 'schoolification' of early years education recently. For instance, they asserted that good quality teaching should be based on the EYFS Framework, but that it should be adjusted to children's specific needs. Also, teaching staff should emphasise the interests of children in their planning to attain the pre-set learning and developmental goals. More significantly, children as active agents in their own development should have a say in what to do on their own. They write that 'quality' ways of promoting children's development should involve:

> Encouraging children to do things for themselves; involving them in decision making and supporting them to find their own solutions to conflicts were elements of good practice felt to encourage self-regulation and independence (Callanan et al., 2017, p.23).

The study revealed that the uniqueness of children, their interests and their agency are not visible enough in early years settings which in turn reduce the quality of the pedagogy.

Overall, the government-funded studies highlighted what 'effective' practice constitutes, and how schools can ensure it. The English government's desire for 'schoolification' of early years education and its increased emphasis on heightened schooled literacy attainment via SSP method in reception

year however, created a tension in the curriculum and therefore in early years settings. It would stem from the fact that all the evidence these studies provided do not become a reference for the government's educational reforms. Regarding this issue, House (2011) comments that policymakers would select the specific findings and use them in their reforms, which could support their political stance. The most recent SEED study illustrated the consequence of these tensions on the early years pedagogies; children's fund of knowledge are not visible in the early years settings. As mentioned earlier in this section, the EYFS Framework seems to be more schoolified, with a focus on heightening schooled literacy standards, implying that the English government is selective in using the findings of the government-funded studies for the most recent revision especially. Therefore, the government's emphasis on readying reception children for Key Stage 1 and beyond seems to suppress the design of child-centred early years pedagogies in practice.

Looking at the studies from a methodological aspect, some commentators argue that the studies taking positivist approaches pose a danger to the standardisation of learning and early years education through generalisable and simplified results (House, 2011; Vandenbroeck, 2012). They may include findings indicating cause and effect relations or the classification of schools using apparently objective scales. However, in 'a rapidly changing world, … what works today may not work tomorrow.' (Whitty, 2007, p.3) or what works in some schools may not work in others (Vandenbroeck, 2012). Therefore, Whitty (2007) asserts that policymakers should take other research into consideration, ones that vary in its philosophical and/or methodological approaches. The current research aims to provide new insights into literacy pedagogies in a reception class of a maintained primary school through holding socio-cultural lenses. There is therefore no attempt to search for 'what works' in this study. Rather, it aims to explore and discuss literacy pedagogies of one reception class, where the teaching staff work 'in continually changing contexts of complexity and unpredictability.' (Vandenbroeck, 2012, p.7). Specifically, the sub-question of the study, 'how do the class teacher and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies?', aims to explore the complexity within the organisation of literacy pedagogies in one reception class.

2.4. Accountability

The accountability agenda and its objective measures are of central importance to the education systems of countries influenced by neo-liberal ideologies in our globalised world. I start by discussing how England has been using accountability measures in its primary education system. Then, I discuss the literature looking at the accountability agenda from a more critical perspective, pointing out the epistemological base of the current system, its implications for pedagogies in general and literacy

pedagogies in particular, its influence on professionalism in teaching and the existing literature regarding children's experience.

2.4.1. Accountability and its measures in English primary schools

Accountability is understood as a requirement for people or organisations; they are obliged to describe their act, that they are in charge of the result of their act and that if necessary, they need to sort the problem out or pay the penalty (Oliver, 1991; Sinclair, 1995). It is strongly associated with "responsibility, transparency, answerability and responsiveness" (Oliver, 1991, p.22).

Since the 1980s, the types of school accountability have increased in number, and its forms have become more complex (West et al., 2011). West et al. (2011) identified seven different forms of accountability: "professional, hierarchical, market, contract, legal, network and participative." (p.42). Scholars argue that in the education system of England, accountabilities are mainly in the form of market and hierarchical accountability. Below is an edited version of a table in the articles of West et al. (2011). As the focus of the current study is on school, only hierarchical and market accountabilities are included.

Type	Who is accountable	Accountable to	For what (examples)	Mechanism (examples)	Sanctions
Hierarchical	• Head teacher • School governing body	• Local authority • DfE • Ofsted	• National test and exam results • Exclusions data • Attendance data • Community involvement • Financial management	• Test and examination data targets • Ofsted (observation, self, evaluation form etc.) • Financial support	• Possibly via Ofsted, LA reputational (naming and shaming) • Possible dismissal • Replacement of governors • School closure
Market	• Headteacher • School governing body	• Parents	• National test and exam results • Quality of Education	• Test and examination data • Ofsted reports • Parent judgement; parent networks	• Possibly, via parents • Parent exit • Falling roll (financial; reputational; theoretical school closure)

Table 1. Description of two forms of external accountability visible in the English schools, adopted from West et al. (2011, p.47).

Schools in England are supposed to be judged in a hierarchical way related to diverse points of the school's features, such as their pedagogies and national assessment results (Acquah, 2013). As is clear in table 1, school governing bodies and headteachers are under the accountability of the local authority, Ofsted (discussed later in this section) and DfE (ibid.). In case of failure to meet the expectations of these authorities, sanctions are applied from light to severe. The lighter sanction could be 'warning' the school and the severe sanction could be changing the people in the management role or impeding the reputation through disclosing the name of the school publicly (Acquah, 2013).

Additionally, in terms of market accountability, parents are perceived as the customers and schools are obliged to be accountable to the parents in the marketized system (ibid.). Children's scores from compulsory national assessments and the evaluation reports of Ofsted, which are published publicly for each school, constitute two sources for customers to know the quality of the service (Acquah, 2013). Again, sanctions can even be the closure of the school or a lighter financial cut of government funding due to a decrease in the number of students (ibid.).

The tools for hierarchical and market accountability that relate to children's development are school inspections and high-stakes national assessments. Assessment and exam results of students become a tool for comparing schools and ranking via school league or performance tables, which aim to drive school improvement and parental choice. In the 2017-2018 academic year, Ofsted visited for its compulsory school inspection as well as four compulsory national assessments at the primary school level in England.

2.4.2. Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills)

The accountability system of English education heavily relies on the Ofsted institution and the reports it provides for the public, as seen in table 1. As part of hierarchical accountability, Ofsted becomes one of the stakeholders that the primary schools are accountable to. As part of market accountability, it provides reports for parents in choosing schools for their children since Ofsted publishes school inspection reports, which include one of the scores each school received on the following benchmark; outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

More specifically, Ofsted inspectors assess schools based on the results of students from the national tests (i.e., the EYFS Profile, Phonics Screening Check, Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs) and the effectiveness of teaching provision. The school inspection framework, valid between 2015 and 2018, defines one of the aspects that the inspectors should take into account: 'the quality and impact of phonics teaching' (Ofsted, 2018, p.64). The inspectors have the right of looking at the school's own improvement plans, the results of national tests, the observations of teaching staff during teaching. The framework would carry importance for schools in forming their pedagogies following the points that are the focus of the inspection. Therefore, Ofsted inspections would enforce primary schools to strictly implement SSP focused teaching.

Not only teaching staff's pedagogical practices but also teaching staff's pre-service and in-service trainings are under the scrutiny of the Ofsted inspectors (Ellis and Moss, 2014) and Department for Education. If the universities or schools do not evidence that they provide SSP focused professional

training, the financial support given to those institutions would stop (ibid.). To encourage in-service training, Department for Education proposed grants of £10,000 to primary schools judged to be excellent in quality SSP teaching, to cooperate with other primary schools in 2015-2016 academic year (DfE, 2015). The grants would support knowledge exchange among primary schools to support SSP teaching and to increase literacy attainment results in national primary assessments.

Furthermore, Ofsted informs the schools about what they mean by the quality provision, which naturally discloses what they disapprove of and considers as failing in educational settings via conducting their own studies through surveys and reviews (Wood, 2019). A vital example report that was relevant to literacy pedagogies in reception year, published by Ofsted in 2017, was *Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools* (Ofsted, 2017). The study indicated that ELGs in reading and writing do not prepare children for the literacy standards of primary national curriculum. Thus, the participant schools created their own curriculum to ready reception children for Year 1 and further literacy standards, supporting the government's argument that 'the earlier, the better' (ibid.). Through explaining their results, the Ofsted staff notify schools across the country about what they expected from them to be evaluated as 'good' or 'outstanding'. Therefore, the Ofsted's study acted an essential mediator guiding the organisation of pedagogies in reception classes.

Overall, the government's decision on how to teach literacy shaped its assessment strategy and the inspection of schools and universities. Nevertheless, it could restrict the university and teaching staff to profit from diverse research studies regarding literacy education to apply in their literacy teaching (Ellis and Moss, 2014). Both teaching staff and children therefore had to engage in the SSP teaching strategy. Severe sanctions could be applied in the case of not following the government's mandatory literacy strategy. According to Torgerson et al. (2019, p.213), Ofsted and its work turned into 'firm government pressure', ensuring that SSP was the only literacy teaching method to be used in reception classes in England by the data collection period of this study.

2.4.3. Individual assessment (Progress Check at 2, EYFS, Phonics Screening Check in Year 1, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2)

From birth to at the end of the primary school, there were five compulsory national assessments in the 2017-2018 academic year (the data collection period for this study). Those are:

- Progress check at the age of 2,
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of Reception,

- Phonics screening check at the end of year 1,
- Key Stage 1 Assessment at the end of year 2,
- Key Stage 2 Assessment at the end of year 6.

I will shortly explain the structure of each assessment with particular emphasis on the literacy aspect. Explaining the structure and content of the assessment tools for hierarchical and market accountability purposes is intended to elucidate how schooled literacy via the SSP approach is enforced and monitored by the government.

Children's assessment starts with age 2 and 3 to determine the individual child's strengths and identify the areas that are below the expected level (DfE, 2017). They are assessed against the three prime areas in the EYFS Framework, one of which is language and communication. The verbal language aspect of literacy is of concern due to the very young age of the children. Should the individual child be identified as having a special educational need or show emerging development in three prime areas, practitioners have to prepare a plan to create a learning environment where the child's learning and development are supported according to their special needs (ibid.). This is deemed an early intervention.

At the end of the reception year, the teacher must evaluate all children, with particular adjustments to the EYFS Profile while assessing children with special needs, against the 17 early learning goals (DfE, 2017). Two of them are related to the literacy development of children, as quoted below:

> **Reading:** children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read (DfE, 2017, p.11).
>
> **Writing:** children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible. (DfE, 2017, p. 11).

Teaching staff must report that children in each ELG are at the 'exceeding', 'expected', or below the expected level of development (also termed the 'emerging' level). Teaching staff are also required to write a paragraph regarding how the child learns under three characteristics; playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically.

One year later in June, students, typically at age 6, have to take the phonics test called 'Year 1 Phonics Screening Check'. The test is conducted by individual children orally and is paper-based. In the test

material, 40 words are divided into two sections, with the second section more complex in structure than the first. Each section includes 12 pseudo-words and 8 real words. Next to each pseudo-word, there is a picture of an alien in order to encourage children not to mix non-words with real words and read them through sight-word reading strategy or whole language approach. In the first section, there are simple word structures from consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) to CVCC. The second section contains CCVCC or CCCVCC. Example words from 2019 phonics screening check include 'sud, yad, soft and sweep' from section 1 and 'brend, throst, strip and thankful' from section 2 (DfE, 2019). The pass threshold for the phonics screening check has been 32 out of 40 words. Considering the non-statutory document, *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High-Quality Phonics* by the Department for Education and Skills [DfES] (2007), children at the age of 6 are expected to be secure at phase 5, which is in line with the test content and the structure of the words.

In considering the nature of the test, its purpose is to assess Year 1 children's decoding ability of real and non-real words without providing any contextual clues. However, Grundin (2018, p.40) argues that "(a) one may be able to pronounce a word because one recognises it without decoding and (b) one may have decoded the word in one's mind but fail to sound it out correctly." Grundin (2018) further questions the nature of the test by discussing the systematic disadvantage of children with articulation problems, summer-born children and children having different accents and dialects. Clark (cited in Clark 2017) also found that a child with autism could easily read real words but failed to read non-words in their first Phonics Screening Check. Thus, relying on the test results would not evaluate children's reading ability, as its purpose is only for assessing grapheme-phoneme correspondence of real and non-real words (Grundin, 2018). Bradbury (2014) points out that its function is then to control and inspect primary school teaching staff in their application of SSP in their literacy pedagogies. Therefore, the test is one type of source for market and hierarchical accountability.

The third national assessment involves not only reading but also writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling, named the Key Stage 1 Test Standard Assessment Task (SAT). In the optional English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, students are required to complete two papers, one for spelling and the other for evaluating children's grammar, punctuation and vocabulary (STA, 2018b). The test for this section lasts around 35 minutes in total.

The assessment is for students approaching the end of year 2, typically for students aged 7. Teachers collect evidence from the independent writings of the pupil throughout the year and assess it (STA, 2018a). However, assessing children's writing requires more attention by teachers and there needs to be plenty of evidences to support their judgements (STA, 2018a). The expectations have been raised

immensely; clarity and coherence in their written narratives are considered to matter most at this level, together with using capital letters, finger spaces, full stops and question marks (ibid.). Also, children should generally use two tenses appropriately, past and present, and some simple conjunctions, such as but, because, if and when (STA, 2018a).

Unlike writing assessment, the children need to have two reading tests that include reading passages and questions. The second is more difficult than the first in relation to the length of the passages and the sentences, as well as the questions regarding the narratives (STA, 2018b). Children have to answer questions after reading the texts. The first one should take around 30 minutes, and the second test is designed to last approximately 40 minutes (ibid.).

The expected learning standard from English reading is to read 'age-appropriate' books, which should have a similar level of complexity to the exemplary readings presented for the Key Stage 1 Test (STA, 2018a). At this stage, the child should move from the decoding to the understanding level while reading a passage with fluency. Accordingly, the child should make 'some inferences' and be capable of responding to queries regarding the passage (ibid.).

For writing and reading areas, teachers have to judge students' learning attainment against three levels, using children's independent writing examples and reading test results as evidence. The judgements are as follows: 'working towards the expected standard', 'working at the expected standard', 'working at the greater depth within the expected standard'. The government proposed that from the 2020-2021 academic year, Key Stage 1 will no longer be a compulsory national assessment (STA, 2018d).

The last national assessment before completing primary school is the Key Stage 2 SAT. It involves tests for English reading and English grammar, punctuation, spelling. Also, it consists of teacher assessment in the following areas: English reading and English writing. English reading was removed from the teacher assessment framework from the 2018-2019 academic year and onwards.

To be 'working at the expected standard', the student needs to read books suitable for year 6 level fluently (STA, 2017). At this point, students are expected to make deductions, assumptions, predictions and summarise important points from the reading passage (ibid.). It seems that the expected reading skills from year 6 are to ensure that students can read critically. Reading the passages fluently is not evaluated as satisfactory for Year 6 students to be ranked at the expected level.

In the writing aspect of literacy, students now have to write narratives clearly and legibly, grammatically correct, punctuated and with adequate depiction of the physical and psychological environment and characters (STA, 2017). Students have to use more advanced punctuation properly from using capital letters and question marks to inverted commas (ibid.). The majority of words should be spelt appropriately by year 5 and year 6. In short, the expectations of writing are almost at the same complexity level in comparison to adults' writing (STA, 2017). Also, unlike the Key Stage 1 SAT, Key Stage 2 SAT is stated as remaining compulsory in the future of primary education (STA, 2018d).

Stainthorp (2020) stated that the English government considerably increased the standards in the English subject in 2014, which created debates in the field and received critics from some primary teaching staff. They argued that with the heightened standards, children from low socio-economic background, children speaking English as an additional language and children with SEND tend to receive lower scores than other children in the primary national assessments. Likewise, Williams-Brown and Jopling (2021) found that primary teachers expressed these children being adversely affected after the 2014 revision. Their analysis of two studies (2010 and 2019) showed that Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers felt more restricted to teach towards national standards, inhibiting their feeling of professional autonomy. The feeling of restraint by the heightened standards was particularly more intense in the reports of Key Stage 1 teachers. That could mean that the increase in the standards of Key Stage 1 curriculum is relatively higher than the increase done in the standards of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Thus, the debates regarding national assessments on a primary school level illustrate that the top-down pressure has risen, which guides primary schools to teach for standards and its national assessments.

Beginning from early years, policymakers in England have created a successive compulsory assessment chain to assess their citizens' developmental path and schooled literacy learning outcomes. The assessment results from the EYFS Profile to Key Stage 2 assessment affect primary schools' success in Ofsted inspections, league tables and all teachers in primary schools. Thus, it was significant to explore the nature of primary assessments and any tensions related to them, as this study is conducted in a reception class of a state primary school in England.

2.4.4. Critical views towards the functions of accountability in English contexts and its implications in reception year

Education systems are constructed having complex targets, which reflect the governments' economic, social and political ideologies (Ozga, 2000). Yet, prioritising one aspect of their ideologies over the

others (e.g., economic interests over social ones) can lead to tensions in the education system. According to Trevor et al. (2020), in the early years education system of England, the tension shows itself by the inclusion of constructs of 'child-centred pedagogies in its system alongside school readiness discourses that see early years education as a preparation period for Key Stage 1 and beyond and that emphasise academic skills (e.g., schooled literacy) in education (see section 2.3.5 in this chapter for more discussion about the tensions, found in the government-funded studies).

The above-mentioned accountability tools (national individual assessments or school inspections) seem to dictate and to control schools mainly in the aspect of academic skills, one of which is schooled literacy. The performance of schools against pre-determined quality measures and the performance of children in national individual assessments have become an important component of the education system. Ball (2003) names this system of education as performativity.

> Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change ^ based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement (ibid., p.216).

Similarly, Harlen (2007) explains that in England, the primary reasons of requiring schools to have summative results of the students altogether are first, 'accountability', which aims for assessing teaching staff, educational institutions and local authorities, and secondly, 'monitoring', that targets to make comparisons of the test scores for the students of particular school level. Monitoring will eventually enable to detect differences in standards. Ball calls this type of accountability regime a 'system of terror' (2008, p.49), arguing that a system based on the performativity of students, teaching staff, and educational institutions can be destructive of teaching while assuring 'performance requirements' (ibid., p.50).

West et al. (2011) consider that the type of accountability that England has external rather than internal. External accountability means that schools are obliged to be answerable to people other than the school members, such as the local authority. Internal accountability, however, is the school's accountability to itself. For instance, teachers are required to explain and discuss their plans with other teachers. Researchers assert that high stakes external accountabilities, which England has, assist in

creating and strengthening general agreement at the school level; cooperation among school teams concentrates more on explicit learning aims (or learning standards) for pupils (Newmann et al., 1997).

Rogoff (1998) criticises the standardisation of learning since it implies that we should regard the learning conditions of all children across the country as the same. Specifically, in the area of literacy development, Teale and Sulzby (1986) argue that it is not possible to categorise literacy development into clear-cut hierarchical steps. Individual children could have their own literacy learning path, which might not reflect the route that the government sets for the children.

Assessing children's learning outcomes could be considered an objective process. But assessment is not an objective phenomenon, and early childhood professionals always have to interpret the evidence and also acknowledge that it is the result of their choice of assessment (Eaude, 2011). By focusing on observing the child's learning, teachers may ignore their own influence and the influence of the remaining children in the class on the observed child's actions (Fleer and Richardson, 2004). Children may not want to show their actual skills or knowledge on certain topics when other children are around them. On the other hand doing observation by considering the child independently of other people around them could also make the record less reliable (ibid.). However, even though the interpretation of early years practitioners can vary, in these ways, reception children at the end of the year must receive one of three points: 'exceeding', 'expected', or 'emerging'. Therefore, it is questionable whether the results of children's profile scores are truly comparable.

2.4.5.1. The Influence of performativity on early years pedagogies and literacy pedagogies

Moss (2012) argues that, with the performativity agenda and its high-stakes accountability measures at the school and individual level, English early years education has merged into primary schooling. Reception year has become the lower stage of compulsory primary education, which reduces the "the otherness or alterity of ECE, making the Other into the Same." (ibid., p.356). In other words, early years education has become a preparation year for the academic demands of further primary education, despite the fact that early years education is different in its underlying assumptions about learning and teaching.

Early years education has been typified by teaching staff who paid great attention to child-led activities and created learning environments with diverse materials accessible to children (Dalhlberg et al., 2007). Children could co-construct their shared understanding with other children or adults in a

culturally meaningful environment. Child-led activities supported children to engage in literacy practices in their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defines the ZPD as

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (1978, p.86).

Focusing on individual children's ZPD provides information about the children's current skills that are maturing and the next skills children will need with the supporting of another more skilled person in the process of acquisition. Setting standards via the ZPD approach, however, contradicts the school readiness discourse and standardisation of literacy skills, in that determining the children's learning target though ZPD requires knowing children's existing skills and making future learning targets in line with that. This is complex and entails the acceptance that learning and development are not linear. For instance, in Reggio Emilia inspired schools, where socio-cultural approaches in learning are embraced, child development is seen as a 'spiral' (Edwards et al., 2012). The spiral refers to the idea that "ideas, opinions, and thoughts must be expressed, revisited, reflected upon, and expressed again, children consolidate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings into meaningful and cohesive wholes" (Hewett, 2001, p.99).

The government's over-reliance on positivist assumptions about knowledge creates one vision of a 'natural' childhood. From this, objective linear literacy learning standards (e.g., ELGs in writing and reading and Key Stage 1 literacy standards) are constructed. Nicholson et al. (2015) argue that the epistemological underpinnings of school readiness have not been discussed widely. The readiness discourse assumes an objective 'true' knowledge, which can be measured through scientific techniques (Usher and Edwards, 2003).

Conceiving of early years education as the early steps of an objective linear development (literacy development in this context) could lead early years institutions to be the same as primary school, which could ignore the diversity in children's skills as well as the diversity in learning conditions (Rogoff, 1998). It could encourage teaching staff to prepare more adult-led activities and push children to reach the standards at the end of the year. An ethnographic study by Gregory et al. (2004) in three socio-economically different reception classes showed that the reception teacher who had most of the children from ethnic minority backgrounds and children of families having the lowest economic wealth, stuck to teaching children academic skills through adult-led activities (e.g., literacy skills). But

the other two schools, one having mostly wealthy families of children and the other, lower income families' children, did not practice instructional teaching as much of the first teacher. Instead, one of those two school's teachers, for instance, gave value to the socialization of the children during reception year. This might suggest the intensity of adult-led activities could even be greater for children coming from lower socio-economic family background and ethnic minority backgrounds. I should note that Gregory et al. (2004) conducted the ethnographic study between 2000 and 2002, which is before the legislation requiring compulsory individual assessment for reception children. A more recent study by Bassok et al. (2016) indicated that teachers spend much more time on teaching maths and literacy skills to early years children through adult-led, academic activities. Children's time engaging in free play, musical activities and science are relatively short. The high-stakes accountability measures seemed to be influential in the content of pedagogies that reception teaching staff established in Bassok et al.'s study (2016).

Hutchings (2015) found that the use of national tests for the purpose of school accountability has clearly influenced teaching strategies and the content of the lessons. Hutchings (2015) conducted a survey of 7,922 teachers from all stages of schools, including early years teachers, and found that 93 per cent of teachers supported the statement, "The focus on academic targets means there are fewer opportunities for creative, investigative and practical activities" (p. 47). Moreover, the study revealed that lesson plans were in line with the content of tests, instead of giving value to creative and exploratory experiences or courses (ibid.). Similarly, Clark and Waller (2007) stressed the point that if teachers focus on evaluating particular skills according to national tests, their encouragement of creativity in children may be affected negatively. Thus, restricting the set of learning goals could lessen children's opportunities for having a learning environment that promotes creativity.

The EYFS Profile encourages teaching staff to do observations of individual children in their natural contexts and document them regularly. At the end of the year, teaching staff should report children's learning and development attainment against the pre-defined 17 ELGs. Basfard and Bath (2014) comment that even though documentation of observations (generally named as learning journeys) of children's learning and development in their classrooms seems to be inspired from socio-cultural discourses, they are used as objective evidence for proving children's levels against the pre-determined standards. The ultimate aim of documentation, then, becomes to meet the requirements of high-stakes accountability and to show how ready children are for primary schooling.

Whilst it could be argued that performativity and accountability are necessary to secure high quality early years education, this is not the case when considering noteworthy examples of successful systems in other countries where the documentation embraces socio-cultural perspectives more thoroughly. Learning stories is the national assessment of New Zealand's curriculum, Te Whāriki. The purpose of assessment in Te Whāriki is to make children's learning dispositions visible to all relevant people, parents, children and teaching staff. Learning stories are defined as "being ready, willing and able to participate in various ways: a combination of inclination, sensitivity to the occasion, and the relevant skill and knowledge" (Carr, 2001, p.21). In contrast to England, the literacy targets of Te Whāriki give importance to the engagement of children with print rather than prescribed skills based learning outputs, such as phonics knowledge. The documents issued by the ministry to ECEC settings encourage teaching staff to create a culturally relevant literacy learning atmosphere (Miller et al., 2002). Hence, teaching staff in New Zealand have political conditions where they can use learning stories, premised on socio-cultural theories, as documentation.

However, Soler and Miller (2003) identify an implicit contradiction between the socio-cultural assumptions proposed to be the basis of Te Whāriki and its position as a national curriculum. National curricula draw 'a developmental sequence' despite the fact that the targets are loose. Under this condition, the child's agency in the formation of pedagogy could be limited (Soler and Miller, 2003). The authors suggest Reggio-Emilia inspired schools as another example of a system that embraces socio-cultural principles strongly. Different to Te Whāriki and the EYFS, it does not have either flexible or tight learning goals, which enables children to get involved in the formation of an emergent curriculum through their funds of knowledge and to make their unique co-construction of shared knowledge visible via pedagogical documentation. It is therefore clear that performative driven educational approaches to early years education are a choice made within a neoliberal, marketised ideology; alternative approaches are possible.

Parents as the customers of the state education system have the right of sending their children to the school of their choice and the right of complaining about the educational service their children receive. Bridges (2010) analysed England's policy documents from 1963 to 2009, focusing on the place of parents under the performative culture of English education system. Bridges (2010) argues that parents would not then be the 'partners' of teaching staff who provide the service (literacy pedagogies in this context). Rather, they could participate in their children's education for the individual interest of their children, such as raising their children's assessment results in national exams to enter high quality schools.

On the one hand, the performativity agenda encourages competition among schools and children via its high-stakes accountability measures. On the other hand, literacy education has been constructed on scientific premises of literacy teaching (teaching schooled literacy via SSP approach), posing the danger of deficit version of parenthood (Mac Naughton and Hughes, 2003). To my knowledge, no prior academic studies have examined the ways in which early years teaching staff involves parents in their literacy pedagogies, taking into consideration the performative culture of English early years education. Thus, the current study addresses the following sub-question: 'In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies?'

While the nature of parents and teaching staff is stated to be redefined by performativity agenda of the successive governments (Bridges, 2010), some other commentators argued that the mediators of performativity, high-stakes accountability measures, have changed the nature of education as well as the definition of the teaching profession (Ball, 2003; Day et al., 2007). Braun and Maguire (2020) state that "Targets [e.g. literacy standards] can act to control and confine teachers' work and re-vision what it means to be a 'good' primary teacher as producing the required results" (p.443). National assessments implicitly test whether teaching staff educated their students in line with the statutory curriculum or not (Bearne, 2017). Bradbury's one-year qualitative ethnographic study of two reception classes also reveals that England's assessment policy shapes teachers' views regarding their job descriptions, their professional responsibilities, and the activities or topics that they feel they need to give precedence to in their plans (2012). Therefore, it can be argued that the art of teaching is technicised towards making children reach prescribed academic standards at the end of the year and doing controlled assessment throughout the year. In this research, I aim to expand the literature by exploring the ways in which literacy pedagogies are established in a reception class, taking into consideration of the tensions regarding the performative culture of the English education system.

Even though teachers follow the prescribed pedagogy of the government, Braun and Maguire (2020) found that the teaching staff follow the rules without believing in their necessity for children. The accountability regime emotionally affected the well-being of the participant teachers; they felt they are obliged to do the national assessments. Back in 2003, Ball warned readers that "Beliefs are no longer important, it is the output that counts. Beliefs are part of an older, increasingly displaced discourse" (Ball, 2003, p.217). The important things are the performance of children in the national tests, the evaluation of the schools and teaching staff in line with their performance results as a school. Ozga (2000), hence, compares schools to corporate business; what is valued is the eventual outcome. In this study, I intended to research the perspectives of teaching staff regarding what they do with

respect to literacy. In contrary to the previous research studies, which involved primary and secondary school teachers across different years, this study only aims to explore the perspectives of teaching staff working in a reception class and purposes to answer the question: 'what are the perspectives of the class teacher and the TAs on their literacy pedagogies?'

When the performance of children from national assessments is prioritised in schools, Ball (2003) asserts that some schools would focus their attention on increasing the number of 'high attainers' in those tests. In that case, the children who are considered as potentially 'falling behind', such as children with special needs, would get less 'investment' by the staff (ibid.). However, Hatch (2002) asserts that accountability should be "an ethical commitment to do what is right for every child, not from measuring productivity according to an arbitrary set of narrowly defined outcomes." (p.461). Given the increasing concerns regarding the ethical provision of early years education to all children within one class, the current study aims to seek for reception children experiences in literacy pedagogies established in one class, thereby addressing the following research question: 'how do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them?'

Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2018) state that even though there have been research studies focusing on the assessment data and its governance at the national and international level (e.g., Ozga, 2009; Lingard et al. 2013; Sellar and Lingard, 2014; Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016), there have been relatively few academic studies focusing on the effects of the high-stakes accountability education system on the pedagogical practices in the primary school in England (e.g., Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Roberts-Holmes, 2019; Braun and Maguire, 2020). Therefore, the present study responds to this by specifically focusing on the formation and establishment of literacy pedagogies in one reception class.

2.5. Teaching Workforce: Teaching Assistants in the Early Years Settings and the Early Years

Alongside increased 'schoolification', a move towards the sole use of SSP teaching methods and the governments' pressure on increasing school literacy attainment via performativity tools, the first workforce reform among teaching staff, published in 2003, also forms a part of the policy context for this study. One of the aims of this research is to explore how the class teacher and the TAs work together in one reception class. Thus, elaborating the discussions and tensions about workforce division among teaching staff would give significant insights into the nature of workforce division in the focused class.

In the literature, different terms are being used to define TAs, such as 'paraprofessionals' or 'teaching aides' (Jones et al., 2012, p.19). I prefer to use the most commonly used term, teaching assistant in this study. Yet, irrespective of its different terms, the general role of teaching assistants is to help the classroom teacher in the early years settings (ibid.).

The first and most influential reform on the current teaching workforce in schools is *Time for Standards: Remodelling the School Workforce*, established by the Department for Education and Skills [DfES] in (2002). The policy aimed to find new strategies that would prepare students in line with the expectations of countries in the new century (ibid.). The policy states that the current school workforce creates too much workload for teachers; hence they cannot help students' learning outcome to reach or exceed the pre-set standards.

Before its establishment, the government started a pilot research study, called *the Transforming the School Workforce (TSW) Pathfinder Project*, in 32 schools in England in 2002. Scholars from Birmingham University researched the efficacy of the Remodelling project in the sample schools (Gunter and Rayner, 2007). However, the policymakers did not wait for the findings of the research to be published and made compulsory the workforce shift by introducing the changes step by step within three years; 2003, 2004 and 2005. Therefore, Gunter and Rayner (2007) argue that it is not a research-supported policy.

Phase one – 2003 • Promote reductions in overall excessive hours • Establish monitoring group • Establish new Implementation Review Unit • Routine delegation of 24 non-teaching tasks • Introduce new work/life balance clauses • Introduce leadership and management time • Undertake review of use of school closure days
Phase two – 2004 • Introduce new limits on covering for absent teachers
Phase three – 2005 • Introduce guaranteed professional time for planning, preparation and assessment • Introduce dedicated headship time • Introduce new invigilation arrangements

Figure 2. Three phases of workforce reforms in the changes, adopted from the DfES (2003 p. 16).

The changes over three years were mainly about distributing the work responsibilities of teachers to other staff in the school, mostly to teaching assistants (Gunter and Rayner, 2007). Even though the policy gave responsibilities to TAs in teaching and learning, the responsibilities relating to accountability rested on the shoulders of the teachers, as is clear from the below statements.

> Teaching assistants who interact with pupils in relation to teaching and learning, must do so within a regulated system of supervision and leadership operated by the pupils' classroom/subject teacher; they may specialise in working across a particular subject area;
>
> Accountability for the overall learning outcomes of a particular pupil must rest with that pupil's qualified classroom/subject teacher (DfES, 2003, p. 12).

This makes evident the government's assumption that assessing children's learning requires higher specialisation than teaching students. Also, it assumes that teaching and assessment can be split between paraprofessionals and qualified teachers. Because of this discrepancy, Gunter argues that the division of the workforce in the Remodelling is "organisational and not pedagogic" (2007, p. 86). Moreover, whilst the policy was about shifting teachers' workload to other staff, mainly TAs, there were no explanations about the profession of teaching, its components and the place of teacher identity in planning lessons and curriculum (Gunter and Rayner, 2007). The policy does not include the insights of pedagogy, learning and student identity, yet the workload shift eventually affects the educational practice and the learner (ibid.). Gunter and Rayner claim (2007) that without having such topics considered in advance, the policy cannot be successful in enabling significant improvements, instead, it would lead towards the de-professionalisation of teaching and decontextualization of the schools.

More importantly, considering the qualifications of TAs in the early years settings, the study of Ratcliff and her colleagues (2011) found that teaching assistants in early years settings had little or no education in teaching children. They learnt teaching strategies by observing teachers in the classroom, which could lead to debates about the quality of education children can receive from TAs' teaching. The number of TAs across England has been steadily increasing. From 2011 to 2018, the number of full-time equivalent teaching assistants working in state-funded nursery and primary schools increased from 137,000 to 176,700 (DfE, 2019). Therefore, it is possible that more and more literacy teaching will be conducted by TAs.

With the Remodelling policy, Hutchings et al. (2009) found that different sorts of job names emerged as a result of the distribution of the workload among support staff, sometimes creating

misunderstandings over roles. Since higher-level status teaching assistants mostly started to teach whole classes during planned (e.g., planning, preparation and assessment (PPA)) and unplanned time (e.g., sickness), after the Remodelling, a third of the participant TAs from Hutchings et al. (2009)'s study at primary school level reported that they required more educational support in guiding children on how to behave in a classroom environment.

More than half of TAs were pleased to work with the whole class, considering that their teaching skills and experience were increasing. More importantly, teachers mentioned that the remodelling policy did not make teachers have less workload; other regulations caused them to work a similar amount before the establishment of the Remodelling. Yet, headteachers and teachers explained that teachers could find more time to concentrate on teaching and learning, which decreased their level of stress eventually.

In considering types of responsibilities that TAs have, Webster et al. (2013) found that TAs play an essential part in the teaching of children with disabilities and children who are likely to fall behind their peers in academic skills. Having these responsibilities, TAs can be considered to be individual tutors of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms. However, Giangreco et al. (2005) pinpoint five important warnings that mainstream schools and parents of children with special needs should question. Firstly, even though children with special needs have more complicated ways of learning, they are educated by individually assigned TAs with the lowest level of education level. Secondly, there are some adverse effects associated with too much close relationship between TAs and children with special needs. For instance, over-closeness might interrupt those children in developing friendship with other friends or, they might, on the other hand, overreact to the special interests and closeness of the TA by showing aggressive behaviours toward their individual TAs. Thirdly, teachers' trust in TAs might decrease the frequency of interaction between teachers and children with special needs. Fourthly, due to individual TAs' lower education level and its quality, teachers, parents, and children might be dissatisfied with the education provided by TAs. Lastly, TAs may cause schools to be unable to recognise the needed revisions in their teaching not only with children who have special needs but also with other children.

Like Giangreco et al. (2005), Peter Blatchford and his colleagues conducted valuable studies in understanding the role of teaching assistants and their impact on students' academic learning outcome in primary, secondary and special schools (see; e.g., Blatchford et al., 2012; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Webster et al., 2013). The government-funded study of Webster et al. (2010) showed that primary and secondary students having TAs' teaching in English had significantly less improvement in

their English course than students having teacher's support mostly. The students with special needs had the highest negative impact of TA support on their English learning outcome. Hence, the research studies indicated the direct pedagogical support of TAs in English subject does not enrich students' English learning. On the contrary, it has adverse effects on their academic performance.

Sosinsky and Gilliam (2011) argue that their research findings on the role of assistant teachers working in Key Stage 1 and beyond might not be very helpful in comprehending the teaching assistants' role for early childhood children since teaching early years children requires adult-child ratios lower than primary school classrooms, and early years education differs in its learning purposes and its atmosphere. The current study with the research question - How do the class teacher and the TAs work together to promote children's literacy learning? - aims to advance understandings of the roles of TAs as well as the class teacher. It endeavours to search for any collaboration between TAs and the teacher or/and among TAs, if exists.

Conclusion

In the first section of the chapter, I discussed the significance and place of children and childhood, considering early years education from the economic, political and philosophical aspects. The review pointed out that dominant neo-liberal and globalised ideologies have infused into everyday pedagogies of early years education system through governments' educational policies (England in this study), such as privatisation, standardisation and high-stakes accountability measures. These policies have promoted the conception of 'hurried childhood' to be dominant in societies, especially in the academic areas, including the desire of teaching literacy as early as possible.

I then contextualised the focus of my research topic through critically analysing the existing literature regarding literacy pedagogies and literacies. People's beliefs about what constitutes literacy determine their assumptions regarding its teaching (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). By holding the positivist views, teaching literacy through SSP as a sole method in England could create the formation of a prescribed pedagogy (Moss and Petrie, 2002), leading to undervaluing diversity in children's ways of learning, their funds of knowledge (Heath, 1983) and undervaluing the contribution of some parents in their children's literacy learning journey (Hughes and Mac Naughton, 2000).

By discussing the primary education policies of England, I intended to clarify the political context of my research site. Previous research showed that the ECEC system began to emphasise 'schoolification' of early years education (Moss and Cameron, 2020), leading to learning being divided into specific

areas (e.g., literacy, maths) and setting learning standards for each area. Although scholars critique the use of SSP as an exclusive method of literacy teaching, the English education reforms in literacy have increasingly enforced the use of SSP in very young children's literacy education.

As the first section clarified that neo-liberal ideologies have infused into education systems through performativity culture and its tools, I attempted to elaborate the performativity agenda in the English primary school context, giving focus to the literacy area. The successive English governments attempted to ensure the implementation of the SSP method through using hierarchical and market accountabilities (West et al., 2011). Parents, as customers of the schools, could register their children to the school of their choice, and the children's literacy learning outcome in national assessments becomes an important indicator determining the 'quality' of schools. However, statutory assessments and their content create disputes in the field; assessing children's phoneme-grapheme correspondence would not provide the full picture of children's reading development. The literature review highlights that the narrowed view of literacy teaching could systematically disadvantage children with diverse learning dispositions and children learning EAL, children with SEND and children coming from lower socio-economic family background. The high-stakes accountability measures could put pressure on teaching staff, guiding them to teach for standards.

In the last section of the chapter, I explored the policies and debates regarding the place of TAs. Within years, TAs have increasingly played an important role in teaching schooled literacy to children having special needs and other 'lower ability' children; it was therefore necessary to search for the ways in which the class teacher and the TAs work together in literacy pedagogies of the focus reception class. The existing studies highlighted that the English government established fine-grained educational reforms in the workforce division among teaching staff for the sake of increasing the learning outcomes (schooled literacy in this context). However, the TAs' direct teaching did not contribute to the English literacy outcomes of those primary and secondary students.

In sum, although the neo-liberal education reforms appear to be intrusive to the ECEC systems and create contradictions with the child-centred philosophies of early years education, there is a scarcity in the literature that addresses the influence of neo-liberal discourses on early years education (Roberts-Holmes, 2019) and its high-stakes accountability on the pedagogies of primary schooling (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Braun and Maguire, 2020). More work is necessary to explore 'how' reception teaching staff establish their pedagogies under these circumstances. The present study aims to fill the gap with its one overarching question and its five sub-research questions on page

15. The next chapter discusses the methodology, methods, tools and data analysis processes I used for my study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology of the study is an ethnographic case study, with the focus case being a reception class in a state-funded primary school in England. The data collection involved participant observation in the reception class (field notes), interviews with teaching staff, interviews with six children as well as interviews with their parents. I also used a play-like attitude scale to rate the children's attitudes towards regular adult-led and child-led literacy activities with all children in the class.

This chapter consists of seven sections. The first section starts with an explanation of a paradigm and then clarifies the research paradigm governing this study. After that, the design of the study is explained. Next, data collection methods are discussed in detail and the ethical considerations are set out. I then discuss my positionality and reflexivity in the study before finally discussing the data analysis process and the analytical framework that was employed.

3.1. Research Paradigm

All researchers have particular perspectives in their research topics, often referred to as paradigms (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). "A paradigm consists of the following components: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods" (Scotland, 2012, p.9). Based on a particular ontological and epistemological view, the supposition of a paradigm is generated. As a result, a researcher's views on reality and knowledge alter among different paradigms with their suppositions determining the methodology (ibid.). Overall, the research paradigm that I follow shapes how I view the research topic, what kind of information I consider to be useful or even crucial for the research and what I infer was found through data collection (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

The current research study used an interpretive paradigm. The ontological assumption of interpretivism is that "reality is a 'social construction'; that is, what people know and believe to be true about the world is *constructed* or *created* and *reinforced* and *supported* as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings." (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, p.67, italics original). Therefore, there are various subjective and culturally-specific realities that people generate 'in [their] heads' (ibid.). In this study, I perceive that there are literacies, emerging and functioning in specific social settings instead of one literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Additionally, all concepts or interpretations are subject to the influence of contextual factors, including race, gender, religion, political view, social structure and so on (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Ladner, 2014). In line with

their views, culture is defined as a situated construct created among the individuals who are in contact with each other and take part in the same activities within a particular community (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Ladner, 2014). Likewise, I consider that literacies are sensitive to cultural, historical and social changes, having their subjective functions within different social practices (Barton and Hamilton, 2000).

3.2. Research Design: An Ethnographic Case Study

The research design of the current study is an ethnographic case study which is a combination of ethnography and case study. Fusch et al. (2018) refer to this type of research design as a blended design. I aimed to 'bind the ethnographic study within time and space with the case study design.' (ibid., p.25)

In this study, I drew the boundaries of my study by taking the class as a 'case' and researched the topic of the study, aiming to understand the literacy pedagogies in one class by embedding myself into its natural environment (Yin, 2014) throughout one academic year (2017-2018) (I will discuss the characteristics of the class members in the next chapter).

The reason why I selected the reception class as a case study was that I aimed to learn the organisation of the literacy pedagogies in one class. I wanted to zoom into the individual experience of each child who brings their diverse funds of knowledge and identities to the class. The research question, 'How do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them?' involves the experience of children in literacy pedagogies provided in the class. Therefore, I needed to closely observe the children's funds of knowledge and identities. It would not have been possible to explore all children's identities in the class. Therefore, I selected six of them to explore their subjective experiences via individual observations and interviews with both parents and children individually. Through this method, I could depict their profiles with 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) and represent their literacy experiences from their point of views on a more meaningful level.

After four months of general classroom observation, I started to observe six children and interview with their parents. Before approaching the parents of six children, the reception teacher suggested the names of potential participants (parents) who might be willing to participate in the study. I chose to select the children this way because the teacher knew which families might be interested and which ones were in difficult circumstances and would not be in a position to participate. This was a situation

of some sensitivity. I did not approach the parents who might feel uncomfortable or not understand the questions I would pose to them.

My research focused on literacies and literacy pedagogies rather than pedagogies in general. It is not as comprehensive an account as one would expect with a full ethnography. Therefore, the study is considered 'ethnographic' rather than ethnography (Green and Bloome, 1997). In this study, I followed seven methodological principles of ethnography in the design and application of this research. Firstly, ethnography concentrates on the 'cultural grammar' (Heath, 1983). Through immersing myself in the research site for nine months, I could elucidate the patterns in the daily actions of the class members. Secondly, the ethnographic approach facilitated me to recognise and give importance to the cultural context that literacy pedagogies and the participants' actions took place. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) stated that people's way of understanding the world, their specific environment and their behaviour could vary and are particular to their living contexts. Therefore, I assumed that the participants' experience and perspectives in relation to literacies are context-specific and that I should note their behaviour and analyse the whole data taking the classroom culture into consideration. While writing my field notes, I attempted to answer the following questions: which activity, who, with whom, where and how? (More discussion about the content of field notes is available later in this chapter.)

Thirdly, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) noted, to understand the 'cultural patterns' of the participants' everyday life as well as to capture the 'extraordinary' that could happen once, I needed to use systematic data collection methods. Thus, I employed four different types of data collection methods (described later in this chapter) with all members in the class, and all methods facilitated me to cover the research problems posed in the study comprehensively. Fourthly, ethnographic studies encourage researchers to immerse themselves in the research site, enabling them to look at the research topic from different angles (ibid.). For instance, working in the class as a 'volunteer TA' and as a researcher facilitated me to have shared experience and feel similar challenges with the teaching staff as an insider and perceive their experience as an outsider in the meantime. Fifthly, my commitment to work with the teaching staff and the children developed a trusting relationship between me and the participants. I could observe the class by minimally distracting or without distracting the participants' natural way of engaging with literacies. Furthermore, having ethnographic lenses towards the research facilitated me to recognise how my identity can influence the nature of data and the ways the participants approached me. For instance, being an international researcher helped me to ask very simple questions to the teaching staff; my 'outsider' position opened up spaces

for discussing very complex issues as well as very simple issues with the participants (more discussions available in the 3.5. Section).

Lastly, analysing the collected data with ethnographic lenses facilitated me to look at the data from different angles simultaneously (Rampton et al., 2004). In other words, I zoomed into the pedagogical practices. In the meantime, I zoomed out and focused on the social and political importance of those practices. Through doing so, I could understand the complexity in everyday literacy pedagogies of one reception class, the tensions in the application of literacy pedagogies and their underlying reasons that caused those tensions to occur. Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as an analytical framework was particularly helpful in elucidating the complexity and systematicity in the establishment of the literacy pedagogies in the researched class. The reason for the good fit of CHAT as an analytical framework and the ethnographic aspect of this study is that the roots of the CHAT derive from Vygotsky's socio-cultural assumptions, which I explore more in detail in 3.7. section.

3.3. Methods of Data Collection

In ethnographic studies, researchers choose data collection methods particular to the study context so that they can thoroughly show the cultural or specific practices of the studied context deeply (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). In other words, using different methods provides opportunities "to discern *predictable patterns* rather than to describe every conceivable instance of interaction of production" within a cultural context (Flick, 2007, p.15, emphasis original). For the current study, I used participant observation and field notes, a collection of documentary data, a play-like attitude scale and semi-structured interviews with teaching staff, six parents and six children.

3.3.1. Participant observation and field notes

I conducted participant observation during the data collection phase, beginning 27 September 2017 to 5 July 2018. Observation is defined as 'the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field setting through the five senses of the researcher.' (Flick, 2007, p. 37). There are two kinds of observation styles that researchers can choose from (Mulhall, 2002). First is a structured observation which follows a positivist approach, while the second one is an unstructured observation, which encourages researchers to analyse events in their specific contexts. "It is based within the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm that acknowledges the importance of context and the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and 'researched'." (ibid., p.306). Following the interpretivist paradigm, I chose to conduct an unstructured observation.

In order to conduct unstructured observations, I needed to know the culture of the class and closely get in touch with the members of the class (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Firstly, there is a need to get the permissions of the people under study to enter their life (Flick, 2007). After being allowed into the field, researchers and participants need to have a reciprocal relationship, and they should build trust toward each other in the natural living area of studied participants (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). However, it is not a quick or straightforward process, and the researchers need to show commitment to the research site. They should find ways to be closer to participants instead of keeping the formality between each other (ibid.). For this study, to immerse myself in the class and build up a rapport with the teacher and children, I worked as a volunteer teaching assistant in the classroom two days a week; every Wednesday and Thursday. As such, I was a participant in the class.

Participant observers always have influences on the local environment that they study and the people living there (Pole and Morrison, 2003), however this does not mean that researchers cannot collect authentic data through participant observation. On the contrary, by analysing the participants' actions and their social environment throughout the data collection process (ibid.), they can minimise their impact and improve their position, actions and way of approaching participants. This role enabled me to break down the formal distance with the school staff (I share my positionality and reflexivity later in this chapter). As a participant observer, I profited from the unstructured observation technique since I wanted to capture the specific culture of a class in providing literacy pedagogies throughout the nine months to explore the interaction of the class members without having a predetermined set of behaviours in my mind (Mulhall, 2003). I noted anything that goes under the definition of literacy events. Anderson et al. (1997, p.313) define literacy events as "any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role". For participant observation, I generated field notes of these literacy events, taking audio-recordings and photographs of documents and physical environment with a small camera as part of this process. The photographs did not include any child's face or body. According to Owocki and Goodman (2002), field notes are helpful when the researchers observe classes for extended periods of time. In line with the philosophy behind doing participant observations, I took field notes while having the following questions in mind: which activity, who, with whom, where and how? An example of my field note could be found in Appendix 4.

As a member of the class, I had informal conversations with the teaching staff. The topics of the conversations ranged from literacy pedagogies they provided, children's funds of knowledge or anything related to the class culture. Swain and Spire (2020) stated that in comparison to interviews, informal conversations would provide more authentic data for participant observers, reflecting the

complexity of everyday experience and perspectives of the participants. Supporting the authors' view, talking with the teaching staff during break times provided a deeper understanding of the class culture, the perspectives of teaching staff and their teaching experience specific to a literacy activity. Using the pronoun 'we' (ibid.) during adult-led activities in the class encouraged a more trusting relationship between the teaching staff and I, as well as allowing me to integrate better with the class overall. Also, the conversations with staff triggered new questions to emerge regarding my research as well as questions to ask the participants for the next interviews. At the end of the day, I added my personal experience and views as a volunteer TA and as a researcher to the field notes.

I categorised observations into two types as classroom and individual observations. In individual observations, I focused on one of the six children and noted literacy events that the child engaged in as well as the other activities the child did with or without their peers. The reason for reporting the other activities is that I sought to learn the child's interests, the nature of their favourite activities and the other children they like to play with in order to gain further insights into children's experiences in the literacy pedagogies of the class.

There was a degree of flexibility in individual observations and I was not too strict about solely observing one child at a time. The class was a social environment, with which I was a member of. For instance, a child could call on me to write something together (e.g., letters to his/her mother) or play together. Depending on the circumstances, I could divert my attention in that moment. During individual observations, I did not completely ignore the other literacy events happening in the class for the other children. In table 2, I report the dates I conducted classroom and individual observations. For classroom observations, I collected data on the literacy events happening in the class while for individual observations, I focused more on one child's literacy events for that day but also collected data on the literacy events happening in the class.

Types of Observations	Dates of Observations
Classroom Observation	27 September 2017, 4 October 2017, 5 October 2017, 11 October 2017, 12 October 2017, 18 October 2017, 15 November 2017, 16 November 2017, 22 November 2017, 23 November 2017, 29 November 2017, 30 November 2017, 13 December 2017, 14 December 2017, 20 December 2017, 21 December 2017, 17 January 2018, 18 January 2018, 21 June 2018
Individual Observations: Arthur	1 February 2018, 21 March 2018, 18 April 2018, 13 June 2018
Individual Observations: Barnie	24 January 2018, 14 February 2018, 28 March 2018, 19 April 2018, 23 May 2018, 20 June 2018, 4 July 2018
Individual Observations: Freddie	31 January 2018, 15 February 2018, 29 March 2018, 25 April 2018, 24 May 2018, 28 June 2018, 5 July 2018
Individual Observations: Megan	7 February 2018, 14 March 2018, 26 April 2018, 14 June 2018
Individual Observations: Bonnie	25 January 2018, 15 March 2018, 2 May 2018, 6 June 2018
Individual Observations: Emily	8 February 2018, 22 March 2018, 3 May 2018, 27 June 2018

Table 2. The dates of the classroom and individual observations

Saldana (2011) states that doing video and audio recordings during observations facilitated the researcher to support the field notes and write them in more detail. The researcher could capture the dialogue of participants, when necessary as a result. When comparing the use of video recording to audio recording, Saldana (2011) commented that participant's behaviour would get influenced by the device, leading to the recordings of participant actions unnatural until they are familiar with the device. Supporting Saldana's views (2011), using an audio-recorder enabled me to have more detailed, clear fieldnotes and report the patterns of conversations during adult-led activities. After returning to my office from the researched class, I elaborated the content of fieldnotes by listening to audio-records of the day. Also, during my hour-long lunch break, I recorded my personal experiences and essential points that I missed out on earlier in the day. In this respect, using an audio-recorder was time-efficient.

I did not approach to do video-recording due to ethical concerns and my positionality as a participant observer. All parents would not have allowed me to do video-recording, considering that I will record the faces of their four and five years old children. Also, while doing video-recording, I would have

been unable to participate in helping the teaching staff when necessary. During participant observations, the teacher could request of me to do an activity with a child or children, and I could still place the audio-recorder the next to the environment where the literacy activity was taking place. I could later transcribe and include the information in my field notes.

3.3.2. Documentary data

Documentary data are the sources that participants produce for their everyday purposes, which would reflect the class culture and the patterns of interactions among them (Prior, 2011). Even though documentary data are not intended to be generated for the researcher they do provide information regarding the people generating those documents and the social environment and specific place where they are created (Pole and Morrison, 2003). In this study, documentary data constituted the school policies, the general and specific educational plans of the class teacher, the assessment tools of the teaching staff (the tools for baseline, formative, summative assessment), children's work samples, homework examples, the six children's learning journey (a file documenting children's learning) and their assessment results as well as their home-school communication handbook. I made use of a camera to take pictures of the documents. I was particularly careful that I did not take photographs of any child's face and body. At the end of every fieldwork visit, data were stored in a dated folder and all audio records were reviewed while looking at my field notes and photographs. I transcribed field notes ready for data analysis in a password-protected computer.

3.3.3. Semi-structured interviews with teaching staff and six parents

In addition to the methods mentioned above, I conducted interviews with the teaching staff and the parents of the six children. The aim of conducting interviews in this study was to gain detailed explanations for the research questions I proposed on page 15, which field notes and documentary data would not entirely answer. I selected semi-structured interviews to do with adult participants as these involve "a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up *why* or *how* questions" (Adams, 2015, p.493, emphasis original). Follow-up questions were useful so that I could learn the subjective perspectives of the participants individually (ibid.) and, later in the data analysis stage, I reported the similarities and differences related to research questions.

First, it was necessary to interview the teaching staff since I could assess their perspectives "within the context of [their] personal history or experience; where delicate or complex issues need to be explored at a detailed level, or where it is important to relate different issues to individual personal

circumstance" (Lewis, 2003, p.58). I prepared interview schedules to learn their personal history, their involvement in the organisation of literacy pedagogies (planning, teaching and assessment) and parent involvement activities, the workforce division among teaching staff, and their views about what they do in the literacy pedagogies established in the class. The interview topics overall enable me to answer the research questions in-depth (see the interview topics in Appendix 1 and 2).

Second, I conducted interviews with the parents of the six children in order to learn more about their funds of knowledge. The parents are generally the first people who could give the richest data about children's fund of knowledge and identities. Knowing the children's funds of knowledge and identities was necessary as it could facilitate me to get insights into the experiences of children in relation to literacy pedagogies as established in the class. I asked questions that focused on the children's age, family members, their own children's interests, the activities their children enjoy doing at home alone or together and the physical materials available in their home (e.g., books, technological or educational toys).

Before entering the research site (school), I aimed to conduct four interviews with each teaching staff member, relying on the usefulness of repeated interviews reported in the ethnographic studies of Barton and Hamilton (1998). The teaching staff were very busy however, and this was not practically possible. Therefore, I decided to decrease the number from four to two, but this was only possible for some teaching staff (see table 3). In the third term, I conducted interviews with three literacy coordinators, SEND coordinator and the deputy head, who were not teaching reception children in person yet had influences on the formation of the literacy pedagogies established in the class. Long durations of participant observations and informal conversations with the teaching staff were particularly useful to get insights into their roles. I therefore wanted to elaborate on their contributions to the class through interviews. Interviews with the teaching staff took place in Mrs Thomas' room or in an empty class in order to encourage the participants to comfortably express their views.

The pseudonyms of the teaching staff interviewed	The first interview in the first term	The second interview in the third term
Mrs Thomas-class teacher	Yes	Yes
Mrs Corbyn-senior TA	Yes	No
Mrs Cooper-TA	Yes	Yes
Mrs Smith- TA	Yes	Yes
Mrs Green-TA	Yes	No
Mrs King- TA	No	Yes
Deputy Head	No	Yes
Reading coordinator	No	Yes
Writing coordinator	No	Yes
Phonics Coordinator	No No	Yes Yes
Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Coordinator	No	Yes

Table 3. The interview schedule with the teaching staff in the school

I conducted interviews with five parents in a café, and I went to the last parent participant's home to have an interview. I wanted to conduct the interviews outside of the school in order to make the parents feel more comfortable talking about their children. Since the interviews were conducted in the second and third term, I already knew the children well and was a familiar face to the parents (including during drop-off and pick-up times), which enabled me to break the formalities. Therefore, our dialogue was more informal and comfortable than between a researcher and a parent.

3.3.4. Child interviews with six children

Listening to children and their perspectives require the active participation of children and adults in the process of co-constructing the meaning of a topic, space or material together (Clark, 2005). Their participation could be encouraged through various verbal and non-verbal ways, which may include talking, drawing or photographing. The current study employed a child-led, participatory interviewing method using multisensory tools with six case children. Clark and Moss (2001) refer to these type of interviews as 'tours', where children can talk about the places in which they do their favourite activities and more through multisensory tools including cameras. I selected drawing and photographing as tools through which they could express their favourite activities. Clark and Moss (2001), who used cameras in their own studies with children, expressed that children enjoy elucidating their perspectives and experiences by using cameras and looking at the results (photographs) with

others, and that the children often felt proud of themselves as a result. Photographs could be a base for conversation between children and adults (Clark, 2005).

Since I aimed to explore the children's voice regarding their favourite places and activities in school and at home, I conducted child-led interviews during break and lunchtime. After the children finished eating their lunch and had played for some time, I approached the participant children, shortly described the activity and asked for their verbal consent. During lunchtime break, the class and the small playground were empty, enabling the participant children to take photographs of different areas. The photographs did not include the pictures of children so as not to break the ethical code. The interview consisted of two phases.

The first phase involved their three favourite places inside and outside the class. The interview started with introducing a camera and a laptop to the children. I then requested that they take three photographs of their favourite places in the school (they could be inside and/or outside the classroom) and to chat with me about what they like to do there, with whom and when. After they complete photographing their favourite places, we transferred the photographs to the laptop. Barker and Smith (2012) argued that photographs provide the physical structure of places efficiently, yet they cannot show the actions of children, which can change depending on the context or time. Responding to this issue, I showed the photographs on the laptop and requested the actions they like to do with whom and when.

The second phase of the study aimed to learn their three favourite places in their home. By showing the camera to children, I asked "Imagine that you bring the camera to your house. Where would be your favourite places in your house and then you can take its picture?" After listening to their response, I further asked the previously mentioned follow-up questions. Different from the first phase, I provided papers and colour pencils in case children would like to visualise their favourite places in their home through drawing, considering that drawing would be a facilitating technique in understanding a child's world (Clark, 2005). Yet only two children drew pictures of their favourite places/items in their home. For instance, Emily drew her colouring bin as the first favourite place in her home. The other four children were either not willing to draw, or we had a limited time remaining. I respected the rights of the children to express themselves in a way they were more comfortable with and did not ask for a drawing again.

3.3.5. A play-like attitude scale for the class

Photographs of adults could constitute a platform for interacting with children's perspectives and experiences (Clark and Moss, 2001). Children could interpret the images and elucidate their subjective views. In order to learn the views of all children regarding regularly done literacy activities in the class, I developed a play-like attitude scale in cooperation with the reception teacher.

Firstly, I reviewed the field notes that I wrote in the first two terms and noted the names of regularly done literacy activities. Then, I matched commonly used literacy activities with relevant photographs. Thirdly, I gained the class teacher's advice to check for comprehensive coverage of popular activities. She added the following sentence: 'playing phonics games on the computer on Fridays'. I also sought her opinion regarding the feelings rating: the picture of a crossed heart means that the children do not like the activity, while a blank picture means that they do not have a feeling about it. The picture of one heart means they like it a little and the number of hearts increases to five depending on how much they like the activity. The class teacher did not agree with the existence of the blank picture since she thought that children either like or do not like things. Nevertheless, I decided to retain it as one of the options since the children do not need to feel emotion towards each literacy activity, particularly if it is mandatory. Having the blank sheet also created an unbiased rating scale. The photographs were to remind the children of the activity. While I was showing the photographs (see an example photograph in Figure 3), I read the names of activities individually as it is written in the left column of table 4 and requested children to point out or say one of the seven scores they wanted to give.

The name of activities	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3....
Writing, drawing in the shed in the small playground			
Doing letter formation in their handwriting booklet			
Writing, drawing in the writing centre			
Learning and repeating sounds with phoneme cards			
Reading or looking at the pictures of stories in the morning			
Doing phonics activities on the IWB			
Reading/Writing in the role play corner			
Reading 'reading books'			
Writing on the whiteboard with pen			
Listening to stories from the teaching staff			
Playing phonics games on the computer on Fridays			
Listening to Goldie's diary			
Writing, drawing in the writing centre			
Writing, drawing in the shed in the small playground			

Table 4. The structure of the play-like attitude scale I recorded children's responses



Figure 3. The rating scale presented to children and the photograph about the activity, reading or looking at the pictures of stories in the morning.

The method of data collection could be more participatory and in-depth, if I received children's responses through verbal communication primarily. However, with the busy daily schedule, this method of data collection was time-efficient (lasting five minutes at most per child) and attractive to children. In small group activity times, I briefly explained the activity and asked each child individually for consent to participate. While I conducted the attitude scale at an available corner of the classroom with one child, the other children saw the activity and the children who participated in the survey chatted with the children who did not know about it. Some children even asked me when their turn would come, and they could play with me. This suggested that I had succeeded in finding a joyful data collection method that children would find interesting.

Overall, the data collection methods I employed throughout the nine months provided comprehensive and in-depth sets of data, which challenged my data analysis process. I discuss that in a section at the end of the methodology chapter.

3.4. Ethics

The study followed the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics of the University of Nottingham (University of Nottingham, 2015). I gained the approval of the ethics committee and I had already received my Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance before entering the research site. Following the ethical guidelines of the university, I prepared an ethics form involving the design, methodology, the aims of the study information leaflets and consent forms for all participants, including teaching staff, parents and children (see sample information leaflets and consent forms in Appendix 3).

In the information leaflets for teaching staff and parents (Appendix 3), the definitions, and aims of the study, the expectations from the participants, the benefits of the study and their right to withdraw, and the possible use of the findings were clearly written. I reported that their names would be published under pseudonyms and that the data related to their personal information would not be shared with other people. I kept the data on a password-protected laptop only accessible to me. Specifically, for parents, I wrote in the information leaflet that I would take photographs of their children's work samples. While handling out the information leaflets and consent form to the parents, I explained to the parents that I would not include children's faces in my records or fieldnotes, since I knew that it could create concerns among parents (Alderson, 2014).

Also, I prepared a separate information leaflet (Appendix 3) for the parents of the six children as I wanted to have an in-depth understanding of children's funds of knowledge at school and in their home. Therefore, in the information leaflet, I wrote that I would like to interview the parents and their children and collect documents including their children's assessment reports as well as their work samples throughout the year. Moreover, I considered allowing the participants to review the transcripts of interviews and all the data I collected, however it was not feasible due to the time-scale and the workload.

The selection of the six parent participants followed the reception teacher's advice using her knowledge of the children and their parents. Her advice was important in choosing the children and their parents who were most likely to feel comfortable being interviewed by me. This was ethically intended to reduce the risk of any interviews being stressful or difficult for participating parents. This did raise other ethical issues, however, as it could result in some children's and parents' voices being quietened and not heard as much as others in this study, potentially further marginalising children and parents who are already marginalised. This is explored further in the limitations section (8.3). I should note that the teacher was not the sole decision-maker in selecting six children and their parents. For instance, the teacher suggested me to approach a girl's mother as she considered that her mother would be willing to interview with me. However, I did not approach that girl's parent since the girl was not comfortable with talking to me in the first months of my data collection period and I needed to do individual interviews, individual observations with her. I instead chose to ask Arthur's mother for an interview and an in-depth understanding of Arthur's subjective funds of knowledge and identities.

Although I did not have interviews with the parents of other children I attempted to represent other children's voice and their lived experiences in relation to literacy pedagogies provided in the focus class through other data collection methods, including classroom observations, documentary data and the play-like attitude scale.

During drop-off and pick-up times, I individually talked with each parent, introduced myself, shortly explained the study context and asked for their consents. I also expressed that they could ask any questions they had, and to return the signed consent forms if they had accepted taking part in the study. Finally, I emphasised that I would always be available to answer any questions on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I obtained signed consent forms from all parents and teaching staff (examples in Appendix 3).

Anderson (2014) points out that informing and then requesting children's consent largely depend on the perception of the researcher towards children's capabilities. I view children as having enough competence to make their own decisions on their participation in the study. We as researchers need to adapt our understanding of the nature of research in line with children's world. Thus, I wrote the quote below and prepared a children's consent form consisting of smiley and sad faces.

> I am Kubra. I am a student at the University of Nottingham. I am interested in how you are learning to read. If you agree, I would like to take notes, record your voice and take pictures of your drawing and writing. (Show the consent form to the class) There are two faces, one is smiley, and the other is sad. If you don't mind me looking at your work and talking to you about your reading and writing, please colour the smiley face. And if you do **not** want me to look at your work and talk to you about your reading and writing, please colour the sad face.
> If you are happy to help me, colour the smiley face.
> If you don't want to help me, colour the sad face.
> You can change your mind any time. And if you don't want to help me, I really don't mind.
> Do you have any questions about what I'm doing?

I individually described and requested children's informed consent. All children accepted to be part of the study. Yet, colouring one face could take time for children. Therefore, I requested children to make a cross or an x on the face that they selected.

3.5. My Positionality and Reflexivity

> The nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument. It is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process. Just as the participants' experiences are framed in social-cultural contexts, so too are those of the researcher (Bourke, 2014, p. 2).

Researchers, therefore, need to explain their positions reflexively, pointing out their identities, their views and themselves, which could elucidate the researcher's subjective lenses towards the focus research topic and the researched. It is also essential to acknowledge my positionality to the reader since it could provide a source for evaluating the confirmability of the study (Guba, 1981). I consider that my positionality towards the research and the researched would change depending on the angle

I look through (Merriam et al., 2001) such from the perspective of a teacher or a non-British researcher speaking English as a second language.

First of all, I consider that I was an insider in the aspect of my professional background. Since high school, I have been educated to be an early years teacher. My experience as a teacher allowed me to be accepted as a volunteer teaching assistant and to become a playmate with the children at the school in England. The teaching staff sometimes requested me to do small group activities, which could be about literacy or other areas of learning with children. I sometimes assisted children who needed individual support during adult-led activities for the class. Approaching the third term, the teacher requested of me to do a one-to-one phonics activity with Megan every Wednesdays and Thursdays. I was fortunate that Megan was one of my case children, enabling me to explore her funds of knowledge more insightfully and have more rapport. Yet, it is true that while conducting adult-led activities, I missed observing literacy activities being done at the same time. My teaching experience however, enabled me to observe my research topic from the perspectives of the teaching staff and the children and the challenges both experienced. I also noticed the small details of literacy pedagogies, such as the necessity of using a green pen while writing formative feedback on children's worksheets.

Doing adult-led activities also encouraged the development of rapport and trust with the children. Not all children can trust and play with an adult in a short period, it requires time and commitment (Pascal and Bertram, 2009). Therefore, for some children, I was an outsider that they felt they should not get close to. For instance, a girl did not talk to me for the first two months after I started data collection. One day, I needed her to do an adult-led activity as I was responsible for leading the activity with all of the children. I called her name to come to the table and spoke to her about what to do. She then started crying. Yet, as time proceeded, she saw me playing with other children and approached me more and more, little by little. In the middle of the year, she talked cheerfully about everything in relation to her life, and I conducted compulsory adult-led activities with her very easily. The relatively slower adaptation of that girl could be due to my English accent and/or non-typical physical appearance in comparison to other teaching staff who were white British. Yet, it was not same with other children. On the first day of my participant observation, for instance, I read a storybook to a group of children after shortly introducing myself to them. They approached me in the same way they approached the other teaching staff. Depending on the nature of the children, I was either an insider or an outsider at the beginning of the year. Time and effort to be their playmate broke the borders between me and some of the children, and eventually I was perceived as an insider by all children by the end of the year.

Secondly, the English education system has high-stakes accountability measures and children's test results, especially in academic areas, are the focuses of such measures, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2). I felt that at the beginning of the year, the teaching staff considered me to be evaluating their teaching in relation to the Ofsted's expectations and standards. The class teacher, especially, mentioned to me how they are successfully teaching literacy to enable children to reach the 'expected' level and beyond. However, their perception of me was not helpful to build a rapport and be open to me about their own independent views. To change this, I always emphasised my identity in relation to being a foreigner discovering literacy pedagogies in an English reception class and being very thankful about this to them. As the year progressed, their view towards me in this aspect changed, I believe.

Being an outsider in the aspect of nationality also helped me to ask the reasons for their specific teaching practices, which were sometimes easy to understand (yet it needed the teaching staff's explanations). Merriam et al.'s (2001) argument is aligned with my own in that having an outsider position is an opportunity because the participants would not consider that I 'already know' the reason. They further stated that:

> It has commonly been assumed that being an insider means easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly, be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study. On the other hand, insiders have been accused of being inherently biased and too close to the culture to be curious enough to raise provocative questions. The insider's strengths become the outsider's weaknesses and vice-versa. The outsider's advantage lies in curiosity with the unfamiliar, the ability to ask taboo questions, and being seen as non-aligned with subgroups thus often getting more information (ibid., p.411).

While I agree with the above quotation, in comparison to a researcher having professional education and experience in England, I was disadvantaged in that I had to spend more time and effort in understanding the British school culture and getting accustomed to the daily schedule of a state reception class in England. To be familiar with the English early years community, I became a member of early years teachers' groups on social media such as, Facebook. I asked practice-related questions to the early years communities and regularly read the posts and the comments of the online members. I also believe that spending nine months in the focus class gave me adequate time to get used to the school culture and deepened my understanding of the research topic.

Lastly, a researcher with many years of experience in teaching at an English reception class could miss

some important points stemming from the English education system. It was not the case for me; all small details took my attention and became a part of the data. Even though it created a further challenge in the analysis process, it provided 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) of a small reception class.

3.6. Analysing the Data

The analysis stage of ethnographic data starts during data collection (Woods, 2005; Creswell, 2015). It is an iterative process; researchers reflect on the existing data, which trigger the development of further data collection methods and further analyses (Creswell, 2015). I could categorise the process of analysing data into six loose steps that Creswell (2015) provided for qualitative researchers.

The first step is collecting the data through the methods I discussed earlier in this chapter. The second step is the organisation of the data. I categorised data into its types and stored them in a password-protected computer and transcribed the audio-records. For instance, I collected interviews with children into the 'interviews with children' file. I needed to categorise the field notes by dates since I wanted to see the shared patterns in the nature of adult-led and/or child-led activities, the participants' behaviour and their relations, and so on. I had a vast number of audio-records not only from the interviews but also from the observations. Therefore, I started transcribing the audio-records just after receiving the informed consents. An example transcription of an adult-led activity could be seen in Appendix 4.

I immediately started writing a story of the day by combining the field notes written in my notebooks, photographs of the day and transcribing the interactions of the participants, which I thought necessary to involve in the study. To use my time efficiently, I did not transcribe all the sentences in the records. I did not have the intention of doing discourse analysis. Thus, transcribing the necessary dialogues to understand the context and the patterns of the interactions within adult-led or child-led activities was the ideal option. I spent a good amount of time transcribing 11 interviews by myself out of 20. I could not spend more time with transcription however, as I had to use the time efficiently and give more attention to the coding stage of the analysis. I consequently worked with a company for the transcription of 9 interviews. I received funding for it from the School of Education, University of Nottingham. The company had a data protection policy, so the university and I trusted that the staff would keep the transcripts confidential.

At the end of the data collection period from September 2017 to July 2018, the real struggle of analysing the data started. The third step was making myself familiar with the completed data. I printed out all transcripts from the field notes, interviews and documentary data. Repeatedly, I read the data and immersed myself. At the fourth stage, I began colour coding: "codes are labels used to describe a segment of text or an image" (Creswell, 2015, p., 243). I repeatedly read all types of transcripts to familiarise myself with the data. I began the coding process with the interview transcripts as one type of data sets and wrote my codes in a small handbook.

When it comes to coding the data set consisting of field notes, I wrote down anything that could go under the definition of 'literacy events' in the focus class. Anderson et al. (1997, p.313) define literacy events as "any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role". For instance, I noted teaching staff's actions that involved literacy uses for daily purposes, such as writing the name of absent children on a paper or taking individual notes after the end of an adult-led activity. However, my research topic was about exploring how literacy pedagogies were established in a broader sense. I then made use of the term 'schooled literacy' (see section 2.2. in the literature review) and included the purposeful actions of the teaching staff that had the aims of supporting children's literacy development. Since one of my sub-research questions is related to understanding children's experiences concerning the literacy pedagogies available to them, I kept the data set concerning children's literacy events. Overall, while analysing the field notes, I used the research questions to maintain a strict focus on the research aims.

For the analysis of play-like attitude scale, I categorised the activities into two groups: adult-led or child-led literacy and phonics activities. I found the sum of the scores that the children gave to an individual activity. One heart had the value of one, two hearts had the value of two, and the scoring system continued up to five hearts which had the value of five. The crossed heart and the blank sheet did not, however, have any positive or negative scores or values. I then ranked the activities based on the total scores they received in a table and interpreted the table in the findings chapter.

A large amount of data resulted in many codes emerging when I approached the completion of the coding phase of the data analysis. The fifth step of the analysis involved separating the codes that could be useful for the description of the context and participants. In the final step, I applied many charts and mind maps so as to see the broader picture of the analysis and group the codes under themes. "Themes (also called categories) are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database" (Creswell, 2015, p., 244).

Table 5 indicates sample coded data, and the themes emerged after the coding process as a response to the research question related to parent involvement. I coded the parent involvement activities in relation to their purposes, such as communication purposes. After that, I categorised the coded data into two separate themes: SSP focused PI and PI for general purposes.

Research question	Theme(s)	Code(s)
In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies?	SSP focused parent involvement (PI)	-PI activities for educating SSP approach to parents -PI activities for promoting SSP practice at home -PI activities for surveillance of SSP focused PI activities
	PI for general purposes	-PI activities for communication purposes -PI activities for promoting literacy practices at home

Table 5 The codes and the themes of one sub-research question

In the process of forming these themes, I realised that I needed a framework that could connect the themes of the sub-questions to the one overarching research question. I came to this decision mainly because I reached the conclusion that the reception class and its teaching staff established literacy pedagogies having a shared object or purpose.

3.7. Activity Theory (AT) and Its Application into the Coded Data

The Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) or Activity Theory (AT) was a very versatile theory to apply my analytical framework into my analysis. I was aware of the fact that ethnographic research studies are definitive; researchers immerse themselves into a specific culture, aiming for discovering and drawing pictures of a culture (Woods, 2005). Yet, researchers in ethnographic studies could apply existing theories which are relevant to the categories emerging from their analysis, as Woods (2005) points out that there could be 'theoretical purchase'. In the following two sections, I attempt to introduce CHAT and then justify why the theory is applicable as an analytical framework for my coded data.

3.7.1. Activity Theory (AT) or Cultural-Historical Theory (CHAT)

CHAT is a developing theory amongst cultural-historical scholars; it has three generations, that can be identified based on the concepts of their previous generation. Particularly, in the current study, I used the second-generation activity theory, where I considered literacy pedagogies of a reception classroom as the unit of analysis.

The second-generation activity theory built upon Vygotsky's cultural historical views on the human mind (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) and the concept of mediated action underpinned the first generation (Vygotsky (1978), Figure 4).

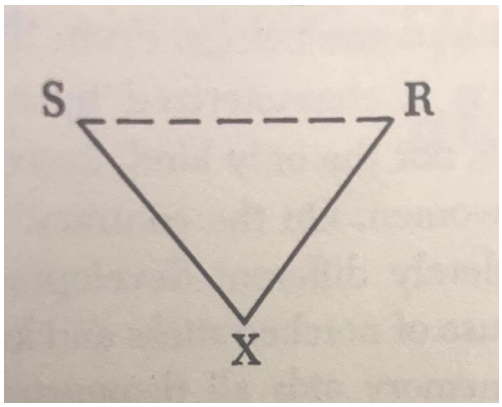


Figure 4. S-R-X model of Vygotsky, taken from Vygotsky (1978)

In Figure 4, the triangle-shaped model indicates the process of mediated action; S referring to stimulus or object, R referring to response or subject and X referring to a mediating tool (such as language).

The first-generation theory had a restricted view of human activity in that it only focused on the analysis of one individual's actions (Engeström, 2001). Alexi Leontev's ideas on collective activities were used to solve this problem in the second-generation AT (ibid.), contributing the concepts of an activity system, its subject, object, tools and division of labour in AT (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). Engeström added the last component of the activity system, referred to as community, to the theory (Kaptelinin, 2005). He created the second-generation model of activity theory (Engeström, 2015), as shown in figure 5.

Adding the community component in the system led to changes in the definition of activity from the interaction between object and subject (Leontev's view) to '"a three-way interaction between subjects, objects, and community" (Engeström's view) (Kaptelinin, 2005, p.10). This enables us to infer that activity systems can be performed by groups of people (subjects and community) with a shared understanding of the object. These three elements are mediated by rules, division of labour

and mental or physical artefacts (ibid.). Thus, the interactions between the components in its latest triangle version were formed, illustrated in Figure 5.

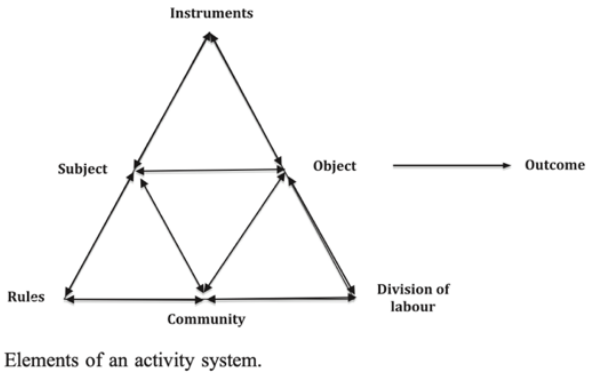


Figure 5. Components of an activity system adopted from Yasukawa et al. (2013).

In an activity system, the *subject* is one or more people who are engaged in AT to achieve the defined object and its motives. *An object* is the main concern of the subject in that it "give[s] continuity, coherence and meaning" to the actions of the subject (Engeström, 2000, p.964). Learning the object of activity enables people (subjects or/and researchers) to comprehend the rationale behind the actions of subjects and the way they do certain actions in an activity (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). In my current study, I follow Kaptelinin's conceptual model on the object in Figure 6, motives and needs as he made clear distinctions between needs, motives and object which I can easily apply to my study context (2005).

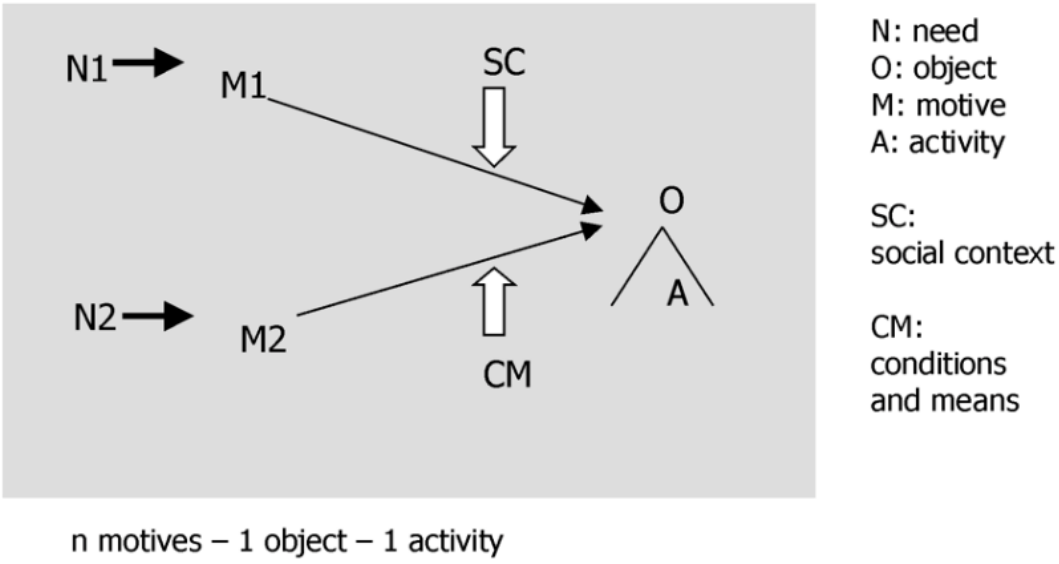


Figure 6. Conceptual model on the object of an activity system, adapted from Kaptelinin (2005).

According to Kaptelinin, an activity system would have more than one motive, yet it would only have one overarching object. Each motive emerges to meet the biological or psychological needs of the system. Needs are formed and changed by the culture and living conditions of people (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). Motives cannot guide or lead the activity, even if it were very strong. It is the object that has the power of directing the activity system. Therefore, it should be clearly described, and the description should contain all the effective motives that the subject(s) tries to reach in their activity system (Kaptelinin, 2005).

Furthermore, since all activities are object-oriented, at the end of the activity, the subject(s) will have an *outcome*, that the content of the object determines. The outcome can be either an abstract concept or a material. Finally, the *community* is a group of people that the subject is attached to during an activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

The interaction among subject(s), community, and an object is mediated by the remaining three concepts: tools, rules and division of labour. *Tools* refer to both intellectual (e.g., language) and physical artefacts (e.g., pencil) that mediate between the object and the subject. "The structure of a tool itself, as well as learning how to use a tool, changes the structure of human interaction with the world" (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006, p.56). Tools are historical in the sense that people transfer them to their offspring, and each generation contributes to the development of new tools as well as sustaining the old ones (ibid.). Next, *rules* are norms that are either formal or informal and influence the ways that AT works (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). They mediate between the subjects and community (Hung et al., 2006). Lastly*, the division of labour* refers to the distribution of the responsibilities among the community that the subject belongs to in an activity. The last component also clarifies "any vertical division of power and status" (Uden, 2007, p.85). Since human activity is complicated in nature and sometimes collective, division of labour enables the subjects to achieve all the motives in a sensible and manageable way. Although the roles of subjects may not seem to reach the final object of the activity system, they establish an enabling environment and circumstances for the attainment of the ultimate object of the activity (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006).

In the third generation, Engeström formed a model that involves more than two activity systems having a common, collaboratively produced object. Since I did not use the third model, I do not intend to go into its detail, except the contradiction concept. The reason for using that concept is that systematic contradictions can indicate tensions in and among the components of the activity system (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Through finding out the tensions in the classroom, I can deduce how those

tensions influence the subjects' (teaching staff) capability of reaching their shared object (ibid.). According to Engestrom's AT, the evolving nature of activity systems requires the existence of contradictions (Roth, 2004).

3.7.2. Applying CHAT into my coded data

I considered that CHAT was a useful theory as an analytical framework due to the following reasons. First of all, AT assisted me in zooming in and zooming out during the data analysis (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). At the micro-level, I could focus on the interaction of components, the patterns in the actions and the emerging contradictions in a contextual environment (ibid.). At the macro level, I could consider how practices are shaped with the mediated tools from the past and the influence of culture in general infused in the formation of the components of the activity system (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999).

To explain, the overarching research question of the study (What matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in an English reception class?) allowed me to explore the concerned topic focusing on the contextual, political factors impacting the formation of the object. Through repeated readings of the coded data, I concluded that the teaching staff established the literacy pedagogies having a shared object. In other words, their collective actions were visibly object-oriented. Therefore, using CHAT, I created a shared object and identified motives for taking part in the formation of the class's object, following the conceptual model of Kaptelinin (2005), illustrated in figure 6.

Not only the overarching research question but also the sub-research questions matched up with the components of the AT, except the 'outcome' component. The components of the activity system assisted me in representing the five sub-research questions, which related to the practice side of the literacy pedagogies in the reception class. I illustrated the specific research questions, which are associated with the particular component of the activity system in table 6 below.

Secondly, the theory was open-ended, giving autonomy to analyse the data in my own choice of way (e.g., thematic analysis, which I had already done in large part) (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). As a result, the theory did not direct me to analyse every detail of my data in line with its specific methods. I could explain the contents of the activity system's component with the thematically analysed data.

Yamagata-Lynch (2010) proposed a list of questions which would help researchers to situate their coded data into the activity system. Getting inspired by the content of the questions, I asked the

questions listed in table 6 to myself. Responding to the questions facilitated me to draw the AS triangle in Figure 7. Starting with defining the objects and the motives enabled me to get insights into the rationale behind the subjects' (teaching staff) actions in educating literacy to children (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006).

The components of the activity system	**Research Questions**	**The questions posed for each component**
Object	What matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in an English reception class?	What is the object of the class as an activity system of literacy pedagogies? How can I define the common object? What are the needs motivating the subjects to form the shared object?
Subject(s)	What are the perspectives of the class teacher and the TAs on their literacy pedagogies?	Who are the subjects in this activity system? What beliefs do they hold in relation to the activity system of literacy pedagogies?
Tools or Instruments	How do the class teacher, and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies?	What are the intellectual and physical tools in focus AS? What are the functions of the tools?
Rules	How do the class teacher, and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies?	What are the rules that the AS system has?
Division of Labour	How do the class teacher and the TAs work together to promote children's literacy learning?	Is there a role division among the subjects? If yes, how did they distribute or share the responsibilities? How do they work together to achieve their shared object?
Community	In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies? How do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them?	Who are the community members? How do the subjects involve parent's in their children's literacy development? What views and experience do children have in the AS of literacy pedagogies presented to them?
Are there systemic contradictions in each component of the AS?		

Table 6. The questions that enabled me to form the AS of literacy pedagogies

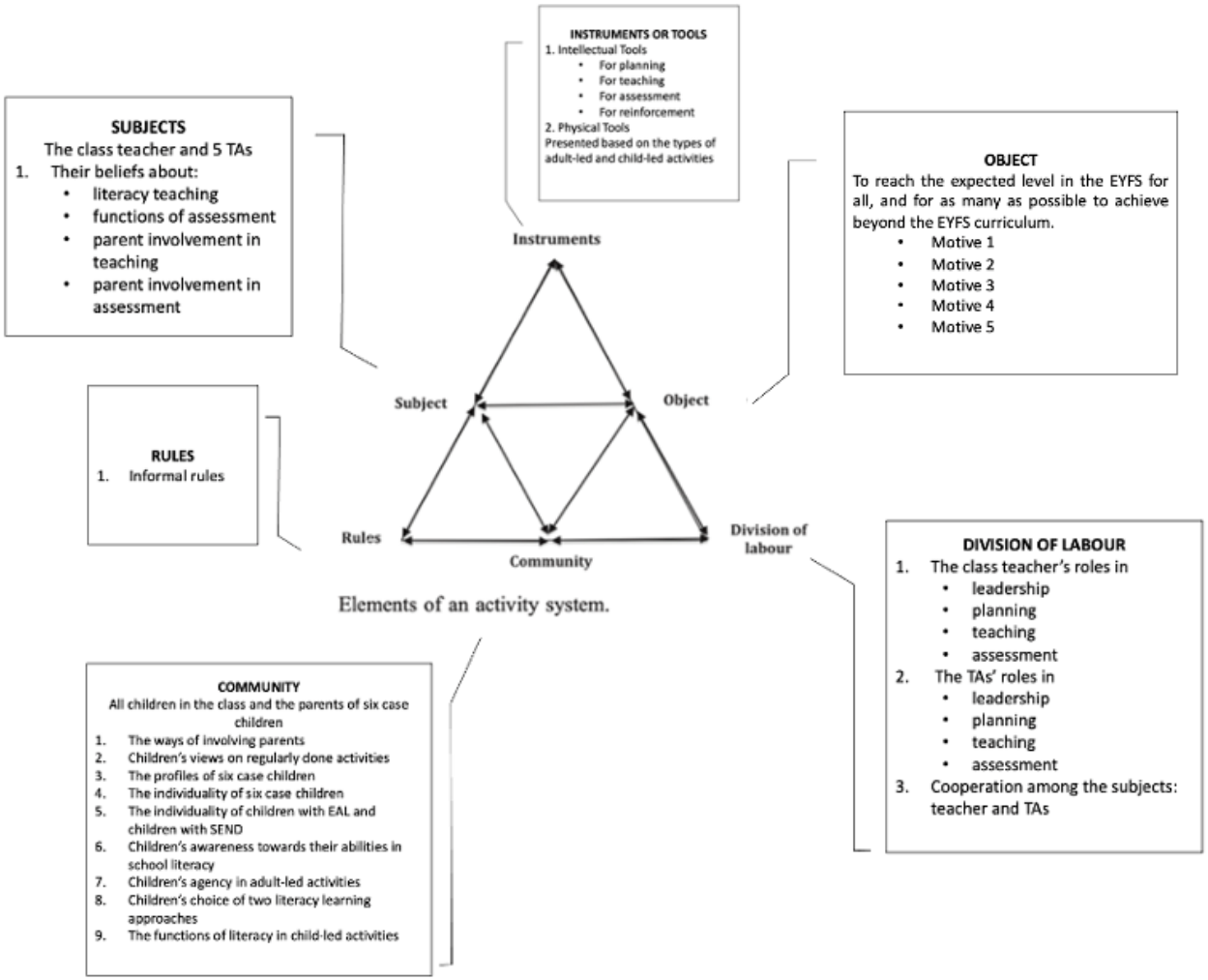


Figure 7. The researched class, framed as an activity system

Conclusion

This chapter explained the design of the study, beginning from the research paradigm and the research design data collection methods. I then discussed the ethics and the data analysis process. The next chapter will clarify the context of the research site, explaining its historical and socio-economic status as well as its physical structure, and end with introducing the profiles of teaching staff.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE SCHOOL AND THE CLASS

Introduction

Describing the context of the focus class is an essential element of ethnographic studies since it enables the reader to contextualise the findings, having a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the culture that the researched group of people lives in (Creswell, 2015). The researchers sometimes present the context beginning from a broader scene to more focused scene (ibid.) in respect to its historical, physical, social and economic status. In line with Creswell's suggestions, I first endeavoured to draw a picture of the school to which the focus class is attached. Then, I continued by describing the focus case study and its physical context, in which the literacy pedagogies took place mostly and eventually I discussed the participants in the focus case study.

4.1. The School and the Class

The school was established in 2008 by uniting two schools. The age range of the school is 3 to 11 years. It is a mixed gendered and state-funded primary school and under the control of a Local Authority. In the school, there were 15 classroom teachers and 11 teaching assistants. In the pupil premium[1] strategy statement document, it is reported that the number of students attending the school was 345 in the 2017-2018 academic year. However, the school can accept students from each year group, including reception and nursery up to 50, which means that the capacity of the school is 400 students in total. Among the students, 71 of them were eligible for pupil premium in that year. Mrs Thomas explained the socio-economic environment of the school as below:

> …I can say that side of the school fence is mostly private housing. Not all of it. Because then a bit further on, we take a lot of children, there's blocks of flats, which again are local authority. And, they're in that IDACI index [Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index]. And then, also, that side, local authority housing. And then, we have people from main road like Freddie coming from the main road, very big houses, you know, across the road. So, it's very mixed (Interview with Mrs Thomas).

[1] Pupil premium is a funding given to schools having children from lower socio-economic family background to support those children's learning attainment (DfE, 2021).

Relying on the teacher's definition and the number of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, I can therefore assume that the children attending the participant school came from a diverse range of families with different socio-economic levels and the neighbourhood of the school is mixed in terms of socio-economic status. According to the last school inspection of Ofsted, conducted in 2018, the school was judged to be 'good' in its overall quality of provision.

The apple classroom (pseudonym) had a reverse L letter (⟍) shape in that the children sitting on the carpet could not see the table b completely, which was close to the exit door, 4. This provided teaching staff with the opportunity to do different activities in the same classroom at the same time. The children with autism and some others took literacy, phonics and writing adult-led activities on that table with a TA, while the remaining children were taught on the carpet with Mrs Thomas (pseudonym).

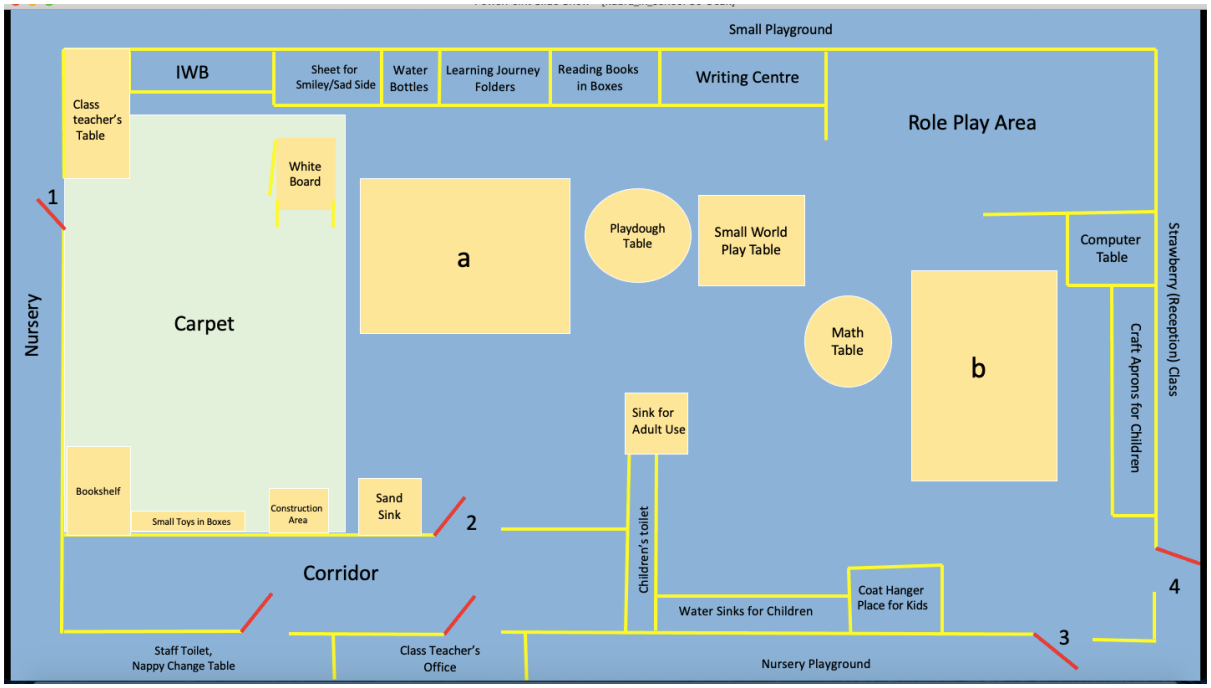


Figure 8. The layout of the apple classroom

The classroom had four doors. The first gate connected the nursery class with the apple class. The second door was only for teachers. There were three different small size rooms behind the second door; Mrs Thomas's room, the toilet and kitchen. As an assistant head, Mrs Thomas had a small room. The teaching assistants used the toilet for diaper changing of two children with autism as well. The children enter and leave the class using gate 3 in the mornings and evenings. Gate 4 connects the class with a small playground and the primary part of the school.

Inside the classroom could be considered as crowded with five tables, learning areas and some small boxes around the corners. Yet, it was well organised by the teaching staff. In small group activity time, the children even knew which table was called ‘maths table’ or ‘playdough table’, although they might not have specific materials in line with the name of the table.

4.2. The Small Playground

The small playground was a quadrilateral shape, as shown in Figure 9. That area was only used by the two reception classes, which means that approximately 40 reception children played there. There were two sheds in there; one (2) is used as a small class, and the other one (3) was used for storage, a box with big blocks, one water sink, one sand sink, one mud kitchen, one tent, a bench and a table under the tent. Even though in the sketch below the outdoor materials seem fewer in number for 40 children, the third shed contained many play materials such as tricycles, scooters, balance toys, small toys, hula hoops, small buckets for watering plants, crayons, storybooks, small cars to be played under the tent.

Generally, the teaching staff changed the toys depending on the planned topic, or the season. However, the critical point was that the children were completely free in the outside only. Therefore, the playground equipment was essential in guiding them about what to do and making them physically active during the break times. Teaching staff did not generally interact with them unless there was a problem such as children fighting, or children having a physical injury during the breaks.

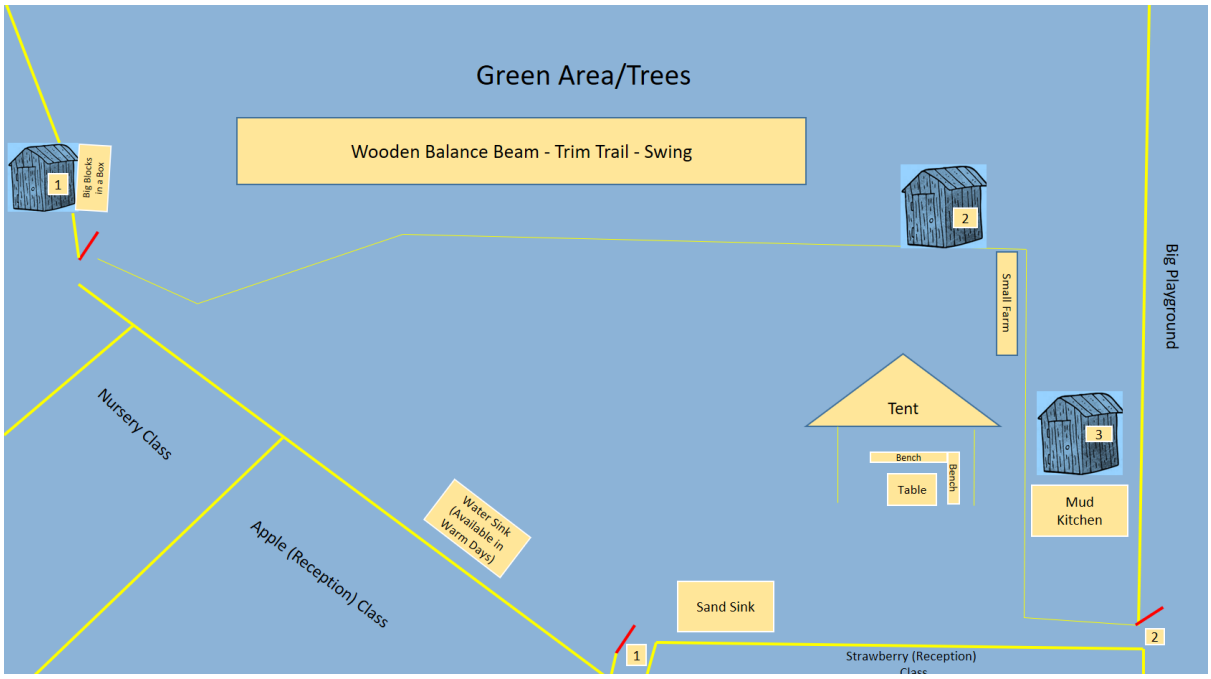


Figure 9. The layout of the small playground

When it comes to literacy environment in the small playground, crayons, water brushes, and their buckets, story books under the tent were usually available for children to read, write or draw. In addition to that, the second shed, as indicated in Figure 9, was only designed for children to do craft activities. Crayons, colour pencils, papers in different colours, scissors, and the remaining craft materials from activities were always ready for children to do literacy activities.

The children were also allowed to draw or write on the outside ground. Therefore, they had an experience of writing or drawing on different spaces, which made them motivated to do so. Continually, there were some children writing or drawing with chalks. All in all, the small playground was rich in stimulating the children to be physically active as well as in encouraging them to engage in child-led literacy activities.

4.3. The Participants in the Focus Class

The focus class had 20 children. There were 7 children for whom the school was eligible for pupil premium funding out of 40 children who attended the two reception classes. The literature review (Chapter 2) indicated that children's bilingualism and disabilities could potentially and systematically disadvantage the subjective literacy experiences of those children and the teaching staff's pedagogical practices towards them may be different (Ball, 2003; Gregory et al. 2004). Therefore, below I shortly described the profiles of bilingual children and children with autism in the focus class. It was important to individually introduce those children as the nature of children's bilingualism and disabilities could be one of the important factors shaping their literacy experiences. At the beginning of the year, there were three bilingual children and two children with autism.

- Harbir is fluent in English, yet not in Punjabi. Both mother and father are originally from Pakistan. However, the teacher and I noticed that the mother never talked in Punjabi with her son during drop-off/pick-up times. The mother mentioned to me that Harbir can understand Punjabi sentences but cannot speak the language.
- Lilly is fluent in English, yet not in Polish. Lilly's mother is Polish, and her father is English. The teacher described her language skill in Polish as follows: "I think she knows a bit. But again, she never really speaks Polish at school." (Mrs Thomas, second interview).

- Kitti is fluent in both English and Hungarian. Her parents are originally from Hungary. During drop-off/pick-up times, her mother and father spoke both languages with Kitti. She was also learning how to write and read in Hungarian. The teacher explained that:

  > "Mrs Thomas: Yeah, and I think she is a bit unconfident because she is saying she wants to write her Father's Day card, she wants to write in English and Hungarian.
  > Kubra: Yeah.
  > Mrs Thomas: So, I said, "Well, yeah, you can do". So, she might have a go at the Hungarian tomorrow.
  > Kubra: Yeah.
  > Mrs Thomas: Her Hungarian, she speaks it, they speak it quite a lot."

  In our informal chat, the father said to me that his wife is teaching Hungarian literacy to their children.

In May 2018, Harbir transferred to another school, and in April 2018, Jingjing started to attend the focus class.

- Jingjing is fluent in Chinese but not in English. Her mother moved to England due to a one-year-long temporary job with her child. Jingjing started to be exposed to the English language in the classroom. In our informal talk, her mother said to me that after school, Jingjing took English lessons individually. The classroom teacher in June described her English proficiency as following: "She's got odd words in English. She can say, sorry, please, thank you etc."

The classroom was dynamic; changes were happening in the number of members, including the teaching staff and children within the same day. Some children from the other reception class came to the apple class when the TAs conducted writing, phonics interventions and adult-led small group phonics activities were beginning. Therefore, I needed to involve those children in my study. After receiving the informed consent from their parents, I had started my observations relating to four children from the strawberry class; Durjoy, Attila, John and Edward. I have discussed them in the relevant places in the findings chapters.

Additionally, we had Felix and Jasper, two children with autism spectrum disorder. The features of autism disorders vary among children. In our informal chat, the class teacher compared the two children and said that Felix has mild autism in comparison to Jasper.

I chose 6 children who were monolingual English speaking children and interviewed their parents. I discuss their profiles more in detail in the findings chapter. Other than children, I had teaching staff as

the participants of the study. At the beginning of the year, I was assuming that one class would have one teacher and one or two TAs working a whole week together. However, it was not the case. As I will elaborate more in the findings chapter, the teaching staff had a work schedule, defining the time slots they had to work in one of the classes within the school.

Moreover, there were teaching staff who were not teaching children face-to-face, yet were having indirect effects on the literacy pedagogies established in the class. Therefore, I involved the relevant teaching staff in the study as well. The pseudonyms of the participant teaching staff are as follows:

- The class teacher: Mrs Thomas
- The TAs: Mrs Corbyn, Mrs Smith, Mrs Green, Mrs King, Mrs Cooper
- The deputy head
- The literacy coordinators; writing, reading and phonics coordinators
- The SEND teacher

I listed the profiles of teaching staff who worked with children directly. They were white British citizens. Most of the teaching staff had long years of teaching experience with various levels and types of qualifications, as illustrated in table 7 below. Their educational qualifications are diverse, ranging from a course to bachelor's degree in English. Working in the same school enabled the teaching staff to know each other's personal life and become friends. When I started observation, I felt that the working atmosphere in the class was very steady and organised; the teaching staff knew when to and where to talk with each other. They knew the teaching staff's expectations from each other throughout the day.

The name of teaching staff	Educational qualification	Years of experience	Years of experience in the focus school
Mrs Thomas	Bachelor's Degree in Education with English as a specialist subject	20	15
Mrs Corbyn	Did not mention	30	18
Mrs Smith	Nursery nurse (2 years of college graduate)	26	15-16
Mrs Green	Completed a course for being a TA	1	1
Mrs King	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Did not mention	3
Mrs Cooper	Level 3	9	9

Table 7. The profiles of the teaching staff working with children in person

Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to familiarise the reader with the school and the class context and introduced the teaching staff's profile precisely. The next chapter will present the findings of this study that I reached after a long period of data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 5 : FINDINGS: THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

Researchers using activity theory as an analytical tool follow the assumption that human actions are 'object-related' (Kaptelinin, 2005). The object element of activity theory plays a crucial role in understanding the actions of the people and the rationale behind their actions (Kaptelinin, 2005; Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). In the current study, the analysis of documentary data, interviews with teaching staff and field notes guided me to conclude that the teaching staff had an object in their minds and that they were trying to achieve it by distributing roles in a particular way, developing their own intellectual and physical tools and using those supplied by the government, creating their class rules and involving the children and their parents (community members).

The analysis that follows, of literacy pedagogies established in an English reception class, was developed using the CHAT framework. The first section of the findings focuses on the shared object of the activity system of literacy pedagogies. This section responds to the research question (1): What matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England? The following two sections in this chapter also provide justifications of the object's content and its argument by exploring the workforce division and the organisation of literacy pedagogies in particular. Therefore, these two sections address not only two sub-research questions (1.1 and 1.2) but also the overarching research question (1).

The aim of the second section is the analysis of workforce division among teaching staff in the researched class in establishing the literacy pedagogies. This section of the analysis addresses the research question (1.1): How do the class teacher and the TAs work together to promote children's literacy learning? The third section discusses the tools, including intellectual and physical ones, and the rules of the class in order to offer a detailed analysis of the organisation of the literacy pedagogies established in the class. This section addresses the question (1.2): How do the class teacher and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies? within the purpose of reaching the shared object.

5.1. OBJECT: 'The Sense-Maker' of the Activity System of Literacy Pedagogies in the Focus Reception Class

5.1.1. The formation of the object in relation to the motives

Analysis of the data led me to conclude that the reception classroom had one overarching object: to reach the 'expected' level for literacy in the EYFS for all children, and for as many as possible to achieve

beyond the EYFS Framework, by teaching schooled literacy through systematic synthetic phonics method exclusively. The 'expected level' was therefore narrowly and reductively defined by phonics. For instance, the teacher explained in her interview that:

> We, generally, it's usually Letters and Sounds, that's the basis of the planning. But then, *we just sort of lift the objectives and the phases*. (Interview with the teacher, italics added).

The *Letters and Sounds* document indicates that the expectation for reception children is to be secure at Phase 4 level by the end of the year in phonics. Phase 5 level is a target for Year 1 students. In line with the teacher's above statement, I observed that the teacher assessed children's schooled literacy skills against Phase 4 phonics at the end of the second term and formed a separate phonics group consisting of children who were secure at Phase 4. According to her assessment results, in the third term, she started to do daily Phase 5 phonics whole group sessions for those children.

As further evidence, I have included below the weekly phonics plan for those working toward Phase 5 in the third term. In the week starting from 25 June 2018, the teacher introduced the graphemes: 'e-e', 'ey' and 'au', which are Phase 5 graphemes in the *Letters and Sounds* document. In line with this, the content of the formative assessment, described at the bottom of the plan, was on assessing 'higher ability'[2] children's memorisation of Phase 5 sounds and high frequency words as well as the repetition of earlier phases.

Phase 5 Summer week 11: e-e, ey
Practise letters/ sounds and start to practise oral blending and segmenting
Teach **blending** and reading high frequency words
Recap from previous week.

FS2 Weekly Phonics Plan
25.06.18
HA

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Revisit/ Review	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far- Robot speak words and children to blend them. Use phoneme cards to reinforce them.	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far - Sounding out phase 2/ 3 - sandpaper letter tiles to build words	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far- Using phoneme pebbles to revisit cvc words with sounds above	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far- Using phoneme pebbles to revisit cvc words with sounds above	Talk about capital letters and full stops. Remind children about using and to join sentences.
Teach	Introduce e-e sound Remind children of rules to apply when choosing the spelling pattern.	Introduce ey sound Remind children of rules to apply when choosing the spelling pattern	Sentence writing. Remind children of rules to apply when choosing the spelling pattern	Tricky word sentence writing Remind children of rules to apply when choosing the spelling pattern	Introduce au sound Remind children of rules to apply when choosing the spelling pattern
Practise	Use quick write to spell words .	Use sound pebbles to make ey words.	Tricky word practise with white boards.	Practise quick write choosing correct spelling pattern.	Practise quick write choosing correct spelling pattern. Dragon game on IWB using the e-e and ey spelling patterns.
Apply	Look at words using e-e sound	Look at words using ey sound	Write words with or sound	Bingo game on IWB using the e-e and ey spelling patterns.	

Assessment

- Give the sound when shown any Phase 4/5 letter
- Give the sound when shown any Phase 3/ 5 digraph, securing the diagraphs sh, ch, th, ng, ee, oo, ai, oi, oa, igh, ar, or, ur, ea, ear, ou, oy, ay, ow, air, ie, oe, ae, wh, ph, au, aw, e-e, ey
- Find any Phase 4/5 letter, from a display, when given the sound.
- Be able to orally blend and segment CVC words.
- Be able to blend and segment in order to read and spell (using magnetic letters) CCVVCC words
- Be able to read all tricky words from phase 4 and 5
- tricky words from Phase 4 and 5

Figure 10. An example weekly phonics planning of the class teacher, dated 25 June 2018.

[2] 'High[er] ability' and 'low[er] ability' are the terms that the teaching staff generally used for categorising children in relation to their performance in phonics and letter formation. The terms, 'high[er] attainer' and 'low[er] attainer' are generally stated in school policy documents. All are used in inverted commas throughout as constructs of the system or teachers. Although the terms, 'ability' and 'attainment' are used interchangeably in the data 'ability' relates to the 'issue' that exists within the child and 'attainment' connects it with the school and its system.

The clarification of the object is essential in understanding the motives and naturally the needs of the classroom. Explaining the motives with the relevant evidence would also support the claim for the accuracy of the object as defined above. From the analysis, I found the following five motives, which shaped the object of the AS:

a. The need to close the gap between ELGs in writing and reading and Key Stage 1 SAT literacy standards
b. The need to achieve non-negotiable writing rules in the reception year
c. The need to meet the expectations of Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers in the same school
d. The need "… to increase the % of higher attainers throughout school" (School Improvement Plan 2017-2018).
e. The need to make the 'lower ability' children reach age-related expectations at least in order not to contradict Ofsted.

The teacher explained that there was a discrepancy between the 'expected' literacy outcome at the end of Reception and the literacy learning expectations for year 2 students. According to her, the ELGs for writing and reading were not in line with the Key Stage 1 SAT literacy expectations. She commented as follows:

> …the expectations [reading and writing ELGs in the EYFS] are that they're not in line with what, if we say children only need to be doing that or only need to be writing. And, it doesn't say anything there about capital letters, full stops, fingers spaces or anything like that. Have you seen? Do you know what they need to be doing to get a greater depth in Year 2? Have you seen some of the examples?
> Kubra: No, not yet.
> The teacher: It's hard. It's hard. You'd be astounded. We were all astounded. So, unless they're getting at a certain level by the end of reception, then the jump they've got to make to get that at the end of Year 2 is too big.
> …
> The teacher: Yeah. So, they need to be getting more by the end of their FS 2 so that they're not having to make up so much ground to get to Year 2.

She considered that starting to prepare children to reach the Key Stage 1 SAT earlier would enable them to have a smoother transition to the more difficult literacy expectations of the upper levels of

schooling. In other words, the teacher implied that the more schooled literacy education the child gets earlier, the better the transitions to Key Stage 1 standards will be.

Whilst the teacher started to teach Phase 5 to the children in the 'higher ability' group only, the teacher and TAs taught three writing rules, named as 'non-negotiable' writing rules, specifically punctuation rules, to all children. These rules were: putting a full stop at the end of a sentence, starting with a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence and leaving finger spaces between words in a sentence (Non-negotiable Writing Rules Document). Although, as she states above, the ELGs for writing and reading do not mention these, as a school, they decided to teach the three writing rules from the reception year.

By doing this, the teacher could also meet the expectations of Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers. The writing coordinator, who was teaching Year 6 in the 2017-2018 academic year, mentioned the reason why they set non-negotiable writing rules for reception and other stages in their school:

> …because when they come to me in year six, they should not be missing out capital letters and full stops (Interview with the writing coordinator).

In an informal discussion, the reception teacher commented that their school is a primary school, and that if the children could not reach the 'expected' level of literacy attainment, the Key Stage 1 and 2 teaching staff would ask her about it. The children's literacy attainment at each stage of their primary schooling was seen as a collective responsibility of the teaching staff. The school planned its own writing standards for each year group, which would enable them to reach an 'expected' level of writing outcome in Year 2 and, finally, the Year 6 SAT tests. Therefore, the writing expectation in the EYFS was not simply the standard that the reception teacher wanted to reach at the end of the year.

> At our staff meeting in the couple of weeks we're looking at everybody in the foundation stage [reception class], they're looking at children in year two [writing samples of those year groups]. So, we can say, "Well, we need to be doing this so that, in two years' time, they can be here, so, another two years' time, they can be there." Because it's a collective responsibility, isn't it? You know I could just say, "No it doesn't matter, I am just gonna focus on the EYFS", but that would be professionally poor of me. You've got to acknowledge what Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 SAT is (Interview with the teacher).

Approaching the end of the year, the actions of the teacher and the TAs were evident in whole class phonics and small group literacy activity times: they aimed at preparing children's writing against the non-negotiable writing rules and, overall, in relation to the Key Stage 1 SATs. For instance,

> On 3 May 2018, the teacher conducted a small group writing activity having the purpose to ensure children could write a sentence on 'The Train Ride' using Phase 4 or Phase 5 phonics. There were 6 children sitting around a table with the teacher. Each child had a phonics mat to remember the graphemes of the sounds and the writing sheet (inserted below). With question and answer methods, she wrote the two following sentences: The train went past the sheep. The train went past the farm. The six children, including Arthur, tried to write the sentences getting the help of the teacher, if needed. After all six children completed and went to other learning tables, the teacher wanted Arthur to write the same sentences on a new sheet. After Arthur left the table, we started talking about Arthur's writing and her expectations for children at that stage. She stated that "If I only assessed on the early learning goal, it's very difficult for them to get to Key Stage 1 SATs." She further said that Arthur's first writing was not as neat as it should be considering the Key Stage 1 literacy standards. According to her, Arthur's writing was not as good as his phonics knowledge was (3 May 2018, fieldnotes).

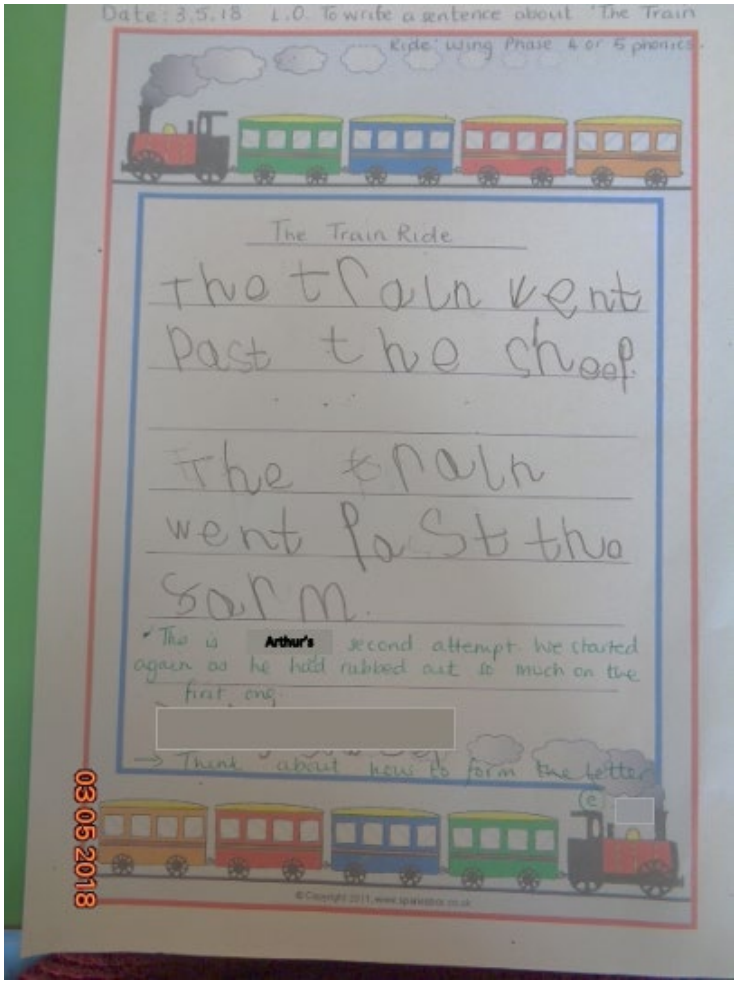


Figure 11. The writing sheet, given to each child.

Analysis of the school improvement plan revealed that one of their priorities was "… to increase the % of higher attainers throughout school". To increase the number of 'higher attainers' children in schooled literacy at reception, they identified several actions to be applied by the teaching staff. These included:

a. To trial challenge activities for continuous provision to challenge more able children.

b. Differentiated, open-ended tasks for more able children to challenge HA [high attainers].

c. More formal writing expectations introduced during the Spring/Summer term.

d. [The other reception teacher] to send a letter out requesting parent volunteers to hear readers in school.

e. [The teacher] to do a reading meeting for new parents (School Improvement Plan).

In relation to the third of these strategies, as shown below in table 8, the school requested the reception teaching staff to evaluate writing abilities of the children deemed to be 'higher attainers' against Year 1 objectives and put their writing sheets in their learning journeys.

Specific actions to achieve key objectives	Outcome/Impact	How is evaluation reported?
More formal writing expectations introduced during the Spring / Summer	Children will be meeting the criteria to achieve exceeding GLD [Good Level of Development, referring to expected or exceeding result in the EYFS Profile]	Marking templates to include Y1 [Year 1] objectives – evidence in learning journeys

Table 8. A part of table in the school improvement plan to achieve their priority of increasing the percentage of 'higher attainers' (School Improvement Plan).

However, the focus for the class as a whole was on having all children, including the 'lower ability' groups of children, achieve age related expectations[3] at least. The reason why they wanted this, and formed intervention groups to support it, was explained by the teacher:

> Anybody who is below age related expectations is a part of intervention groups. … …priority is given to the children who just need little bit of extra push to make good level of development by the end of the year. If you leave them, they don't make good level of development and our results [the overall EYFS Profile results of the school] will be low and then that contradicts Ofsted and things like that. So, you have to look to see which children need that intervention, so you can maintain your results [the overall EYFS results of the school] (Interview with class teacher).

When I looked at the school's previous three Ofsted inspection reports from 2010 to 2018, I noticed that one of the tools that the Ofsted inspectors were using to judge the school's literacy pedagogies was the School Performance Handbook, which involved the comparison of national and county level test results with the school. The teacher had a fear of 'contradicting Ofsted' and felt it was compulsory to follow their suggestions. The deputy explained the source of the teacher's fear in this way:

[3] Age related expectations are decided based on the results of the school against the national results in the School Performance Handbook by the county council.

> Schools are driven by the standards that they have to reach. ... Because if your results aren't good enough somebody can take over your school. You can be made to be an academy, somebody else in another school can come and ruin you. So it is going to affect your behaviour (Interview with Deputy Head).

Both the school staff's (subjects) explanations and their actions strongly indicated that the needs and, consequently, the motives emerged from the demands of external agencies, for example: the standardisation of literacy learning and surveillance of result via high-stakes assessment, Ofsted inspections by the government, the creation of the school's own standardisation and surveillance by other teaching staff including Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers. The nature of object forced the teaching staff teach schooled literacy via SSP method exclusively (more discussion available in the nature of SSP method as a compulsory teaching technique in the 5.3.1.3.Section in this chapter). Literacy pedagogies driven by the motives of the external agencies have the danger of undervaluing child-centred approaches (Wohlwend, 2008). Beside the evidence I illustrated in the formation of the shared object, the following findings in this chapter and in the next chapter enable me to justify the nature of the object through giving a detailed account about the nature and implementation of literacy pedagogies in the focus class.

Even though teaching staff were aware of the fact that the defined object contradicted their personal beliefs and values (discussed in the 6.2. Section), their actions were directed by the desire to achieve the set object. The need to be seen to be effective, formed and dictated by the people/organisations outside the classroom, had the oppressing power of shaping the object. The subjects (teaching staff) and the community members (children and parents) could not produce, or get involved in, the formation of the object.

5.2. DIVISION OF LABOUR: Hierarchical and Organisational in its Application

Throughout the data collection, I observed that the TAs and the teacher equally worked in the provision of literacy pedagogies to children. It was therefore necessary to explore how the class teacher and the TAs work together to draw the full picture of the literacy pedagogies established in the case class. In the initial stages of analysis, I attempted to analyse the data regarding the teacher and TA responsibilities and collaboration all together. The coded data showed that there is an evident hierarchy in the nature of responsibilities between the teacher and the TAs; the teacher was the

authority distributing roles to TAs. Hence I decided to create categories as teacher responsibilities, TA responsibilities and cooperation between them.

5.2.1. Complexity in the object, leading to complexity in the division of the workforce, putting more pressure on the teacher

Clarity about the division of work amongst the workforce is essential when there is more than one subject (teaching staff), when the community members (children and their parents) are large in number and most importantly when the nature of the object is complex (see the figure of the AS on page 95). The nature of the object of the activity system led to complex yet systematic planning, teaching, assessing and reporting processes by and among the teaching staff. The object of the AS involves jargon: 'expected level', which is an abstract and apparently neutral phrase. Therefore, the subjects first needed to know what 'expected level' of literacy development means and involves in the EYFS. Knowing it helped the teaching staff to plan their lessons and teach all children toward the expected level as a threshold. For those students achieving the 'expected level' already, the teaching staff also needed to know what ' achieving beyond the EYFS framework of literacy skills involved and how to plan and teach it to children.

Due to the complexity of the object, the number of subjects and community members, the activity system necessitated a leader who could manage the overall provision of literacy pedagogies in the class. Naturally, among the teaching staff, the one who had the higher qualification with higher professional expertise in teaching and assessment across primary school levels, was chosen to be the leader of the Foundation Stage. Mrs Thomas was the most suitable person for this position in the hierarchy considering her demographic information (which can be found in the previous chapter). She assumed overall responsibility in the process for achieving the object of the activity system. As Mrs King, a TA, noted:

> It is very hard work to be a teacher. There is a lot of workload that you have to, so even though you are teaching from 9 to 15.30, you still go home and you have lots to do when you get home, planning lessons, what you will be doing, marking, just everything else. There is so much pressure from the government now to get children up to the level, just to push them and progress them. That just puts so much pressure on teachers (Interview with Mrs King).

As can be seen from the table below, the workload of the teacher was heavy and required her to work very hard, supporting the TA's view. All responsibilities were equally important in managing children's attainment against the object of the activity system.

Teacher's Responsibilities	Codes
Leadership responsibilities	-School level leadership responsibilities -Class level leadership responsibilities
Planning	-General and specific planning -Planning literacy environment (corners, tables, walls) -Planning SEN children's learning aim with SEN teacher
Teaching	-Whole class phonics activities: Teaching whole class phonics except two SEND children (in May, higher ability group children only) -Whole class literacy activities: Reading story books to the whole class -Small group literacy activities -One-to-one literacy activities: Listening children's reading of their 'reading books'
Assessment	--Moderating the assessment performance at the county level -Conducting baseline assessment -Conducting formative assessments -Conducting summative assessment -Reporting the results of three assessment types

Table 9. The teacher's responsibilities in the focus class

5.2.1.1. Leadership Responsibilities of the Teacher

The teacher's long years of experience in her profession opened up for her various leadership roles at school and class level. At the school level, Mrs Thomas was in charge of the early years part of the school and worked as an Assistant Head. She met with other teaching staff every Wednesday morning and conducted meetings with NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) every Tuesday afternoon. In the meetings, she managed and tackled issues related to the foundation unit (reception and nursery classes in the primary school) of the school. Specifically, Mrs Thomas played a crucial role in the management of assessment data in the foundation unit, which included the nursery class and the other Reception class. Her specific role in the assessment of the foundation stage unit was written into the school improvement plan 2017-2018:

> - [The class teacher] to collate and analyse data from [Apple and Strawberry class] EAZMAG entries to see which pupils are performing below and well below typical ARE [Age Related Expectations].

- [The class teacher] to provide a list of which children are performing below and well below typical in writing, reading, C&L [Communication and Language] and PSED [Personal, Social, emotional Development]
- [The class teacher] to set up intervention groups for the above areas with an intervention folder
- [The class teacher] to ensure that FSM6/FSM [Free School Meal in the last 6 years/ Free School Meal] children are included in these intervention groups
- [The class teacher] to monitor progress of intervention groups-revisited Dec 2017 + March 2018 (School Improvement Plan 2017-2018).

The class teacher was responsible for data analysis, determining intervention groups based on the analysis, monitoring the academic performance of children in the foundation stage. Also, using the data analysis that she stored with the EAZMAG (discussed more in Section 5.3.2.1). Mrs Thomas had progress meetings six times a year with the headteacher. She informed the headteacher about the ongoing education process, the assessment results and attainment results of the foundation stage children. In short, the class teacher was selected to regularly evaluate the test results of foundation stage children throughout the year against the set object of the AS and create intervention groups for the children of 'lower ability'.

In addition, Mrs Thomas distributed specific responsibilities among teaching assistants throughout the year. Mrs Smith explained that:

> We have a timetable, we're each given a timetable at the beginning of the year which [the class teacher] compiled for each of us. So, we know what we are doing, when, who we are supporting when (Interview with Mrs Smith).

It was under the control of the teacher that the TAs could only teach and support the particular children that they were assigned. Thus, she was the decision-maker in forming the community groups interacting with the TAs in the schooled literacy learning processes.

5.2.1.2. Planning Responsibilities

Mrs Thomas had two types of planning for the class: general plans and specific plans. As discussed in the section on the teacher's leadership role, she met with the other two teachers from the nursery

and reception class every Wednesday morning and they wrote all the lesson plans for their classes cooperatively during that time slot.

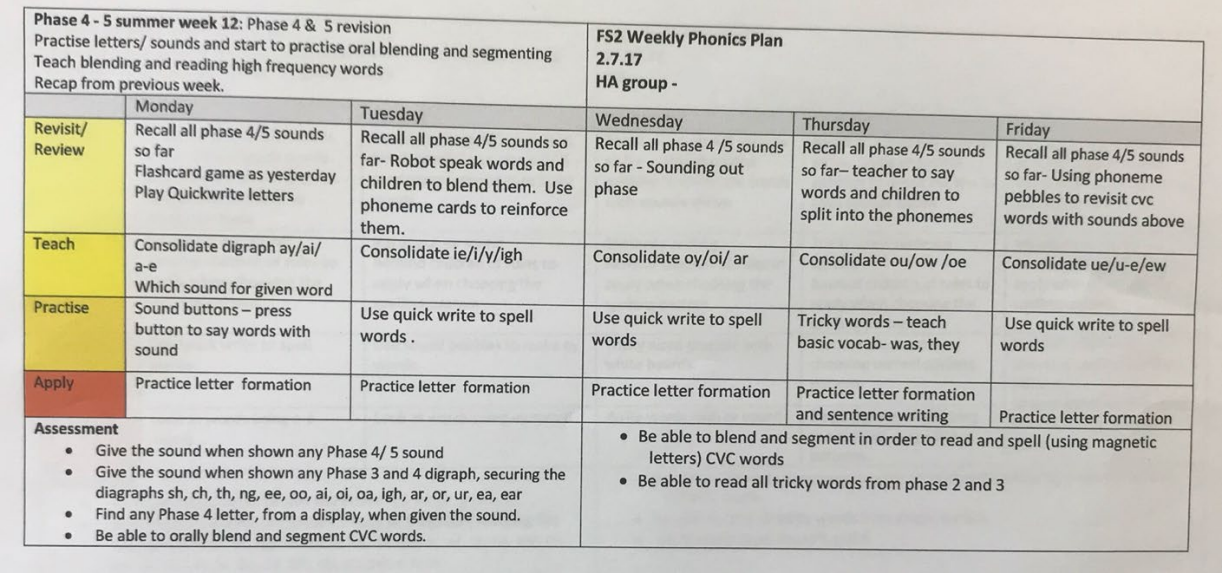
First of all, general planning was topic based. The teacher explained that:

> We do a number of topics throughout the year. That's on a two-year rolling cycle. Some of them are sort of more society-based, understanding the world. And for some, it's more literacy-based, like traditional stories (Interview with the class teacher).

Her specific plans on phonics enabled her to confidently say the sounds to children and expect them to remember the target name. The specific plans draw a map for teaching staff to follow a sequence in teaching sounds from simple to complex (e.g., from digraphs to split vowel digraphs).

Instead of general plans, specific plans were "…much more targeted on the ability of the children. A lot more rigorous assessment with the phonics", according to the teacher. In informal chats, teachers and TAs discussed whether children achieved the learning aim of the week in phonics. Afterwards, the teacher shaped the planning for the next Wednesday with the other two foundation stage teachers. The teacher explained their informal chat as below:

> Lots and lots of informal chatting about children: who've done well, this or the writing was terrible today, we need to do some more of that. Like Mrs Cooper and I, when we came back after Easter, oh my gosh!, the writing is, you know, dire. So, we need to do more writing. So, it's just lots of informal chat like that. And then, we'll plan that, in planning opportunities, when we're doing planning on a Wednesday during PPA [Planning, Preparation, Assessment]. For, you know, tackling whatever it is that we need to do during the week (Interview with the class teacher).



Phase 4 - 5 summer week 12: Phase 4 & 5 revision
Practise letters/ sounds and start to practise oral blending and segmenting
Teach blending and reading high frequency words
Recap from previous week.

FS2 Weekly Phonics Plan
2.7.17
HA group -

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Revisit/ Review	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far Flashcard game as yesterday Play Quickwrite letters	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far- Robot speak words and children to blend them. Use phoneme cards to reinforce them.	Recall all phase 4 /5 sounds so far - Sounding out phase	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far– teacher to say words and children to split into the phonemes	Recall all phase 4/5 sounds so far- Using phoneme pebbles to revisit cvc words with sounds above
Teach	Consolidate digraph ay/ai/ a-e Which sound for given word	Consolidate ie/i/y/igh	Consolidate oy/oi/ ar	Consolidate ou/ow /oe	Consolidate ue/u-e/ew
Practise	Sound buttons – press button to say words with sound	Use quick write to spell words .	Use quick write to spell words	Tricky words – teach basic vocab- was, they	Use quick write to spell words
Apply	Practice letter formation	Practice letter formation	Practice letter formation	Practice letter formation and sentence writing	Practice letter formation

Assessment

- Give the sound when shown any Phase 4/ 5 sound
- Give the sound when shown any Phase 3 and 4 digraph, securing the diagraphs sh, ch, th, ng, ee, oo, ai, oi, oa, igh, ar, or, ur, ea, ear
- Find any Phase 4 letter, from a display, when given the sound.
- Be able to orally blend and segment CVC words.
- Be able to blend and segment in order to read and spell (using magnetic letters) CVC words
- Be able to read all tricky words from phase 2 and 3

Figure 12. Weekly phonics plan for the 'higher ability' group of children between 2 July -6 July 2018

Figure 12 demonstrates the framework of the teacher's 20 minutes phonics session with the 'higher ability' group. It is systematically planned in that the teacher knew which sounds to repeat, which sounds, high frequency or tricky words should be introduced for the first time and finally which sounds and tricky words to assess during the phonics session.

The teacher's plans also included the organisation of the literacy environment, other than on Wednesday mornings. The resources on the learning tables, materials in the corners in the classroom and the small playground were all described on her weekly general plan. On Wednesday mornings when the teacher had a PPA time, Mrs Corbyn, the senior TA, planned and provided the materials for learning tables. As I will discuss later, all of the tables were generally focused on writing letters and drawing different patterns of lines. However, I did not note such heavy emphasis on schooled literacy based learning tables on Wednesday afternoons and Thursdays. (I give examples of corners from different dates in the data collection period in the tools section of the activity system. These examples demonstrate how the literacy environment was used as an additional resource, contributing to the target aims defined on the general and specific plans).

Since there were two children with autism in the class, the teachers' responsibility was to set learning aims for these two children. Even though the school had a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), who was also a teacher of Year 3 and Year 4 classes, the SENCO explained in her interview that,

> No, I don't set, help out with, the targets. Again, because the staff are very experienced. And also, some of these targets will come from outside agencies like Speech and Language Agency. They will come in. They will work with whomever, like Felix, Jasper (Interview with SENCO teacher).

Mrs Cooper also explained that the class teacher prepared the long term individual educational plans for the two children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and handed them in to the TAs. TAs were responsible for preparing day-to-day teaching, assessing and reporting. It is noteworthy, though, that contrary to my observations regarding the teaching of SEND children, the school's Special Education Needs Policy clearly established that the teacher's responsibilities for those children were more comprehensive. As is clear from the quotation below, her responsibilities ranged from collaboration with the SENCO teacher across all the stages of SEND children's education planning, daily teaching, assessment. There was no specific role assigned in the policy to TAs regarding those children's education.

The teachers' roles with SEND children's education in particular were identified as:

a. Being aware of the school's procedures for the identification and assessment of, and subsequent provision for pupil's with SEND
b. Collaborating with the SENCO to decide the action required to assist the pupil to progress
c. Working with the SENCO to collect available information on the pupil
d. In collaboration with the SENCO, develop provision maps/IEPs [Individualised Educational Plan] for SEND pupils
e. Working with SEN pupils on a daily basis to deliver the individual programme outlined in the provision map/IEP
f. Developing constructive relationships with parents.

(Special Education Needs Policy).

The comparison of different data sets enabled me to see the contradiction between the school rule and how the teacher discharged her responsibilities in practice. The shift of the education of SEND children from the teacher to the TAs seemed to me to be due to the workload of the teacher. Throughout the data collection process, I observed that, when the TAs were teaching SEND children, the teacher was teaching literacy or phonics to the children without special needs. One might ask why the role divisions related to teaching children with and without disabilities was not the reverse, with the teacher teaching the SEND children and the TAs teaching literacy to children without disabilities. The answer lies in the object of the class's activity system. The object prioritises the increase in the

number of 'higher ability' children. Therefore, the system produces the rules about the division of labour: the more expert teaching staff teach the 'higher ability' children in schooled literacy.

5.2.1.3. Teaching Responsibilities

The teacher taught whole class literacy and phonics sessions, small group literacy sessions with three to six children and one-to-one literacy sessions. First of all, the teacher read storybooks to the class. Generally, it happened just before the end of the day. Every day, there was at least a 20-minute long phonics session, taught to the whole class, only by her. However, from the start two children with disabilities were excluded from the teacher's phonics sessions. This was due to the above mentioned unspoken, rule: the more expert teaching staff should teach the 'higher ability' children in schooled literacy. Mrs Green was assigned to teach Felix and Mrs Cooper was ready to teach Jasper during those phonics time slots. As the year progressed, the drop offs in the number of children attending phonics adult-led activities continued. Children who could not reach the phonics expectation were sent to TAs to do separate phonics sessions (This topic will be discussed more in the division of TAs' labour) in Section 5.2.2). By the third term, the teacher's role became teaching the children of the two reception classes who were secure at Phase 4 and were ready to learn Phase 5. The 'lower ability' children could not enable Mrs Thomas to achieve the object of the class' activity system. Therefore, to solve the contradiction between the current literacy ability of children (community) and the object, she changed the target community.

On the other hand, in the small group literacy sessions, where the teacher and from 3 to 6 children do the same literacy activity together, there was no division depending on the literacy ability of children. That was because the teacher called several children at a time. I also observed that on occasions, the teacher called two children with autism and made the focus literacy activity easier for those children. However, it was generally the TAs doing literacy activities with the two children.

The teacher also had one-to-one literacy sessions, where she listened to children reading their 'reading books' throughout the year. She sometimes changed children's books with the new ones after assessing their reading ability through SSP and wrote some phonics homework for a child who struggled with specific phonemes and high-frequency words.

5.2.1.4. Assessment of Reception Children's Progress

The teaching staff (subjects) needed to know the ways of assessing and reporting children against the neutralised definition of the 'expected' level because all stakeholders needed to agree on the decision made over a child's level of literacy attainment through looking at the objective evidence (children's work samples). Assessment involved baseline, formative and summative assessments. Each assessment type produced its own 'neutral' evidence, which informed the teaching staff's planning, teaching and grouping of children based on their literacy attainment. Therefore, the ways of conducting baseline, formative and summative assessments and their reporting needed to be objective and clear for all teaching staff.

In the focus class, the class teacher had control over each type of assessment in contrast to the five TAs, who were only allowed to do formative assessment. The teacher was considered capable of handling the complexity of assessing children against the object of the AS. This was mainly attributed to her expertise in assessment, gained throughout working for twenty years. Her objective judgement of children's literacy attainment was validated not only by other teaching staff in the school but also by education professionals in the local authority. For instance, she worked as a moderator for several schools based in the same county as her school. In the summer term, she visited the schools and checked the learning journeys (discussed in the tool section) of reception children. She assessed children's work examples using the exemplification materials (also discussed in the tool section) provided by the DfE as a reference.

> Mrs Thomas: "…I am the moderator of the county. So, I go to other schools and look at their assessments and check they are in line with what should be. Well, we have in the early years, there are exemplification materials. Have you seen them?
> Kubra: Yeah, yeah.
> Mrs Thomas: Yeah, that's what we use, the county moderators, of whom I'm one, we use them and we get 3 or 4 schools every summer, then we go to and look at their judgements, look at the evidence they provide for the judgement and then say they're in line with what it should be."

Being a moderator at the county level facilitated her ability to compare the literacy attainment results and work samples of other schools with the children's work in her own classroom. I noted that after she visited those schools, she told the class that their letter formations were better than the other schools' and congratulated her children. Thus, county level moderation enabled her to estimate how much her children were better than other school children and eventually how their school success

would be at the county level. In other words, this responsibility of the teacher mediated the subject's self-evaluation in relation to the object.

In her own classroom, the teacher conducted three types of assessment throughout the year. In table 10, I shortly describe the types of assessments and their details. This also offers an example of the intensity of the teacher's workload.

Types of Assessments	**Time of Year**	**Purposes of Assessments**	**Assessment Tools**	**The stakeholders having access to the results**
Baseline Assessment (Booklet)	Beginning	-Assessing children's current knowledge and abilities -Ranking the results against criterion-referenced scale	-Her own assessment tool -EAZMAG for record keeping	-Ofsted inspectors -The school teaching staff including head teacher and deputy head
Formative Assessment (Children's work samples and learning journeys)	Throughout the year	-Finding evidence to support their judgements regarding children's literacy skills. -Assessing for learning	-Empty notebooks for each child. -EAZMAG for record keeping	- Ofsted inspectors -The school teaching staff including head teacher and deputy head -The parents during parent evenings
Summative Assessments (interim exams: Phase 3 and 4 tests, EYFS Profile)	At the end of 1. and 2. semester (Phase 3 and Phase 4 tests) and at the end of the year (the EYFS Profile)	-Learning children's literacy attainment against criterion-referenced tests -Interim exams: Building intervention groups for the children falling behind	-Phase 3 and Phase 4 found, downloaded from the Internet -EYFS Profile, compulsory national assessment - EAZMAG for record keeping	-Ofsted inspectors -The school teaching staff including head teacher and deputy head -The parents during parent evenings

Table 10. A short summary of the assessments done by the teacher throughout the year

The academic year started with the aim of learning where children's literacy skills were at against the age ranking/scale in *Development Matters*, a non-statutory guidance document. The teacher thought that she should do her own baseline assessment for the following reasons:

> "…sometimes we can take from 12 different places as well as our nursery. …everybody's judgement is different. The reason we do baseline when they're coming to school is because it's then one judgement. And everybody is starting from the same starting point. So, it's much easier to compare children. Whereas you might take again like from one nursery and they say oh, yes this child is 40 to 60 – 'secure' - whereas another child might be 30 to 50 – 'developing'. But then you look at them. And you think well, actually, there is not much difference. It's subjective." (Interview with reception teacher)

The assessment tools of other schools were not considered helpful in mediating the teaching staff's understanding of the children's current level of development to reach the object at the end of the year. Thus, the teacher created her own baseline test or mediating artefact for the purpose of achieving their objects (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). The scale in Development *Matters* in relation to children's schooled literacy skills turned into criteria in assessing children's level of schooled literacy attainment.

As a requirement of her role, the teacher then conducted her own baseline test to oversee children's literacy level and to draw a map of planning and teaching to achieve her ultimate object at the end of the year. After the application of the baseline assessment, she put the results in the data storage and analysis software, EAZMAG. Based on the results, she formed intervention groups of children for TAs to conduct extra phonics and writing sessions for those who were considered as on entry 'below' and 'well below', as discussed in the teacher's leadership responsibility section.

After baseline testing, not only the teacher but also the TAs constantly needed to collect and report children's work and comment on children's ability in relation to a specific activity: how far the child reached, with or without the guidance of the teaching staff, in relation to the learning object for an activity and what the child needed to do next. Figure 13 illustrates an example worksheet and the class teacher's comments, which follows the formative feedback rules. Every child had their literacy folders or learning journeys, where the teaching staff noted and commented on these points.

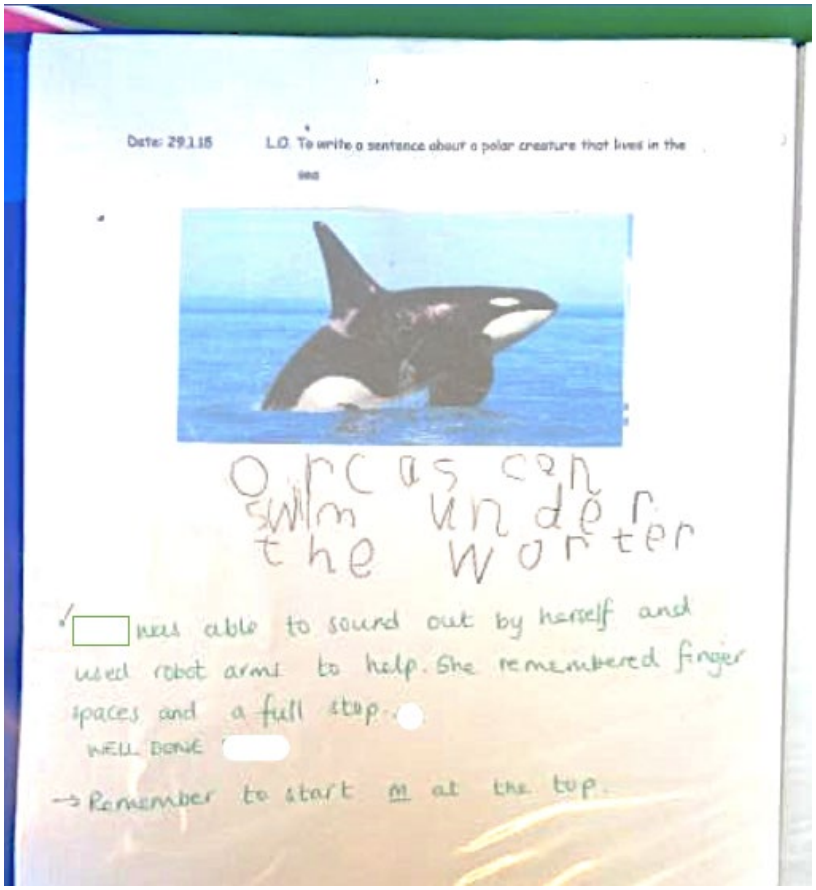


Figure 13. An example small group literacy activity worksheet and the teacher's comments on Bonnie's writing

The teacher had to keep files for each learning area for every child. In our informal talks, the teacher said that those files were critical to have as evidence for their judgements, in case Ofsted inspectors came and questioned their decisions about children's literacy attainments. In addition, the teacher also showed children's folders to parents, as the teacher told me and as I observed at a parents' evening.

At the end of the first and second term, the teacher conducted interim exams for each child individually. The aim was to assess children's literacy skills against Phase 3 and Phase 4 phonics and spellings. After each interim exam, she reported the results to her EAZMAG software for revising the intervention group membership, for conducting extra individual literacy activities and for dividing the two reception classes into four ability groups, which were Phase 5, Phase 4, Phase 3 and Phase 1 groups, in the third term. Since the EYFS Profile was a compulsory national assessment in the 2017-2018 academic year; the teacher assessed children's literacy development together with other areas of learning and development and graded children's overall development as 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. She put the results into the EAZMAG for the next year teachers, the school and Ofsted.

Overall, the objective term, 'expected' level in the object of the activity system gave rise to a careful and regular assessing, reporting and monitoring process which was done mostly by the teacher throughout the year. The assessment workload of the teacher consisted mainly in using her expertise in creating her own assessment tools; objectively evaluating children's work sample against three levels, below 'expected' or 'emerging', expected and above expect or 'exceeding' (there is further discussion of the assessment tools in Section 5.3.2).

5.2.2. The division of labour among TAs: organisational role distribution

The responsibilities of the TAs in the focus class related to the areas of leadership, planning, teaching and assessment, as listed in table 11. The division of labour followed a route that was drawn by the teacher and changed in accordance with the dynamic nature of the activity system throughout the year. Below I describe the specific responsibilities of each TA for the four areas.

	Mrs Cooper	Mrs Corbyn	Mrs Green (worked in the first and second term)	Mrs Smith	Mrs King
a. Leadership Responsibilities	-	-Line manager of the other TAs: leading TA meetings on Thursday afternoons, doing appraisals of the TAs	-	-	-
b. Planning	-Small group literacy activities: Planning writing intervention - Small group literacy activities: Planning	- Whole class literacy activities: Following the letter formation handbook order in teaching to write letters	-Small group literacy activities: Planning phonics intervention to the 'lower ability' group	-Small group literacy activities: Planning phonics intervention in the third term	-Small group literacy activities: Planning daily Phase 3 phonics session the third term

	daily Phase 1 phonics sessions in the third term -One-to-one literacy activities: Teaching the child with autism: Jasper	-Planning of learning tables on Wednesday mornings	-Small group literacy activities: Planning daily phonics session for 4 children (children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family background, children with SEND) in the second term between 14 December 2017 to 29 March 2018 -One-to-one literacy activities: Teaching the child with autism: Felix until December, 2017.		
c. Teaching Whole class literacy and phonics activities Small group literacy activities One-to-one literacy activities	-Whole class literacy activities: Covering teacher in her absence: Doing whole-class phonics session and small group	- Whole class literacy activities: Teaching letter formation to whole class except Jasper (not sure about Felix) - Whole class	- Small group literacy activities: Teaching phonics intervention to the 'lower ability' group in the first and second term	-Small group literacy activities Teaching phonics to intervention group children in the third term	- Small group literacy activities: Teaching daily Phase 3 phonics for 4 children (children learning EAL, children from lower

	literacy activities -Small group literacy activities: Teaching Phase 1 phonics to two children with autism: Jasper and Durjoy - Small group literacy activities: Doing writing intervention with the 'lower ability' children -One-to-one literacy activities: Teaching the child with autism: Jasper One-to-one literacy activities: Listening children reading their "reading books"	literacy activities: Reading storybooks to the class -Small group literacy activities: Teaching letter formation and observing the handwriting of groups of three to six.	- Small group literacy activities: Daily phonics session for 4 children in the second term between 14 December 2017 to 29 March 2018 -One-to-one literacy activities: Teaching the child with autism: Felix , December 2017. One-to-one literacy activities: Listening children reading their "reading books"		socio-economic family background, children with SEND) children in the third term
d. Assessing Reception Children's Progress	-Formative assessment (written: learning journeys, children work samples to be put in	-Formative assessment (written: letter formation booklet, verbal: skill-based)	-Formative assessment (written: learning journeys, children work samples to be put in	-Formative assessment (written: learning journeys, children work samples to be put in	-Formative assessment (written: learning journeys, children work samples to

	Mrs Cooper' intervention folder verbal: skill-based)		Mrs Green intervention folder verbal: skill-based)	Mrs Smith intervention folder verbal: skill-based)	be put in Mrs King's phonics group folder verbal: skill-based)

Table 11. The responsibilities of the TAs in supporting children's literacy development in the focus class

5.2.2.1. Leadership Responsibilities of the TAs

In the foundation stage, there were two groups among the teaching staff; the group of teachers and the group of TAs. The leader of the teacher group, Mrs Thomas, had influence over every action of the TAs. Mrs Corbyn, the leader of the TA group, explained that the reason for being selected as a line manager of the other TAs was her 30 years of teaching experience. Her leadership responsibilities ranged from meeting with all TAs every Thursday afternoon, setting performance targets and evaluating the teaching of the TAs, as she explained in her first interview below:

> … I do their [the TAs'] appraisals and their performance targets.
>
> And just making sure that they're [the TAs] covered and they are happy, and the support is where it should be and that they are doing the job that they should be doing. And just sort of keeping them all in line really (Mrs Corbyn, Interview).

On Thursday afternoons, the TAs were informed about the decisions that had been made by the teachers or the necessary new information that the teachers mentioned in their Wednesday teacher meetings. Mrs Green defined the content of their TA meetings as below:

> it's just to let us [the TAs] know what happened in staff meeting on Wednesday and if there is anything that we need as teaching assistants, if there's anything which everyone needs to know, it just gets passed on and that's all is really (Mrs Green, interview).

Mrs Corbyn's leadership responsibilities were therefore mainly about keeping the work performance of the TAs "all in line" with the expectations which Mrs Thomas set at the beginning of the year for all TAs working in her classroom.

5.2.2.2. Planning Responsibilities

Except Mrs Corbyn, all other TAs had the autonomy to structure their own small group or/and one-to-one literacy intervention activities for the children of 'lower ability' in their literacy against the object of the AS. Their planning was mostly based on the performance of the children in previous lessons, according to my observations and interviews with the four TAs. For example, Mrs Cooper explained that:

> I do write the intervention every week. We started off with letter formation. Now, we've moved on to sentences to include capital letters, finger spaces, and full stops. They're still finding it hard. Any that, any that can do it, they can do a simple sentence, it's only a short sentence including tricky words. Any that can do it, we try and extend sentences to make it longer. But I always look back to see if there's any words that they're having trouble spelling or they can't sound out or… So, really the planning is just looking back at what they did last time, and then adapting it for the next time. (Mrs Cooper, Interview)

However, being self-directed in their planning did not mean that the TAs were not aware of or interested in the specific literacy planning of the teacher. Mrs Smith mentioned that:

> I sometimes look at the literacy planning. So, what has been planned for phonics and the topic for the week for the children. So, sometimes I base the activities on that. I think carefully about the children that are in those groups. So, I have six children that are of a similar nature, similar difficulties perhaps so that we can aim our activity at that group of children. So, I'm building each time on things we'd perhaps looked at previously. Sometimes, we may concentrate on a book. We may, we may look at phonics in particular. I like occasionally to do something very practical because that suits some of those children much better than written activities. But I choose for myself. I don't ask Mrs Thomas, and I plan in my own time. Usually, in a lunch break. (Mrs Smith, Interview)

Table 11 indicates the planning responsibility of the five TAs in the second row and the types of adult-led literacy activities: Mrs Cooper planned her writing intervention activities to conduct on Thursday afternoons for the whole year. She also planned daily Phase 1 phonics sessions in the third term for two SEND children, Jasper and Durjoy. Finally, she prepared literacy activities for her focus child, Jasper throughout the year. Mrs Green in the first and second terms, planned her phonics intervention activities to do Wednesday afternoons. Approaching the end of the first term in December 2017, Mrs Green's individual daily phonics session with the SEND child, Felix, changed into a small group phonics session with four children (e.g., children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family

background, children with SEND). These children were Alice, Felix, Attila and John. The reason was that Felix had a rapid development in his language and literacy development and three other children could not catch up with their peers in phonics learning. After Mrs Green left in March 2018, Mrs Thomas distributed her role to the two other TAs; Mrs King took the responsibility of doing daily phonics session with 4 children and Mrs Smith took the responsibility of planning and doing Wednesday phonics interventions.

Different from four other TAs, Mrs Corbyn planned adult-led whole class activities for the Wednesday handwriting session by herself. She followed the sequence of teaching letters from the commercial handwriting booklet and planned the materials to be placed on learning tables in line with the handwriting booklet sequence of teaching letters.

5.2.2.3. Teaching Responsibilities of the TAs

Even though the TAs had the autonomy to plan their small group and one-to one adult-led literacy activities they, except Mrs Corbyn, did not have the power of shaping the planning of the whole-class adult-led literacy activities. As is evident in the above, only Mrs Corbyn and Mrs Cooper could teach whole class adult-led literacy activities. During whole class literacy sessions, if Mrs Green and Mrs Smith were in the class they were supporting individuals and small groups of children.

Moreover, as a result of the unspoken rule in the division of labour between the teacher and the TAs, the more expert teaching staff taught the 'higher ability' children in respect to schooled literacy. The children who were grouped as 'lower ability', most of whom had SEND, were learning EAL and were from lower socio-economic family backgrounds or summer-born children) mostly had literacy education from the four TAs. According to Mrs Cooper, the purpose of the TAs in teaching "… is to get the ones, the ones in the middle that sort of, to make sure that they don't fall below." (interview with Mrs Cooper). However, from my observations and analysis of the weekly timetable, it is clear that the focus children of the TAs were not only the ones in the middle but also the ones 'falling behind' from the beginning.

Based on baseline assessments, the teaching and personal care of two children with disabilities were assigned to two TAs, Mrs Cooper and Mrs Green, from the start. Those two children did not attend any daily phonics sessions in the first term and they had individual teaching with their assigned TAs during the morning phonics sessions. All the remaining children had daily phonics sessions together. However, six children whose baseline test results were low in comparison to other children had interventions every week by Mrs Cooper for writing and Mrs Green for phonics.

As the year progressed, the drop-outs from the whole class teaching continued and more children got more TA teaching. In the second term, from the dates 14 December 2017 to 29 March 2018, one child from the focus class, Alice and John and Attila from the other reception class joined Mrs Green' daily phonics session, together with Felix.

In the third term, Mrs Green left her job, which required the teacher to distribute Mrs Green' responsibilities to the other 3 TAs: Mrs Cooper, Mrs King and Mrs Smith. Mrs Cooper was assigned to teach two SEND children, Jasper and Durjoy (a child with autism in the other reception class), Phase 1 children, for 20 minutes every weekday. Mrs King was assigned to teach Phase 3 phonics to four children, John, Alice, Felix, Attila and Jingjing for 20 minutes every weekday. On 16 May 2018, Alice and Attila moved up to Phase 4 phonics group as Mrs Thomas and Mrs King agreed that they were doing better than the other three children and that Mrs King could not move her teaching on because the other three children could not match the learning pace of Alice and Attila. Finally, Mrs Smith was assigned to do phonics intervention on behalf of Mrs Green.

All in all, the rule in the division of labour between the teacher and the TAs was: the more expert teaching staff teach the 'higher ability' children in respect to schooled literacy, determined by the weekly timetable to be formed as above. However, the departure of one subject (Mrs Green), and the children's non-linear literacy development, led to changes in the literacy ability groups which reshaped the division of labour among TAs.

5.2.2.4. Assessment and Screening Responsibilities of the TAs

Among the range of assessment types that I mentioned in identifying the assessment responsibilities of the teacher, the TAs were only responsible for formative assessments. However, the content of the formative assessment and even the colour of the pen while writing down formative feedback were mentioned in the school policy. To explain, the TAs were allowed to give verbal and written feedback that was "in accordance with the lesson objective and the child's own personal learning targets" using a green pen (The Focus School's Staff Handbook).

For instance, in the figure 14 below, the aim of the session was to write 'one-armed robot letters'; m, k, and p, dated 21 March 2018. Following the completion of writing, Mrs Corbyn wrote on Arthur's

page “Good letter formation” and as a next step, “try to make the body of the p sit on a line.” Her feedback was exactly an example of the application of the school rule on feedback policy.

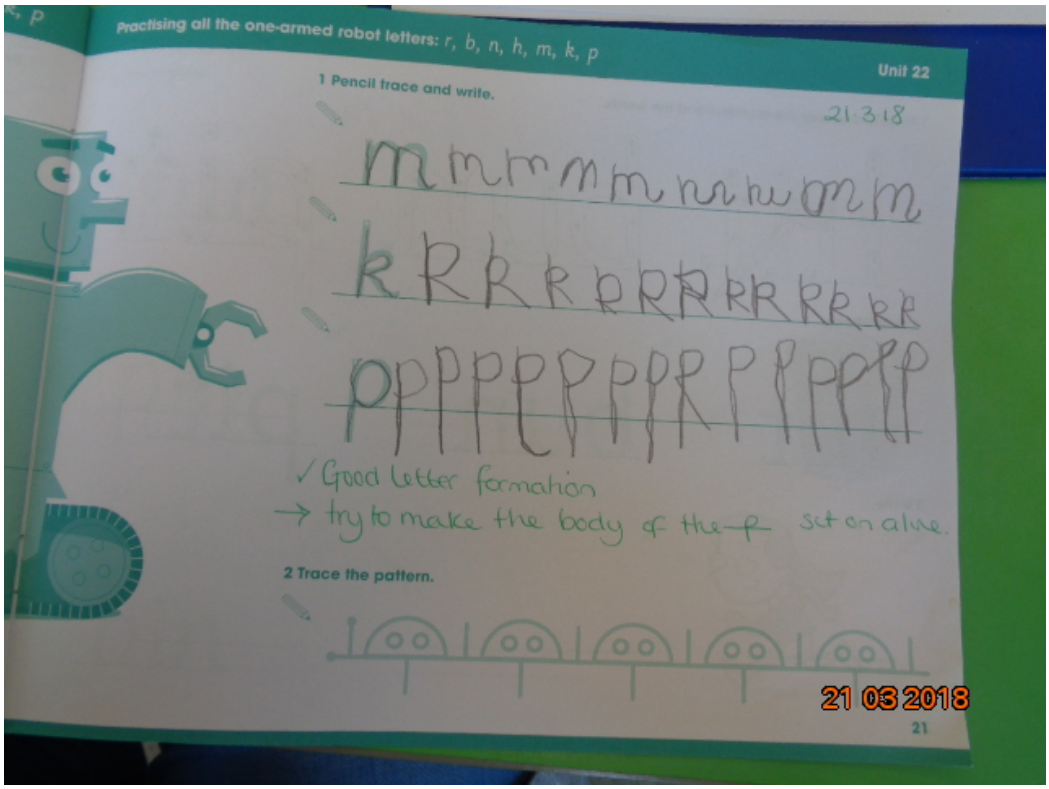


Figure 14. The formative feedback of Mrs Corbyn on the letter formation of Arthur in 21 March 2018

Another example comes from Mrs Cooper leading a small group writing activity which had the learning objective “To write a simple sentence about the Nativity scene” in 7 December 2017, shown in figure 15. Looking at Megan’s sentence, she wrote “Well done, Megan” and suggested Megan should “keep practising correct letter formation.”

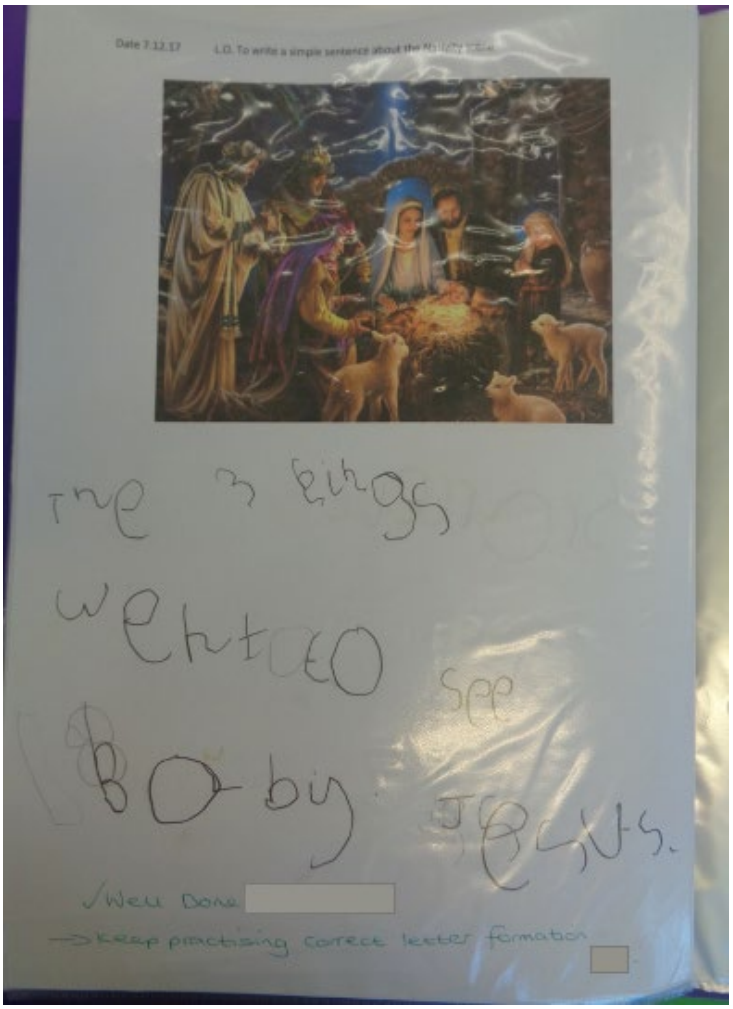


Figure 15. The formative feedback of Mrs Cooper on the letter formation of Megan in 7 December 2017

In considering the place of the TAs in adult-led literacy activities, I found that TAs had the most involvement in teaching aspects of literacy pedagogy. However, their participation in the leadership and planning of the whole class activities (except Mrs Corbyn' handwriting session) and assessment of children were very limited. The TAs were allowed to participate in the literacy pedagogy at a certain level that the teacher identified for each TA (described in greater in section 5.2.1.1).

Compared to all assessment types discussed in the teacher responsibilities, the restricted responsibility of the TAs shows that assessment was perceived as requiring more professionalism and expertise, therefore it should be the responsibility of the teacher instead of the TAs. The teacher could assess, report and decide on children's learning outcome and finally take actions at the class level. In contrast, the place of TAs was limited to giving verbal and written feedback in line with the school feedback policy.

However, looking from the pedagogical perspective, planning, teaching and assessment are complementary to each other. Formative feedback is only one aspect of pedagogical practice. In short, there is a discrepancy between the place of the TAs in teaching literacy and their place in assessing children. The evidence draws me to Gunter and Rayner's point that the division of literacy pedagogy among the teacher and the TAs can be "organisational and not pedagogic" (Gunter and Rayner, 2007, p, 86). Since the teacher gave the authority of applying their own self-directed small or one-to-one literacy activities to the TAs for the children who had the potential of 'falling below' the objectives of the AS, those children received more literacy teaching from the TA than the teacher. And the amount of the time that they spent with the TAs increased in line with the severity of children's failure to reach the 'expected' level of literacy outcome. As a result, the TAs became the main teacher of the children: children with SEND, children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family backgrounds and summer born children.

5.2.3. Cooperation among the subjects: Five TAs and a teacher

The structure of the division of workforce between the teacher and the TAs and then among the TAs indicates that there is generally a top-down and one-way information flow from teachers to TAs and from senior TA to other TAs.

Yet, I cannot completely call the cooperation among the subjects one-way since there were informal discussions where the class teacher asked for the views of the TAs, according to my observations and interviews with the teaching staff. However, the topics of their informal talk were generally limited to academic performance and/or learning outcomes of the children in certain activities. For instance, the teacher said that

> … what happens is we [the teacher and the TAs] just sort of chat. It's both, informally. So, play times, lunch times, things like that. Lots and lots of informal chatting about children: who've done well, this or the writing was terrible today, we need to do some more of that (Interview, class teacher).

Since the object of the AS of the class was related to schooled literacy learning outcomes, tested through objective measures, the children's schooled literacy learning outcomes throughout the year

were always the priority of the teaching staff. I observed that it became natural for the informal discussion between the teacher and the TAs to be focused on this topic.

5.3. Tools and Rules

5.3.1. The tools

In the focus classroom, the types and uses of tools revealed (1) how the tool as a mediator facilitated the interaction among subjects, community and object, (2) which tools were externally received and which of them were created by the subjects, (3) what type of tools subjects preferred and the reasons. In the CHAT framework, tools are categorised as intellectual (e.g., language) and physical (e.g., pencil). Therefore, I divided the tools in a similar way. Below are the intellectual and physical tools for facilitating children's written language development or literacy development that I observed and recorded throughout the data collection period. I categorised intellectual tools based on the functions they served in teaching staff's literacy pedagogy: planning, teaching, assessment and literacy environment. Whilst each area is interrelated and an indispensable part of the literacy pedagogies provided, each aspect requires different tools to be used most of the time.

5.3.1.1. Intellectual Tools for Planning

Looking from a Vygotskian perspective, language is the primary intellectual tool that human beings use in their interactions. Acknowledging the indispensable connection between oral language and written language, I focus on the written aspect of language from a socio-cultural perspective and consider that written language is an intellectual tool being used for various purposes in literate communities.

5.3.1.1.1. Intellectual Tools for The Teacher's Planning: A Challenge to Find the Balance in Pedagogical Practices

The planning process can be divided into four categories: the teacher's general planning, the teacher's specific planning, planning of the literacy environment (corners, tables and walls) and planning of the SEND children's learning and developmental aims.

5.3.1.1.1.1. General Planning: Where Children's Voices are Heard

Both general and specific planning is required to make use of different intellectual or pedagogical tools. As discussed in the division of labour section regarding the teacher, the general planning was mainly done for teaching various societally important topics with the contributing literacy learning to be used for meaningful purposes. However, specific planning was mainly done for teaching schooled literacy by following the systematic synthetic phonics method in particular.

General planning was contributing to children's literacy learning through various topics that are relevant to children's lives. Also, it provided a breadth of experience through different topics, following children's interest, popular topics of the week, and integrating the topics discussed at home into the general planning for the classroom.

The teacher mentioned their first aim of general planning;

> Just to give the children a big, sort of, breadth of experience because children, they're either born lucky or unlucky. The lucky children will have parents that take them to museums and out on visits, and talk to them a lot, and provide a very nurturing environment. And, unlucky children won't get any of that. So, it's our duty in school to provide all those enriching experiences to develop the whole child, not just the phonics and writing etc. So, it's to provide them with a breadth of experience so that they've encountered lots of different things by the time they get into Key Stage 1 (Interview with the teacher).

Their second aim was to find topics that are of current interest to the children. The teacher talked about an example event which enabled her and her colleague to select the topic of sea animals for their general planning.

> **Mrs Thomas:** And, things we think that children would be interested in, like transport.
> **Kubra:** Sea animals, kind of?
> **Mrs Thomas**: Yeah. The sea one was, well, that was, again, in response to… So, [Ted] brought that poster in. You know, because of Blue Planet, the programme. So, watching the Blue Planet programme, and then saying "Well, actually, we're all really interested in this. So, let's do a half term on it (Interview with the teacher).

Also, she gave an example of a recent event, which shaped their topic planning.

> You know, or, they hear when Tim, I can't remember his surname now. He is the first, one of the, not the first, but a British bloke went into space. And, there was lots on the news. So, we watched News Round, so we did lots to do with space. And, you know. So, it's quite a popular thing (Interview with the teacher).

From the field notes, I have also seen the range of different topics that the class engaged in. For instance, to introduce other traditional cultures, they celebrated Diwali in October,2017 and Chinese New Year in February 2017. They learnt about traffic and its rules in April 2018 and air vehicles in May 2018.

However, the teacher made clear that this planning was not an easy process; she commented that "it's quite tricky providing resources and stuff, and getting those altogether." The difficulty was also due to the fact that the literacy activities stated in general plans needed to be in line with the targeted schooled literacy skills in the specific plans.

5.3.1.1.1.2. Specific Planning: Test Performance Driven Tools

Specific plans consisted of targets focusing on children's schooled literacy skills (an example can be seen in the teacher's planning responsibility section). The ultimate aim was to prepare a learning environment that enabled the class to achieve its object. Therefore, different than general plans, the teaching staff had "... a lot more rigorous assessment with the phonics" (interview with the teacher) to oversee how far the children's literacy outcome matched the object of their activity system throughout the year. Some of the necessary mediating tools were actually evident in the object section. In the below table, I categorised all mediating tools that the teacher used in her specific planning. Since I consider that the activity system of the class is dynamic, always evolving and has the potential of creating its own tools as well as applying externally produced tools, I divided the tools into three categories; policy level, school level and class level and listed in table 12.

Policy Level	School Level	Class Level
Statutory: Key Stage 1 Curriculum, The EYFS Framework Non-statutory: Development Matters, Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics,	School Performance Handbook Ofsted Inspection Reports School Improvement Plan Non-negotiable writing rules	Children's literacy learning outcome

Table 12. Mediating tools the teacher used for the specific planning

Policy level documents were external tools; they included statutory and non-statutory documents for the focus class. First of all, although it is not statutory that reception classes should follow the Key Stage 1 literacy standards as they have their own separate framework (the EYFS Framework), I found that the reception teacher was following the KS1 literacy standards and that she was lifting the learning targets to meet their first need, mentioned in the object section. In the planning and naturally in the assessment, the influence of Key Stage 1 literacy standards were therefore visible (see example evidence in the Object section).

Secondly, it is compulsory for the schools under the control of Ofsted to prepare their planning in line with the EYFS Framework (as discussed in the literature). Therefore, the focus class had to follow the framework and support children to reach 17 early learning goals, including writing and reading ELGs at least to the 'expected' level.

However, during planning, the non-statutory guidance *Development Matters* document was more specific and practical for teachers' use. The document provided a guideline for teaching staff to learn what a child at the certain age group could do and how they could support children's literacy development. The document aligns with the EYFS framework in that the ultimate learning goals for 40-60+ months old children are written to be the ELGs in the EYFS. The teacher explained that the guidelines showed her the route for the planning of the learning tables, baseline assessment and the ability-based grouping of children.

Particularly for designing the learning tables, the teacher said:

> So, well, it's to do with 'Development Matters'. So, we have a literacy activity, maths activity, small world, so you're looking at being imaginative, personal-social, communication, language, fine motor, so Play-Doh or something like that…

Moreover, to decide the children's entrance level of development and then to measure children's progress throughout the year, the guidelines provide a detailed step by step description of learning expectations.

> We did our own baseline, sort of, a little assessment book, just so we can measure progress. And a lot of the statements in the development matters are very specific. … And then, from the baseline, then, we can measure progress through the rest of the year and, yeah, decide who needs interventions to catch up.

However, the guideline is not specific in the planning and the assessment of children's literacy development, especially via systematic synthetic phonics as a teaching method. To fill that gap, the Department for Education published non-statutory guidelines in 2007, named *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics*, particularly on schooled literacy teaching. The document was especially useful for the teaching staff, in that the guidelines for teaching phonics started from birth to the end of Year 2 (Key Stage 1) and the teaching staff could provide literacy activities for the children who were already at 'exceeding' level in reading and writing during the Reception year.

School level documents included the school performance handbook, Ofsted inspection reports, school improvement plans and non-negotiable writing rules. The order of the documents had a rationale of reference: each document's content is mainly decided by the previously mentioned document.

The school performance handbook was composed of schools' performance in the previous year in the national high-stakes assessments. Each school annually received a school performance handbook published by the county council. The school attainment results were compared with the results at a local and national level. Based on the national level attainment results, schools could see where they stood in different learning areas. For each learning area, schools had their own percentage and/or the number of children achieving the expected standard of learning goals at reception year and other students' results from the Phonics Screening Check, the Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs. The teaching staff

could evaluate their scores by looking at the attainment in relation to age-related expectations (ARE). ARE scores are gained by calculating the attainment level of children at the national level.

The school performance handbook was used by the Ofsted Inspector in evaluating the schools' learning and attainment across levels. It was not the only resource that Ofsted used for judging school quality. However, it had crucial importance as the Ofsted inspectors' reports contained overall and specific judgement regarding the quality of the school; this constituted another tool that shaped pedagogy in the focus class. As a response to the school's test results in comparison to national results and the specific requirement of the Ofsted inspectors regarding the school provision and literacy pedagogy in particular, the school created its own document or tool, named the 'School Improvement Plan'. This was designed to effectively manage their point by point planning in the process of improving the school's literacy standards across all levels.

In the improvement plan, improving writing standards across all levels was the priority of the school. Therefore, the teaching staff across all years, led by the writing coordinator, created their own writing standards some of which were designated as non-negotiables. Each staff member had to consider the writing standards of the school, insofar as they were specified for the reception year. Class level documents were also related to the learning outcomes of children. Based on children's performance in activities that included literacy activities, the teacher wrote her specific plans, to do more activities having the same learning target or to move to more advanced learning targets as the year progressed.

All in all, the comparison to national test scores at the school level led to levels in the specific planning that were higher than the 'expected' level. Children at the FS reaching the 'expected' level were not considered as being as successful as the percentage of children achieving the 'exceeding' level at the EYFS was higher than the focus school's percentage.

5.3.1.1.1.3. Planning of the Physical Environment: A Tool for Contextually Relevant Literacy Learning Opportunities

The organisation of the inside physical environments was another type of tool that was part of the targets of the general and specific planning. The physical environment and the materials designed to promote literacy development are especially important to highlight because, first, the learning centres and learning tables enabled children to use literacy for functional purposes in their life and, second, children had the opportunity of using both whole language approach and systematic synthetic phonics approach in their writing and reading attempts.

The learning centres inside the class consisted of six centres or corners: a role-play area, writing centre, book corner, construction area, sand sink and computer table. The first three areas were particularly used to promote child-led activities that could involve reading and writing with their peers or by themselves. Therefore, I will discuss only those three tables in detail below.

The role play centre (Figure 16 and 17) was regularly decorated in line with the topic in the general plan. The corner was intended to facilitate not only children's literacy development but also their language development, conceptual knowledge about the topic, and personal, social and emotional development. For instance, in the table below, the teaching staff designed the corner around the topic of caterpillars (inspired by the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar). The corner turned out to be a café, called Caterpillar Café. Some children had the role of cafe staff and some of them became the customers. Some of the words, such as 'plums' and 'pears' on the menu were the words that the teaching staff aimed to teach children using phonics knowledge. However, some of them, such as 'chocolate' and 'strawberries' were not at the level that children could write with their phonics knowledge. The materials in the corner were not completely open-ended, in that the children's role play was related to café staff and customers. Yet, the corner provided an enjoyable and contextually relevant space, where children could use both whole language approaches and phonics approaches.



Figure 16. The role play centre in the focus class



Figure 17. A menu in the café, inspired from the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Another area where the desired activity was only writing, with or without peers, was the writing centre (Figure 18). It comprised of different pens, pencils and coloured papers or pieces of cards remaining from the previous activities. So, the materials were more open-ended than the ones in the role-play area in that the children could do anything imaginatively with the resources provided. The walls of the corner were full of words and sentences, placed to teach children the name of stationery items and forms of literacy and the possible activities children might want to do there.



Figure 18. The walls of the writing centre

As with the role-play centre, children in this corner could engage in literacy practices related to both literacy teaching approaches. In this area, I observed the children using literacy for functional purposes, such as writing celebration or invitation letters for their friends or producing drawings to be given to their loved ones.

The book corner or bookshelf was designed only for reading purposes, as shown in Figure 19. In the mornings before registration time and during small group activity times, children were allowed to read books or pretend to read books. The books were mostly storybooks; the children could not read all the words in them with their phonics knowledge. Therefore, the children had the opportunity of reading via whole language approach by looking at the familiar books that the teaching staff or their parents had read to them previously or guessing the words looking at the pictures.



Figure 19. The book corner in the focus class

Learning tables constituted another type of space for children to do literacy-related activities during small group activity times. Different from learning centres, where only the teacher planned it, the senior TA, Mrs Corbyn had the responsibility of planning the materials to put on the learning tables on Wednesday mornings (the time period the teacher had for Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA)). In the remaining days of the week, the teacher's planning for the learning tables was applied.

However, this created an unbalanced learning opportunity for the children in that on Wednesday mornings, the materials were generally paper-pencil based activities and the activities were mostly about drawing on dotted lines or repeatedly writing the same letters/words (see table 13). In the remaining times of the week, children had more variety in the type of materials, some of which were imaginative, or involved playing with playdough or doing maths activities.

	Small group activity table (a)	Playdough table	Small world play table	Maths table	Intervention group table (b)
16 November 2017	Literacy: Writing activity with the teacher: 'Writing this is my bed.' Sentence	Playdough with cutters and rolling pin	Fairy toys	-	Art: Doing sponge printing looking at the arts of Van Gough
21 December 2017	Art: Making a hat using coloured papers, scissors with Mrs Cooper	Christmas pictures and playdough to decorate on them	Decorating cards with small penguin, Santa Claus and tree pictures	-	Art: Cutting the pictures on the old Christmas cards and decorating their own Christmas cards with Mrs Green
25 January 2018	Art: Doing snowflake collage	Playdough with snowflake cutters	Wooden blocks	-	Art: Snowflake biscuit decoration
5 February 2018	Art and literacy: Making Chinese fortune cookies with coloured papers and writing one school rule inside it.	Picking beans using Chinese chopsticks	Art: Making a dragon picture with hand printing	Ordering dragon numbers from 1 to 13	Literacy: Reading their reading books under the teacher's guidance
29 March 2018	Literacy: Interim exam on Phase 4 with the teacher	Playdough mats on Easter and playdough	Farmer toys; trolley, farmers, farm animals, plants	Jigsaws	-
19 April 2018	Literacy: Reading their reading book with Mrs Thomas and Mrs Cooper	Playdough mats on vehicles and playdough	Wooden blocks and small wooden cars	Number flashcards and small race toys	Colouring papers and colouring pencils
3 May 2018	Literacy: Writing two sentences about "Train Ride"	Colouring sheets and colouring pencils	Farm animals	Bingo game with dice and small circles	Art: Doing box modelling to make a train using boxes, papers, scissors and rope
7 June 2018	Literacy: Writing	Playdough mats on caterpillars and playdough	Butter flies, plants and story books about butterflies	-	Art and Literacy: The hungry caterpillar paper chain with the written instruction nearby to learn its application

Table 13. Learning tables on Thursday mornings

	Small group activity table (a)	Playdough table	Small world play table	Maths table	Intervention group table (b)
15 November 2017	Handwriting booklet: tracing over triangles with Mrs Corbyn	Playdough with cutters and rolling pin	Fairy toys (Elf toys)	Cutting zigzag lines with scissors	Triangle and rectangle Legos to draw on shapes over a paper covered table
13 December 2017	Handwriting booklet: racing over waves, circles and triangles with Mrs Corbyn	Playdough, cutters, roller pins, Christmas mats	Worksheets for tracing over dotted lines	-	Worksheets for tracing over wavy patterns, board pen
24 January 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing y and j letters with Mrs Corbyn	Letter formation worksheets: tracing over y and j letters	Writing y and j on a sheet using board pen	-	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over j and y letters
7 February 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing r letter with Mrs Corbyn	Writing r, b, n, h letters on papers covered with plastic punched pocket, using board pen	Worksheets for tracing over dotted wavy lines and writing n letters	Worksheets for tracing over dotted triangle, wave, circle, and rectangle shapes, using pencils	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over r letter
14 March 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing k and p letters with Mrs Corbyn	Worksheets for tracing over dotted lines	Handwriting booklet: writing k and p letters without adult guidance, named independent writers	Doing letter formation on white board with board pen, looking at h, p, k, n flash cards	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over k, d, p letters
25 April 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing a and d letters with Mrs Corbyn	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over d and a letters, and writing d and a on a line	Handwriting booklet: writing a and d letters without adult guidance, named independent writers	-	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over d and a letters
9 May 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing g and q letters with Mrs Corbyn	Worksheets for tracing over gloved shaped dotted lines	Handwriting booklet: writing a and d letters without adult guidance, named independent writers	Worksheets for tracing over wavy, straight dotted lines	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over g and q letters
13 June 2018	Handwriting booklet: writing v, w and x letters with Mrs Corbyn	Worksheets for writing tricky word; have	Handwriting booklet: writing v, w and x letters without adult guidance, named independent writers	Writing worksheet on doing v letter formation and writing very, when, vowel words	Letter formation worksheet: tracing over w letter

Table 14. Learning Tables on Wednesday Mornings

This lack of balance between Wednesday mornings and the other days of the week led the children to have some adaptation issues. On Wednesday mornings, the children were not allowed to use the

writing centre, where they could produce their own imaginative and independent writing. The nature of the materials on Wednesday mornings restricted the variety of the children's writing. The list of tables on one Thursday and one Wednesday morning each month illustrates how the variety in the materials narrowed. Further, looking at table 14, I can deduce that the children on Wednesday mornings could play with playdough only in November and December, 2017. As the academic year progressed, the restriction in the diversity became greater. However, in considering the activity system as a whole, Wednesday mornings were strongly contributing to reaching the object. The children could form neater letters as they practised writing the same letters many times on letter formation sheets.

5.3.1.1.1.4.Planning of the SEND Children's Learning and Developmental Aims: Different Yet Similar Tools

The specific and long term planning for the children with SEND had the same object, but used a more detailed and specific tool designed specifically for children with SEND. According to the SENCO, the early learning goals in the EYFS were very broad statements for the two children with autism, whose developmental and learning improvements were small yet recognisable by the teacher. To evaluate and set specific targets for those children with SEND, the teacher used a commercial assessment tool, called B Squared. For the early years children the company had created an Early Steps framework, whose learning goals start from children's birth to the 'exceeding' level of ELGs in seven areas, one of which is literacy (B-squared Ltd., 2018). Mrs Cooper explained this as follows:

> Kubra: Are you going to fill, I mean, you and Mrs Thomas, going to fill in the EYFS Profile for Felix and Jasper?
> Mrs Cooper: No, because they, they've got an Early Steps Progress Chart.
> Kubra: Which is just for children with special needs?
> Mrs Cooper: Yeah, yeah. It is only for Jasper and Felix and Durjoy, obviously. But, it starts at birth to 11, which we can't do because obviously we don't know what they could do as babies. But then, sort of like, 18-20 months, we've ticked all these, because that's what they can do. They have to reach 80% almost to move on to do next stage.

Since the tool's ultimate learning goals and the specific statements indicating that level of development were written as the indicators of the 'exceeding' level of ELGs, the staff only used the

Early Steps framework. Therefore, we can consider that the commercial tool for planning and assessment was a more specifically written version of the EYFS ELGs for the children with SEND.

However, it is important to note that the teacher's responsibility was only to set learning goals in the long term and hand it in to the TAs to do day-to-day activities with the children with SEND. Thus, I will explain the daily activities planning in the following sections on the tools used by TAs in their planning.

5.3.1.2. The TAs' Tools for the Planning of Adult-Led Small Groups and One-To-One Literacy Activities: Limited Independence

The primary tool of the TAs' planning was generally based on the previous targets that the teacher taught to the class. The specific and general plans of the teacher were always hanging on the wall of the class, where all the TAs could see them. The TAs should not teach any phonics that had not already been taught by the teacher. Also, the TAs were expected to prepare their planning to reach the learning and developmental targets for the children with SEND by the teacher (as mentioned before).

However, the learning targets for children deemed 'lower ability' would not have been just the previous week's specific planning by the teacher. The scope of their learning target could change vastly. Therefore, they always needed to check the learning outcome of children from their previous small group or one-to-one literacy activities.

Mrs Smith explained that

> I'm building each time on things we'd perhaps looked at previously (Interview with Mrs Smith).

And similarly Mrs Cooper stated that in her writing intervention group, she started from simple to complex learning targets, as below:

> I do write the intervention every week. We started off with letter formation. Now, we've moved on to sentences to include capital letters, finger spaces, and full stops. They're still finding it hard. Any that, any that can do it, they can do a simple sentence, it's only a short sentence including tricky words. Any that can do it, we try and extend sentences to make them longer. But, I always look back to see if there's any words that they're having trouble spelling

> or they can't sound out or… So, really the planning is just looking back at what they did last time, and then adapting it for the next time (Interview with Mrs Cooper).

Thirdly, in our informal talk, Mrs Cooper said to me that she was using the *Letters and Sounds* document, which could also guide them to the groups of sounds belong to the phases. It was an important reference book for the TAs in that they could teach phonics to the children deemed as 'lower ability' who were grouped based on their phonics level, by the teacher in the third term.

All in all, the planning tools of the TAs were mainly targeted on improving the schooled literacy skills of the children. Therefore, the planning process was mainly based on following the specific planning targets of the teacher and children's learning outcomes from past literacy activities.

5.3.1.3. Intellectual Tools for Teaching

5.3.1.3.1. Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Teaching as a Compulsory Tool of Teaching Schooled Literacy

The school, like other schools across the country, had to obey the government's recommendation of using the SSP approach in their literacy pedagogies (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.3.3 for more detailed discussion about SSP). The school's English policy document stated:

> "From F2 [Foundation 2, referring to reception year] to Yr 3 [Year 3] children follow the phases of Letters and Sounds. Differentiated phonics sessions take place five times a week. These discrete twenty minute sessions are in line with Synthetic Phonics, as recommended by the Rose Review." (School Policy of English Lesson).

The phonics teaching in whole, small group and individualised literacy activities generally involved the application of the instruction suggested in the *Letters and Sounds* document. The phonemes were discretely taught from simple to complex; teaching from individual sounds to split diagraphs and from segmenting, blending and spelling one syllable words to two-syllable words. Since some words, namely high frequency words, in English are not phonetically plausible (e.g., what and she) those words were to be learned without using phonics knowledge. The teaching staff also followed the list of sight words in the document.

However, the teacher explained that they also made use of a commercial phonics scheme called Jolly Phonics. She said that the scheme helped them teach the children sounds with their specific actions at the beginning of the year. When children started to say the sounds automatically, they then stopped using it. Example sounds with their actions would be making one arm like a snake shape and moving it while pronouncing the /s/ sound and pretending to beat a drum while saying the sound, /d/ repeatedly.

Particularly for different graphemes representing the same sound, the teacher taught them successively in her whole class phonics sessions. For instance, on 15 February 2018, the teacher introduced the '-ay' digraph, and the day before, she introduced the '-ai' digraph. She explained that '-ai' digraph generally comes in the middle of a word, such as rain and pain. On the contrary, '-ay' digraph comes at the end of a word, such as ray and may.

Additionally, the teaching staff made use of specific rhymes and actions in teaching some high-frequency words, which could eventually help children memorise those words. For instance, children learnt to memorise the word 'was' with the phrase whales and seals. The initials of the phrase make the 'was' word. Another example was the word, 'what', the teacher said to children that the 'what' word has a secret word, 'hat'. While saying the word, she pronounced the word as /w/, hat and put her one hand over her head, representing the place of a hat.

The requirement of teaching sounds phase by phase led the teaching staff to promote and support children in writing all the words only with the sounds they learnt until that time. A good example would be figure 20; Archie's sentence writing with Mrs Thomas in an adult-led small group literacy activity, dated 8 February 2018.

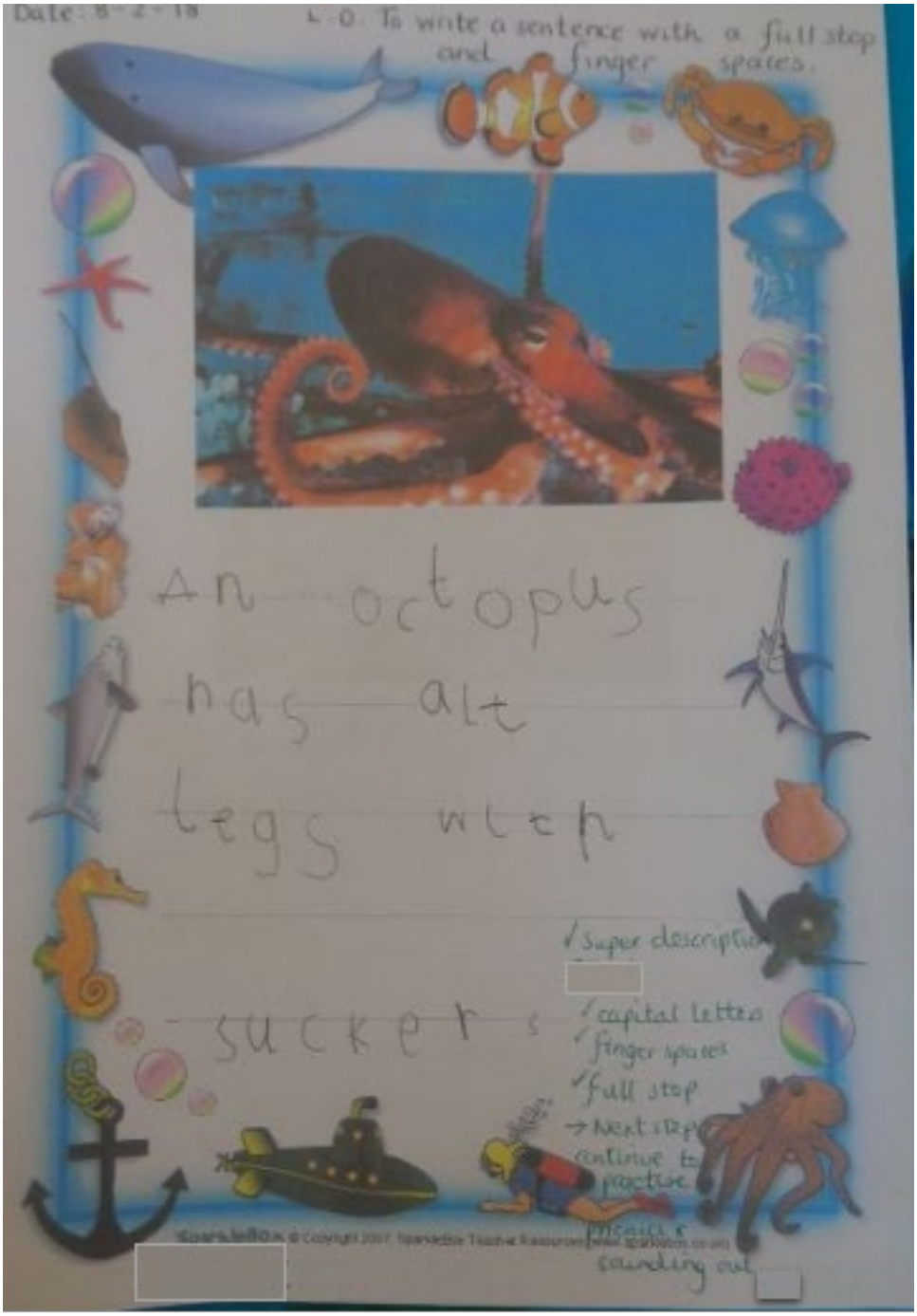


Figure 20. Archie's sentence writing in a small group adult-led activity

After Archie left the table, Mrs Thomas explained that the 'ait' word is correct because it is phonetically plausible. Children wrote the word eight with the sounds they knew so far. She continued explaining that children will learn to write the 'eight' in Year 1 (8 February 2018, field notes).

In another adult-led small group literacy activity with Mrs Thomas

> Freddie wrote the word: 'yelloa' for yellow, Mrs Thomas did not correct him and explained to me that since the /ow/ digraph is a Phase 5 sound that they did not learn yet and 'oa' and 'ow' digraphs represent same sound, she accepts his writing as correct. (22 March, field notes).

However, when children wrote a word incorrectly and the word involved the sounds they already knew, the teaching staff corrected them.

Mrs Thomas considered that teaching phonemes phase by phase created a challenge for them in this sense. It was also a challenge for the children. I noted literacy events where the children were unsure which of the graphemes representing the same sound should be written. It was particularly confusing for the children when writing and reading high frequency words, as shown in the example below:

> Mrs Cooper wanted Bonnie to write the word 'he'. Bonnie wrote it as 'hee' by applying her phonetic knowledge. Mrs Cooper sounded out 'e' letter, doing its specific action. Then, Bonnie corrected herself and only wrote the 'e' word after 'h' to write 'he' word. (6 June 2018, field notes)

Overall, there was a heavy emphasis on the children's ability to memorise due to the detailed procedure of the SSP. The SSP method as a tool created a learning atmosphere where literacy learning required children to memorise the sounds with their actions, to differentiate the graphemes representing the same sound, the place where the graphemes generally come and to memorise the high frequency words as a whole.

5.3.1.3.2.The Three Forms of Adult-Led Literacy Activities

The three types of adult-led activities, whole class, small group and individualised literacy activities could all be divided into phonics and literacy sessions. I argue that although in all type of activities, children had to use and practise their phonics knowledge, the use of literacy for a purpose was more visible in small group literacy activities.

5.3.1.3.2.1. Adult-Led Whole Class Literacy Activities

At the beginning of the year, there were whole class phonics sessions every weekday, lasting at least 20 minutes. As noted above, the two children with autism did not join the whole class phonics sessions

from the beginning of the year but they instead had individualised phonics sessions by the TAs; Mrs Cooper for Jasper's teaching and Mrs Green for Felix's teaching. However, as I mentioned in the teaching responsibilities section on the TAs, some children could not match the pace of the teacher's whole class phonics session, which created tension in the system, since it could lead the subjects not to reach their objects eventually. As a solution, in December the teacher moved those 'low ability' children to Mrs Green' individualised phonics session. The subjects were fortunate that Felix had a rapid improvement in language and literacy areas of development approaching December, 2017. Mrs Green's individualised phonics session turned into a small group phonics sessions with the 'lower ability' children, who were learning EAL, Summer-born, had SEND or were from a low SES family. The drop-outs continued in the beginning of the summer term. This time, two Reception classes merged and divided into four phonics groups; Phase 5, Phase 4, Phase 3 and Phase 1 groups. Phase 5 was Mrs Thomas's whole-class group; Phase 4 was the other Reception teacher's whole-class group; Phase 3 was Mrs King's small group and Phase 1 was Mrs Cooper's group with Jasper and the other child with autism from the other Reception class.

The structure and the content of the sessions did not change much across whole, small and one-to-one phonics sessions and across teaching staff. Through analysing my field notes, I created the list below. I wrote the list chronologically: the academic year started from sound level practices, then word level reading and writing and then sentence level reading and writing was included. Throughout the year, the teaching staff introduced new sounds to be learnt. In the beginning of the year, the phonics sessions began with

- Sounding out phonemes with their specific actions,
- Sounding out the first sound of small toys or pictures of objects,

Then, it continued with;

- Writing words that include the target phoneme of the day or the sounds learnt so far,
- Finding and saying words that start with the sound the teacher mentioned,
- Counting the sounds forming the target words,
- Finding and pointing to the graphemes that the teacher wanted them to look at on the phoneme phase mats,
- Blending and segmenting real and non-real words,
- Writing and reading high frequency words,
- Matching pictures with their names.

Finally, it ended with;

- Writing simple sentences that start with a capital letter, involve finger spaces and full-stop/question mark/exclamation point.

I did not observe Phase 3 group writing sentences in their phonics sessions as those children were judged by the teacher as not ready for sentence writing. Similarly, I did not observe Phase 1 children writing words in their sessions either.

Each 20 minutes-long session involved several phonics activities, as can be seen from the field notes below of a whole class phonics session with Mrs Thomas:

> In 20 December 2017, the aim of the whole class phonics session was to make all children excluding Alice, Felix and Jasper practice previously learned sounds and spelling words that include the 'ar' digraph. Mrs Thomas showed the letter, o and a picture that starts with the o sound and requested them to do the actions of that sound. Then, she wanted children to raise their hands, if they know a word beginning with o sound. After doing the same activity with the 'l, m, n, g, ar', she moved to the activity of handwriting words. She showed the picture of the three target words each of them had the 'ar' diagraph in it and wanted children to write the focus word. (20 December 2017, field notes)

Other than phonics sessions, whole class literacy sessions also involved teaching staff reading stories from books, explaining and demonstrating the upcoming small-group literacy activity and the words/sentences to be written by the children, and teaching letter formation with Mrs Corbyn (on Wednesday mornings only). The aim of Mrs Corbyn's whole class session was to show children how to form letters in the direction they wanted them to write in; her small-group letter formation session happened just after this. So, she prepared children for the small-group handwriting activity. An example of this instruction about letters would be writing the letter 'k'. She told the class how to write 'k' as 'Down, down, half up, round and a kick' and for the 'c' letter, she said 'round, down, round and up,' writing the letters on the white board in the meantime.

5.3.1.3.2.2. Adult-led Small Group Literacy Activities

In contrast, adult-led small group writing sessions, except small group phonics and writing interventions and Mrs Corbyn's Wednesday handwriting sessions, enabled children to use literacy for a purpose. Children had the opportunity of encountering literacy in a more contextually relevant

situation. Yet, they were still required to use their phonics knowledge generally and they did not have freedom to write their own creative sentences. This was because the teaching staff wanted children to practise their phonics knowledge and they wanted to assess children's performance against an objective learning goal specified for each activity as written on the top of each work sheet. Eventually, the assessment results would inform teaching staff about how close children's literacy performance was to the object of their activity system. For example,

> In 13 June 2018, the topic of the week was planting. The TA told me that they discussed planting the day before my observation day. The children were supposed to write the steps of planting a seed. Four to six children sat around a table with Mrs Cooper. Each child had a phonics mat where children can see the graphemes with their representing picture and a word mat having words related to planting with their pictures, such as a seed word with a seed picture nearby. Below is an example of Olivia's writing. Looking at Olivia's writing performance, Mrs Cooper wrote that 'Olivia wrote the instructions by herself, Well done.' (13 June 2018, field notes)

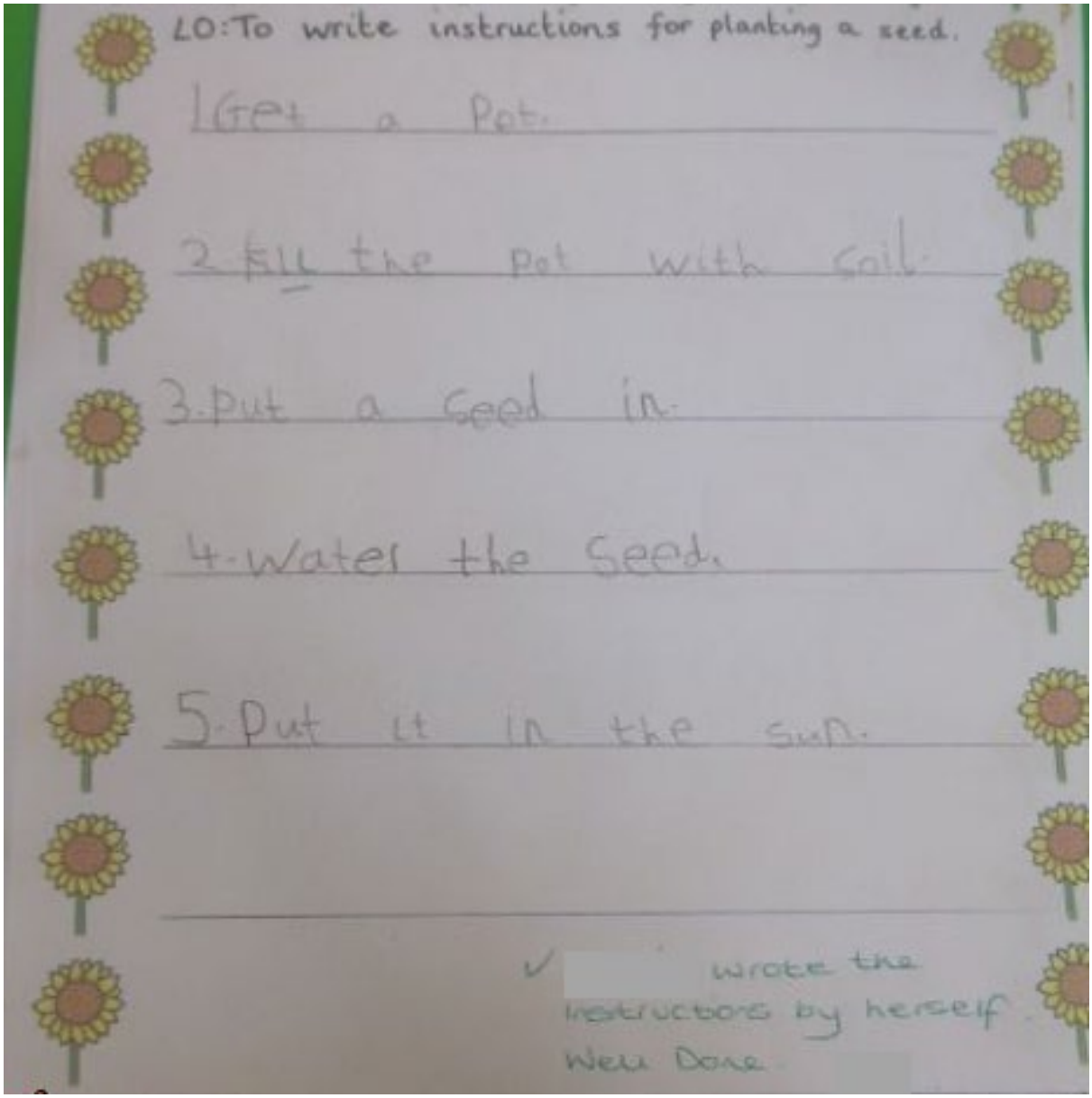


Figure 21. A child's writing example of adult-led small-group literacy practice.

The writing activity taught children that literacy can be used as a memory-aid. In addition children practised their phonic knowledge in writing the instructions. However, Mrs Cooper's feedback on the writing example was on Olivia's ability to write the work independently. The valued aspect of assessment was writing ability rather than the child's interest in planting, her interaction with other children (if any), or her knowledge/questions about the topic of planting.

In contrast to the adult-led small group literacy activities, adult-led phonics and writing interventions exactly same as adult-led whole class phonics sessions, where the correct way of writing letters and

learning individual sounds were the teaching staff's priority. This can be illustrated with my observation of Mrs Green's small group phonics intervention lesson on 31 January 2018.

> There were six children sitting around a table. The TA gave out a Phase 3 mat for each child. She pronounced certain phonemes and wanted the child to pinpoint the grapheme of the sound she said. Those graphemes were '-ar', '-ow', '-sh', '-ng', '-ch'. As a second activity, each child had to read the following words, jar, far, dark, go, me, I, the, no, star, cow, crown, written on a cup. The last activity was reading some high frequency words in turn; me, we, are, to, you, was, he, they, is be, no, go, it, I, the and at. (31 January 2018, field notes)

Similarly, adult-led small-group handwriting activities targeted children to do letter formations and write words repeatedly. Below is another example from Mrs Corbyn's small group handwriting session from 25 April 2018.

> The focus letters of the lesson were writing 'd' and 'a' letters in the way she taught them. The children needed to write the letters, 'a' and 'd' neatly, as shown below. (25 April 2018, field notes)

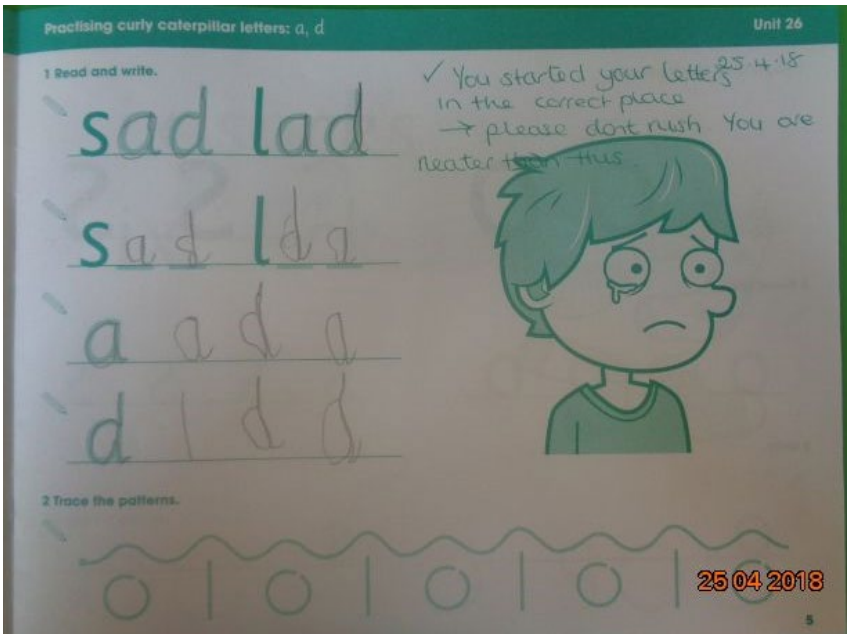


Figure 22. A child's handwriting of a and d letters in Mrs Corbyn' small group literacy activity.

5.3.1.3.2.3. One-to-One or Indivualised Adult-led Literacy Activities

Individualised literacy activities can be divided into phonics for the two children with autism and reading their 'reading books' as literacy sessions for all children. The phonics lessons were about making the two children with autism (Jasper and Durjoy) aware of different sounds and improving their ability to differentiate environmental sounds, such as the sounds of different animals.

Listening to children's reading was the second one-to-one literacy session that all teaching staff tried to do throughout the week. The teacher told me that they strove to listen to children's reading at least once a week. The content of the books was in line with the phonics phases that they were working at (there is more discussions of the book bands or 'reading books' in Section 5.3.4.4.2). Therefore, the main aim of the activity was to practise reading phonetically.

5.3.1.3.3. The Patterns in the Interactions between Teaching Staff and the Children: A Recitational Script

The pattern in the interaction of teaching staff and children under the compulsory SSP approach of teaching is important in understanding the nature of interaction between teaching staff-children and children-children. Since the class as a community formed its own patterns of interaction in class talk, which a researcher can only know by observation (Gutierrez,1993), I made use of the field notes for this part of the analysis. From the three patterns of interactions proposed by Gutierrez (1993), I found that the interactions of the class community in adult-led activities followed a recitational script, as shown the figure 23. Thus, I offer this frame to elucidate how the teaching staff communicated in their teaching process.

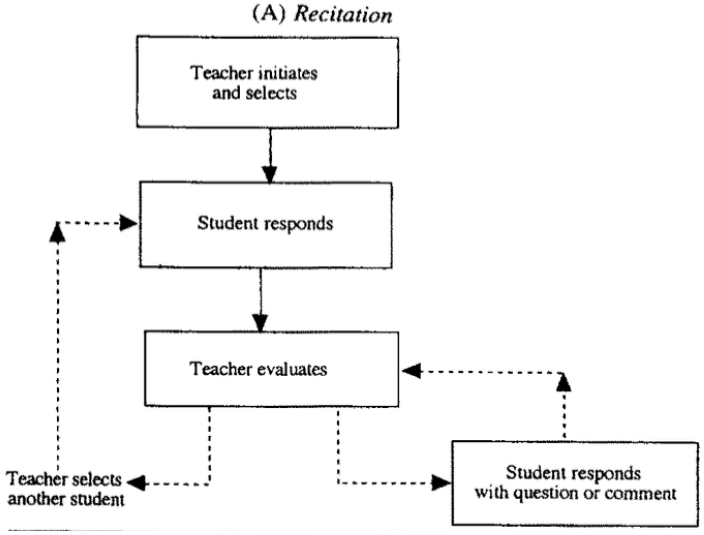


Figure 23. The frame of recitational interaction between children and teaching staff, adopted from Gutierrez (1993).

The recitational interaction of the teaching staff can be explained using an example from my fieldnotes.

> The context: There were three TAs in the class; Mrs Cooper, Mrs Smith and Mrs Green. Each was doing separate small-group activities with four to eight children; Mrs Green was the only one doing a phonics activity. The participating six children were Alice, Oliver, Esme, Attila, John and Edward, who were identified as intervention group children by Mrs Thomas.
>
> The activity: The learning aims were to practise reading CV and CVC words written on a snake shaped cartoon, as shown the figure 24. The six children were sitting around a rectangular shaped table with the TA. To read a word, the children needed to roll a dice and read the number on the top and find the word with the found number. The children had to read it individually, when their turn came. Alice rolled 1 and the word that she had to read was 'it'.
>
> Mrs Green: One step, Alice. (showing the box that the word 'it' is written.)
> Alice: /t/.
> Mrs Green: You know the sound (referring to /ɪ/ sound). /ɪ/, /t/ (sounding them out separately.) What is the word?
> Alice: /ɪ/, /t/. (repeating the sounds at the same time with Mrs Green).
> Mrs Green: Right, you listen to Mrs Green and hear what word it is, /ɪ/, /t/, 'it' (blending the sounds slowly).
> Alice: 'sit'.
> Mrs Green: That was John's word. 'It', 'it', you say it, Alice.
> Alice: 'it'.
>
> Then, she turned to the next question, waiting for her rolling the dice and the activity continued in the same structure of conversation (17 January 2018, fieldnotes).



Figure 24. The snaked-shaped learning mat, used during the small group literacy activity

In such interactions, the teaching staff had the role of directing the activity. They had the power of deciding the words to read and write. Their role was to guide activities in a way that children could spell or read the 'right' word. All children, regardless of their personal needs and interests, had to achieve reading and writing of the same target word.

Children in such a learning environment participated in the activity through responding to the questions of the teaching staff, as it was the appropriate way of engagement. They could perceive literacy as segmenting and blending the words correctly. The impression about literacy learning would be that learning is individual, children should not talk to each or the children sitting near cannot be available to help or guide each other. Learning from peers was not promoted during the activities. The image that the teacher drew in children's minds was that during the activity, the teacher would talk to them individually if they read or wrote wrongly, or right or if they raised their hands. There would not be any other type of conversation they could engage in.

Even though the class community could create its own pattern of interaction, the teaching staff had to follow policy and school level rules in literacy pedagogy. The SSP teaching method, which is a compulsory method of teaching, particularly had a specific force in encouraging adult-led activities to be recitational. This is because the method requires teaching staff to be sure that children can sound out and write previously learnt individual letters and graphemes. Emphasis on learning sounds individually directs the teaching staff to ask and assess children's knowledge individually.

5.3.2. Intellectual tools for objective assessment of schooled literacy skills

5.3.2.1. The Structure of the Tools for Three Types of Assessment

The school also had the freedom of choosing/creating their own assessment tools, as mentioned in below passage from the School Improvement Plan 2017-2018.

> It is up to schools to define their measures of good and very good progress … [and] choose assessment systems which can show incremental progression…. [However], whichever system schools use, they should be able to answer the questions:

- *What proportions of pupils are on track to **reach** and what proportions are on track to **exceed age related expectations** in each year group.*
- *What proportion of pupils within cohort as a whole, and by key age groups (above), are making **good** and **very good progress**, in the separate subjects of reading, writing and mathematics.*
- *How are prior attainment gaps evident at KS1/baseline narrowing over the key stage (and since the start of the year), particularly for PP [pupil premium] pupils compared to other (non PP) pupils?*
  - *How does their attainment compare with non PP pupils nationally and are attainment gaps narrowing between successive cohorts?*

(School Improvement Plan 2017-2018, italics and bold words original).

The tool for baseline assessment was formed by the teacher due to the reasons I discussed earlier (see Section 5.2.1.4). The pages that were related to learning children's current states of literacy development are shown in Figure 25. The structure of the booklet was similar to a check list, as the teacher explains:

> Well, we have a little booklet, and it's got certain bits of information that are the required for the Development Matters. And we just worked away through it. It's got like phonics, maths, shapes etc. And then, we tick off, if they can do this. (Interview with Classroom Teacher)

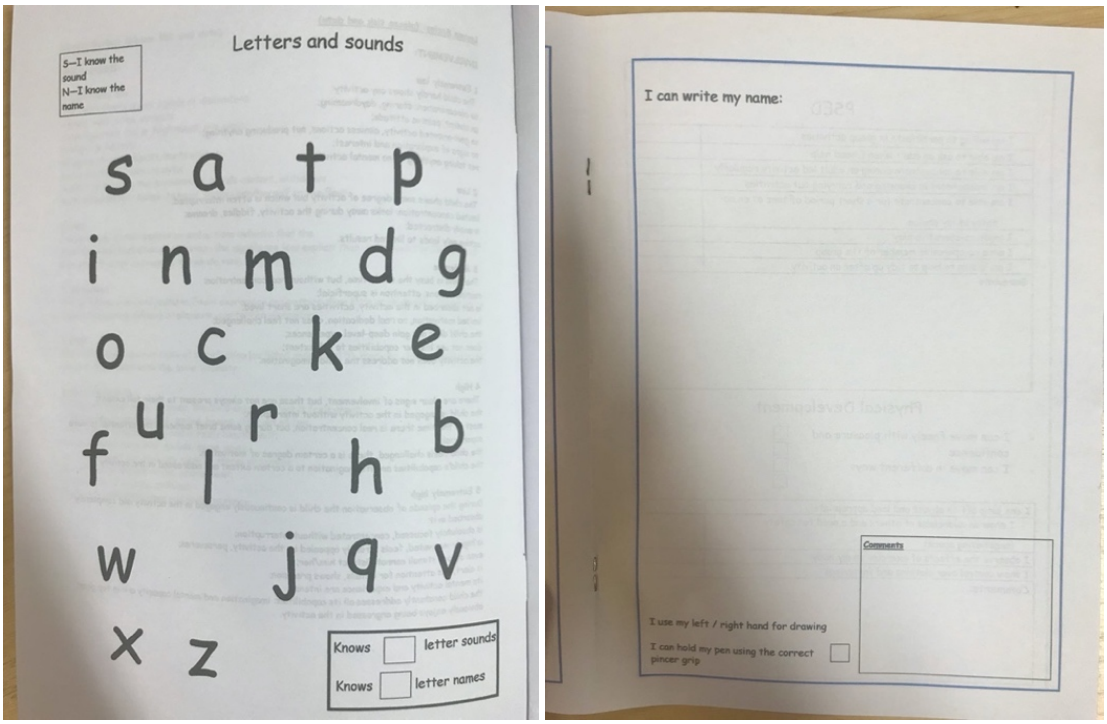


Figure 25. Two pages in the booklet of baseline assessment related to literacy development

On the left page, the teacher asked the sounds and the names of the sounds and on the other page, she wanted to learn which of their hands they write with and how they hold the pencil. According to children's responses, the teacher ranked children based on the age scale provided by the 'Development Matters' document (Early Education, 2012).

The formative or ongoing assessment was to observe, guide, assess and report the schooled literacy skills of children. It was used by both the teacher and the TAs. Literacy worksheets for observation and reporting, literacy folders for evidence collection, 'book reading' lists for keeping records of children's phonetic reading level were the tools that the teaching staff employed. Ongoing assessments were generally done in adult-led literacy activities.

The pattern in the formative assessment process was the same across the teaching staff since there was an agreed rule for the way of doing them. The pattern of formative feedback was (a) provide and present the necessary materials to children, (b) explain the task to the child, (c) observe the child, (d) guide and correct the child when they need help, (e) write an indicator about child's literacy performance in relation to the learning objective of the specific literacy activity, (f) save it as evidence of children's performance in their learning journeys or literacy folders, where possible. However, there

were exceptions in some formative feedback: the teaching staff asked children to re-do the target literacy activity or re-write certain letters if they found the child's performance was not good enough. An example of such feedback was illustrated in the object section of the findings chapter (See section 5.1.1).

The teacher conducted summative assessments which resembled the structure of the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check test for reception children. The teacher said to me that she conducted an individual test in the first term which was about Phase 3 phonics and I observed her conducting an individual test on Phase 4 phonics in the end of the second term, 29 March 2018.
The summative assessment tool of the second term consisted of five tasks

1. Identifying and saying the sounds of the identified graphemes: s, a, t, p, l, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r, h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss, j, v, w, x, y, z, zz, qu, ch, sh, th, ng, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er.
2. Reading identified high frequency words: he, we, be, me, she, my, you, all, are, they, her, was, said, have, like, so, come, do, one, little, there, what, when, out, here
3. Blending sounds to read identified words: fight, car-park, ladder, milk, next, went, dent, drink, clap, trap, flat, nest, slip, flag, stamp, train, spoon, spark, growl, from, soft, slept, lunchbox.
4. Reading identified non-sense words: deart, spairt, drart, florp, smeeck, kerlf, bamp.
5. Segmenting to spell the words that the teacher said to them. Those words are band, gift, chimp, said, have, like, sandpit, stop, sniff, green, clown, swing, smell, brush, twist, think, crunch, so, do, some, little, one, when, out, what.

The teacher did not ask all the words in each task. She randomly selected some words or graphemes for the children. If the child successfully performed the specific task, she ticked off near the words/graphemes. Lastly, she reported all the correct answers and decided whether a child was working towards or secure at phase 4. Then, the teacher created a mid-year report from the test to hand it in to parents during parent evenings. The structure of report was analogous with the EYFS Profile which led me to argue that the compulsory national profiling system created similar versions of summative reports during the year.

Literacy

	1	2	3
Reading Children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.		✓	
Writing Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.		✓	

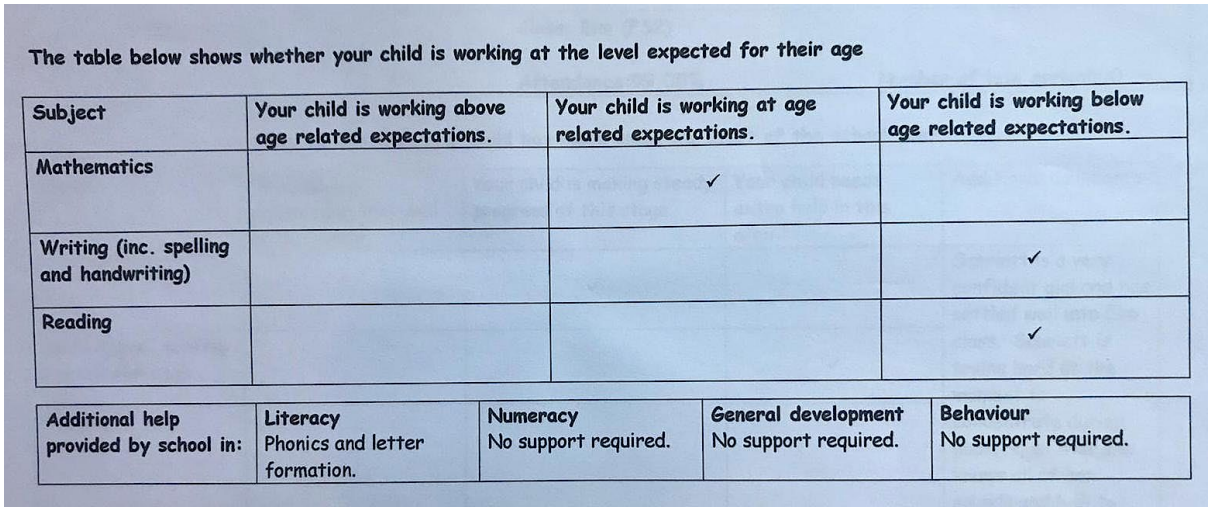
Figure 26. The literacy section of Megan's summative assessment report, the EYFS Profile.

Figure 26 illustrates the literacy part of Megan's EYFS Profile and her grade against reading and writing ELGs. The number 2 refers to 'expected' level, number 1 is 'emerging' level and number 3 is 'exceeded' level. The child's mid-year report or interim report had a similar pattern of scoring the child's current literacy skills, as seen in Figure 27. The class preferred to prepare an interim report, clearly aligned with the statutory duty to report EYFS outcomes to parents. Yet, the EYFS Profile encompassed children's learning attainment in 17 ELGs. The interim report was restricted to the mathematics, writing and reading areas of learning and more detailed in that the teacher also ranked the amount of help they needed in a certain area of learning, commented on her behaviour during literacy sessions and extra help she got from the teaching staff, as indicated in Figure 28.

The table below shows the progress that your child has made since the start of the school year.

Subject	Your child is **progressing** very well at this stage	Your child is making steady **progress** at this stage	Your child needs extra help in this area	Additional Comments
Mathematics		✓		is a very confident girl and has settled well into class. is trying hard at the moment to concentrate during phonics, so that she knows all of her sounds and how to write them.
Writing (inc. spelling and handwriting)			✓	
Reading			✓	

Figure 27. The section of Megan's interim report on the amount of assistance that she needed



The table below shows whether your child is working at the level expected for their age

Subject	Your child is working above age related expectations.	Your child is working at age related expectations.	Your child is working below age related expectations.
Mathematics		✓	
Writing (inc. spelling and handwriting)			✓
Reading			✓

Additional help provided by school in:	Literacy	Numeracy	General development	Behaviour
	Phonics and letter formation.	No support required.	No support required.	No support required.

Figure 28. The section of Megan's current level of literacy attainment and the additional support provided by the teaching staff, reported in her interim report

Moreover, the school bought commercial data storage and analysis software, called EAZMAG and entered all children's test results from the beginning of the year. In the assessment policy of the school, EAZMAG was introduced as:

> Assessment data is entered onto EAZMAG and all staff can access this data. Staff can use EAZMAG to generate visual maps, tracking and progress reports and need to ensure that they use the information they give to inform both their teaching and their interventions. EAZMAG also provides information about children's additional needs or vulnerability (Assessment Policy of the School).

The teacher also mentioned that EAZMAG helped her arrange and then rearrange the ability groups and intervention groups throughout the year. Since the data were accessible to all staff, it led the teaching staff to be warned by the deputy or/and other teaching staff, in case children's literacy attainment was not as 'expected' or falling as the year progressed. The deputy pointed this out with this explanation:

> We would have pupil progress meetings. So, we would get all the teachers for a year group together and we would say "Maybe your results are not very good", "Why are they not very good?", "What can we do to make those results better?", "How can we change what you're

> doing to make that better?" or I would say, well, look at that particular group, like, "The girls are not doing very well, where are they not doing very well?" so, the data is not just left as a set of numbers, we go back to the teachers and say "You might not have noticed but there is a pattern, and last year this group of children were amazing, this year this group of children are not amazing, why not?". So, we would do stuff like that. We would ask questions (Interview with Deputy Head Teacher).

Overall, the assessment tools of the focus class were created, bought and used in a very systematic and clear way so that any person coming from outside the school could understand the schooled literacy learning progress of an individual child easily. This makes for a clear system of accountability. Also, we can see that the tools that were created by the teacher had a similar purpose to the compulsory national assessment: assessing children's schooled literacy, their SSP skills in particular. Thus, the structure of the teacher's tools resembled national tests, especially the interim tests of the teacher with the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check.

5.3.3. Intellectual tools for reinforcements on children's schooled literacy practices

Rewarding children in relation to their attitude towards schooled literacy practices was used as a subsidiary tool for assessment and motivating children. Here I argue that since the reward system worked based on their schooled literacy practices mostly, the children who performed well throughout the year naturally got more rewards than the 'lower ability' children and the 'lower ability' children were differentiated from other children with different stickers given to them a result of their 'right' answers or/and performance to TAs' phonics and writing interventions. Yet, I should note the rewards were not limited to schooled literacy practices only, the teaching staff used them for behaviour management as well.

The rewards for children's literacy attainment could be categorised as class level and individual level rewards. If the children as a class performed the schooled literacy behaviour in the expected way, the teaching staff put several marbles in the class's jar. When the jar was filled with marbles the class was rewarded; I don't have information about the type of the reward. In 18 April 2018, since all children started to write the 'c' letter from up to down, Mrs Corbyn put three marbles in the jar. In another example, dated 20 May 2018, the class teacher motivated children as a class saying that if all of them wrote the expected sentence in the small group literacy activity following the rules - writing the pronoun 'I' letter in capital, leaving finger spaces between words and not using capital 't' letter in the

middle of a sentence and ending the sentence with a full stop - the class would be rewarded with putting marbles in the jar.

At the individual level, there were three forms of rewards for the children doing the expected literacy performance. Firstly, every morning, the teacher put up a paper separated into two sections and a smiley face and a sad face was drawn in two separate sections. The children who could answer a difficult question in the whole class phonics session or perform well in writing the expected words/sentences in small group literacy sessions were rewarded by writing their names on the smiley side of the paper. However, the children who did not do the expected literacy practices or did not follow the instructions after several verbal warnings had to write their names on the sad side of the paper. Relying on my observations, writing their names on the sad side was very upsetting and some children even cried during writing their names on the sad side.

> In 31 January 2018, two children had to write their names on the sad side as they drew a picture instead of writing letters repeatedly on a letter formation worksheet. At the end of the day the children having their names on the smiley side received a sticker by the teacher. The teacher again repeated the reasons why they got stickers. On the other hand, the children having their names on the sad side were warned again without any stickers given at the end of the day (31 January 2018, field notes).

Different from the daily smiley/sad side rewarding system, there was a teaching reward certificate and a golden sticker, given on Friday assemblies in front of the school. In 24 January 2018, the teaching staff selected Alice as she was good in the Wednesday phonics intervention session and they selected Kitti as that week Kitti had a birthday. Hence, the reinforcement system worked in a way that the children who performed well in schooled literacy practices and who followed the instructions of the teaching staff were rewarded more than the 'lower ability' children.

Further, the TAs doing interventions had their specific stickers for children attending their phonics and writing intervention sessions. At the end of activities, they gave their specific stickers to those children. Therefore, the children in the intervention group who got the TA stickers were differentiated in the class every Wednesday and Thursday. Thus, the type of sticker, the timing of the given sticker and the specific teaching staff member giving the sticker also differentiated intervention group children from other children.

Lastly, there was another reinforcement that the class celebrated in the mornings with the class teacher when children had read their 'reading books' 10, 25 and 50 times at home. Then the names of the children were included on the school's weekly newsletters. Mrs Smith defined the details of the reinforcement as follows:

> The chart is divided into fifty small areas, all numbered. So, each time a parent listens to a child or grown-up or indeed an elder brother and sister. It is signed in the box and dated. When the child has read for 10 times they gain a bronze award certificate and a sticker. When they've read 25 times as silver award. And this is celebrated not only in the classroom but also on our school newsletter. So, in fact, the entire school community will know that a child has been awarded that prize. And then, for 50 reads, they get a golden certificate and they're allowed to choose a book, a brand new book to take home (Interview with Mrs Smith).

All in all, there was a heavy emphasis on the usage of reinforcements to motivate the children to do the expected schooled literacy performance. The 'higher ability' children had a higher probability of getting more stickers from the teacher and potential 'lower ability' children got more and different stickers from the TA.

5.3.4. Physical tools

The nature of physical tools and their specific usage shaped the patterns of the actions of the children and teaching staff (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). I categorise physical tools into four sub-sections, which involve whole-class, small group, one-to-one and child-led activities, since here I argue that the available physical tools for the teaching staff's and children's access change, depending on the type of literacy activity. Hence, TAs had no opportunity of using the IWB in their literacy teaching and as a consequence, the 'lower ability' children got less opportunity of learning literacy through technological tools, the IWB in particular.

In this study, I refer to literacy activities that do not involve the presence of an adult as 'child-led'. However, I am aware of the fact that some physical tools (i.e., letter formation worksheets) are directive, which guide children to do a particular literacy practice. Therefore, even though teaching staff were not present in child-led activities the literacy activity was generally done in the way the teaching staff desired. Yet, children as active agents of their own literacy practices could have the

creativity of changing the physical tools as they imagined. Thus, I include such directive tools as a tool for child-led activity in case teaching staff were not present in the activity.

5.3.4.1. The Tools that were Regularly Used in Adult-led Whole Class Literacy Activities

5.3.4.1.1. The Walls and Windows

The wall and the window that children sat in front of during whole class literacy sessions had specific functions in schooled literacy teaching. There were a lot of labels that were for teaching letters, phonics and tricky words as well as the names of months, days. Those labels were especially located above the interactive white board (IWB) and near to it. Through this, children could see the written form of sounds, diagraphs, split vowel diagraphs and so on. The letters or diagraphs were grouped based on the similarity of the sound that they make when read in words. For instance, the diagraphs, '-er', '-ir', '-ur' were presented in a picture of three children holding each other's hands (see Figure 29). Also, the window just near to IWB was full of tricky words and the memorable words that remind children of the tricky words such as, said for 'Sally Anne is dancing', and was for 'whales and seals' (see Figure 30). In phonics sessions, the teacher drew children's attention to the label of the sound or the tricky words that they were working on.



Figure 29. The prints hanging over the IWB.



Figure 30. The high frequency words on the window near the IWB.

5.3.4.1.2. Technological Tools

The class had one IWB and one iPad which belonged to the teacher. The school also provided six laptops that all classes used in turn. On Fridays, the teacher said to me that it was their turn to use them and children were allowed to play phonics games using them.

In considering the function of the IWB in adult-led activities the teacher mentioned that: “Yeah, I use it loads, haha. Yeah, I would feel like my arm is cut off if I didn’t have my white interactive board.” (Interview with the teacher). Supporting her comment, I observed many of her whole-class sessions where she made use of the IWB. Especially, she used the IWB in her everyday whole-class phonics sessions. She used power points and word documents for illustrating written words with their pictures nearby (an example slide, shown in Figure 31).

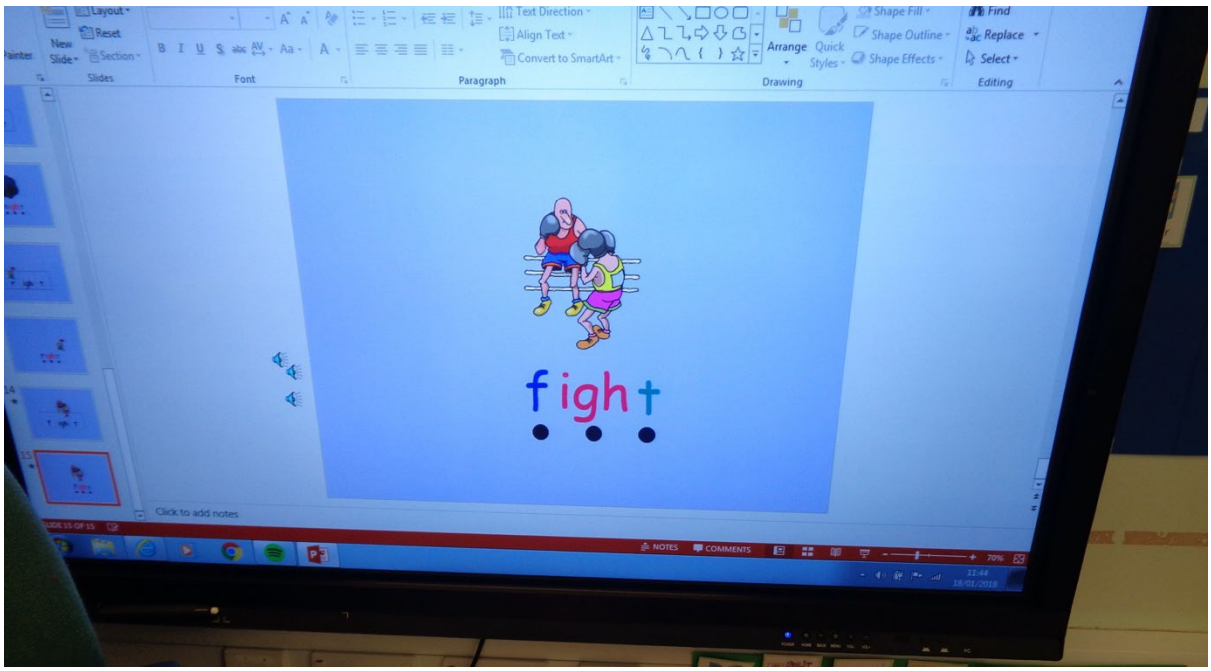


Figure 31. An example power point slide in an adult-led whole class phonics session, dated 18 January 2018.

The IWB had a specific advantage in providing a multisensory approach in that children could see the written graphemes/word/sentence, touch the correct answer/button and hear a sound that confirmed the correct answer, such as a clapping sound. I observed that despite the fact that online phonics games were about sounding out letters, blending sounds to have words or segmenting words,

children were excited about touching and hearing the IWB. All children were volunteering to come to the front and do the target activity by touching the IWB.

Due the fact that some 'lower ability' children did not have everyday phonics session in the whole-class sessions and they had their TA-led small group phonics sessions in the meantime, those children had less opportunity of engaging in schooled literacy learning using the IWB. They were mostly doing phonics sessions with paper-and-pencil materials and small toys.

Although the teacher used the IWB as a main tool in her whole class phonics session she did not have a similar positive approach towards the usage of IWB in child-led activities. She stated that:

> if we're [the teaching staff] not very careful, this is why I don't often have games on the whiteboard [IWB] because you put the game on, and then, two minutes later "Mrs. Thomas, the screen's gone off!", you know. And so, then you're trying to do something else. And then, it's a chore (Interview with the teacher).

Guiding children in their child-led IWB activities was distracting the teacher from doing other things. Therefore, she did not download games on the IWB. In my observations, I noticed that since the teaching staff were always busy with doing something (e.g., doing small group activities, sticking children's completed worksheets in their learning journeys, changing children's reading book) during some children's indoor free times they were not involved in child-led activities. Thus, I can conclude that the complex and hectic nature of teaching staff's roles did not prioritise the children's use of the IWB in their free times.

5.3.4.2. The Tools that were Regularly Used in Both Adult-led Whole Class and Small Group Literacy Activities

There were shared tools that were regularly used in both adult-led whole and small group literacy activities. The commonality of the tools especially existed in phonics sessions in both types of activities. The activities involved a whiteboard for teaching staff use, word and phoneme cards representing one word or phoneme in each card (shown in Figure 32), lists of graphemes categorised under the same phonics phases, called phonics mats, and differentiated boxes of small toys having the same initials. As can be seen from tools, except the whiteboard, they had one purpose, which was facilitating learning schooled literacy through SSP teaching.

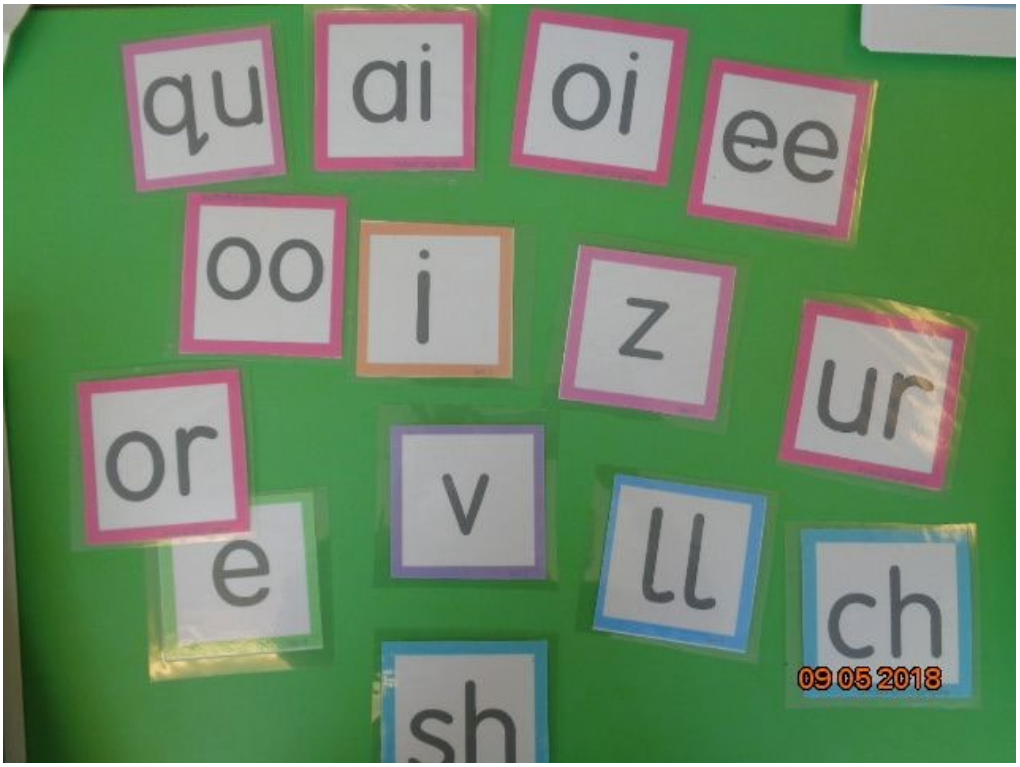


Figure 32. An example of grapheme cards that children were taught during whole and small group phonics sessions (9 May 2018).

In whole class phonics sessions, the teaching staff regularly used the whiteboard for writing graphemes/words/sentences. Some selected children were also allowed to write the focus graphemes/words/sentences in the phonics sessions. Also, the whiteboard was used as a tool for introducing the small-group literacy activities. The teaching staff wrote the example word/sentences that they expected children to do during that session. In some of the small group activity times, the teaching staff brought it in front of the table so that children could look at the example word/sentence.

Also, there were small whiteboards with a pen and rubber for each child (as shown in Figure 33). In contrast to previously mentioned phonics materials, the small whiteboard was open in the sense that someone could write on it anything they wanted, it was not directive. However, in whole class and small group phonics sessions, children had to follow the instruction of the teaching staff and the instructions were always about writing a letter/word/sentence that the teaching staff mentioned. Thus, the instructions narrowed its function.



Figure 33. An example table that children were required to write the letters of -t, -y, -j, -l

In conclusion, the tools that were regularly used in whole and small group literacy activity times, particularly in phonics sessions, were directive. The tools mediated learning and practising schooled literacy through memorisation and repetition.

5.3.4.3. The Tools that were Regularly Used in Small Group Literacy Activities

The tools that were specifically used in small group activity times changed depending on the teaching staff. As I mentioned in the planning of the physical environment, the small group writing activity time of Mrs Corbyn on Wednesdays was more restrictive than other days of small group literacy activities. The tools that she used in her teaching were the same each time. Every child had his/her own handwriting booklet. The booklet started with drawing dotted lines to writing words neatly. Every week Mrs Corbyn introduced one or two letters and showed children where to start writing letters.

The booklet contributed to the way she taught letter formation. As it illustrated in the Figure 34, the letters had arrows inside to guide children to write letters in an expected way.

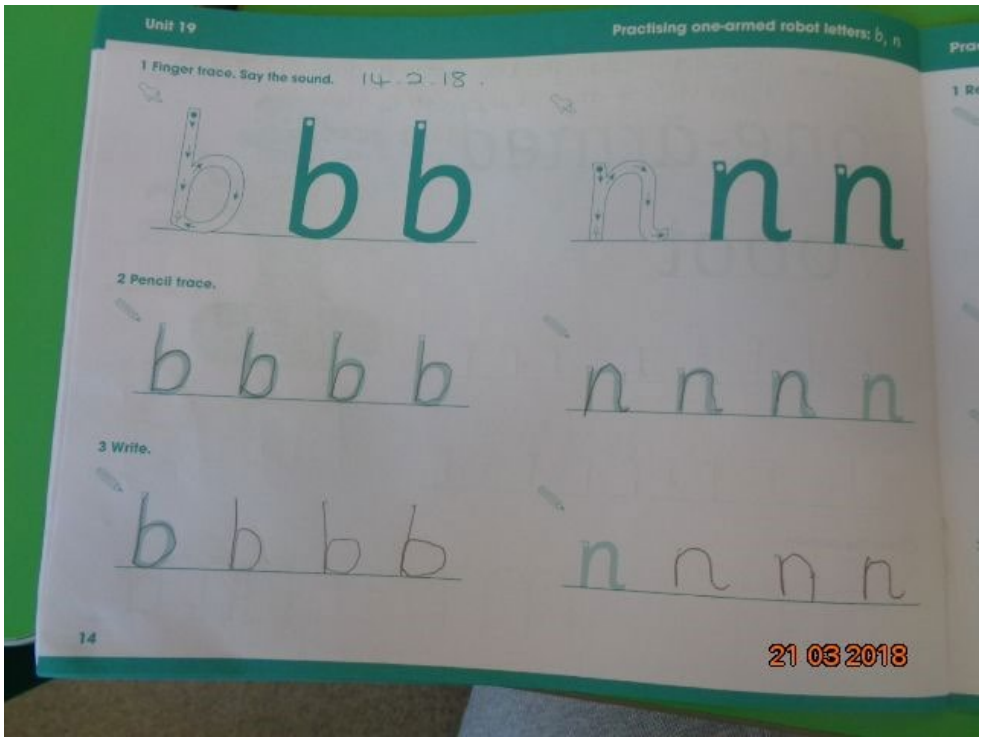


Figure 34. One page of Bonnie's letter formation of -b and -n letters

In contrast, the tools for other small group literacy activities were more diverse and contextually relevant to children's lives. For instance, on 28 February 2018, children wrote a sentence about the traditional story of 'Little Red Hen' that they had listened to (see Figure 35). The worksheet had a specific learning objective related to writing via SSP and written feedback about the child's performance against the learning objective. Almost all small group literacy activities followed this structure.

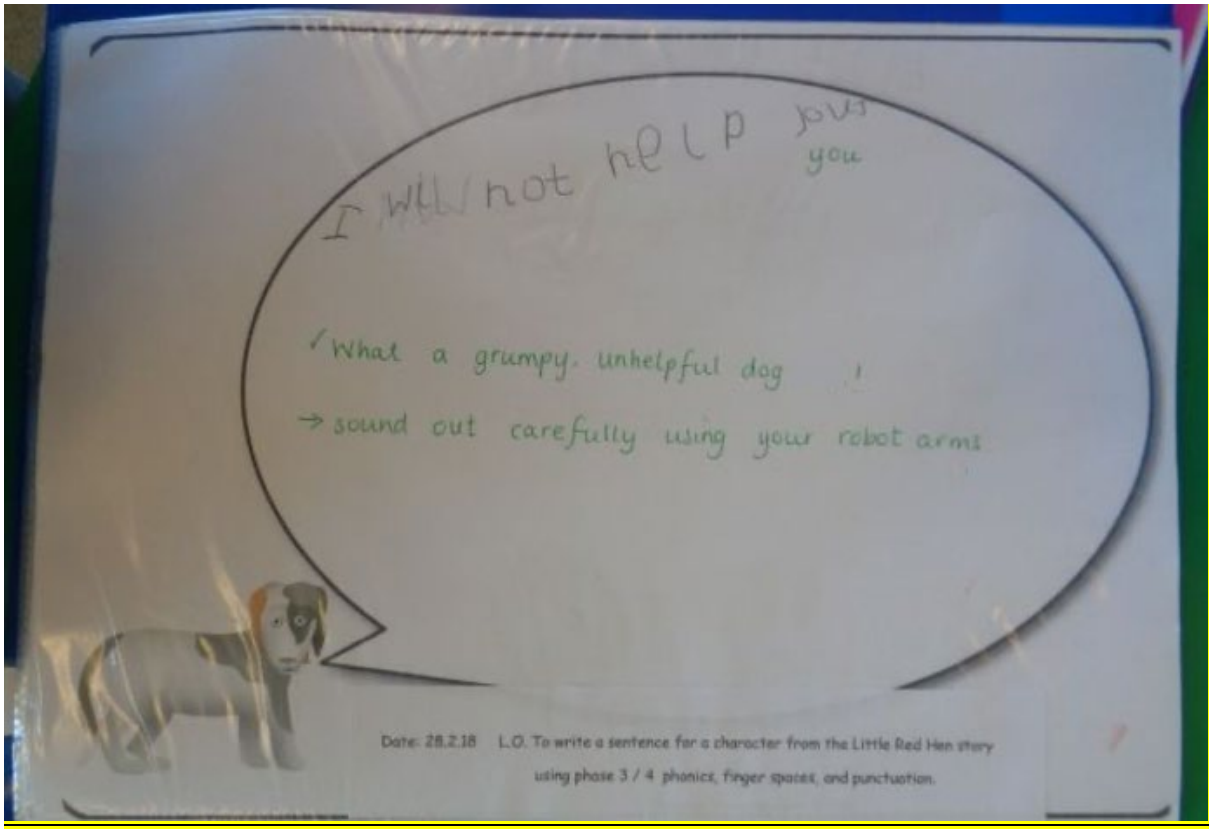


Figure 35. An example writing worksheet, done in the small group literacy activity time, dated 28 February 2018.

5.3.4.4. The Tools that were Regularly Used in One-to-One Literacy Activities

5.3.4.4.1. Reading Scheme: 'Reading Books' In line with the Phonics Phases

The 'reading books' were products of a commercial reading scheme. The readers of the books were children instead of adults. Therefore, they were different from story books. To explain, the phonics coordinator stated that the books generally correlated with the phonics phases, which enabled children to practise their reading through SSP. Naturally, the books were divided into levels based on the complexity in the word and sentence structure. The book bands correlating with the phonics phases also enabled the teaching staff to judge children's reading development against the object of the AS of the class.

Even though the first level of the reading scheme constituted books that have no words, it did not fit with the needs of two of the children, which created a contradiction in the system. To solve it, Mrs

Cooper created a tool for them. She prepared individual cards of the story characters and cards that had the written names of the characters. The children were required to match the name with its character until they learnt the written name of the characters. Then, they could start the reading scheme like other children. The tool was unique to the class, two children in particular, yet, its ultimate function was to ensure a transition to the commercial reading scheme in line with all the other children.

5.3.4.5. The Tools that were Always Available for Child-Led Activities

Even though the range of tools that would engage children in their child-led literacy practices changed depending on the general planning, there were some tools that were always available for children to practise reading and writing.

Children could always reach storybooks inside the classroom and outside in the small playground. They could also practise their phonics with the phonics cards available in the class. Playdough mats and prints in the role play area, shown in Figure 36 and Figure 37, were always accessible for children for their reading development. The content of the prints was changed based on the topic of the week. Different from the tools in adult-led literacy activities, the prints on the playdough mats and in the role play corner provided an opportunity for children to read by guessing the words from the context and from pictures. Written words could be very complex and involve phonemes that children had not learned yet. Therefore, the prints on the playdough mats and in the role play area facilitated reading through not only phonics knowledge but also through a whole language approach.

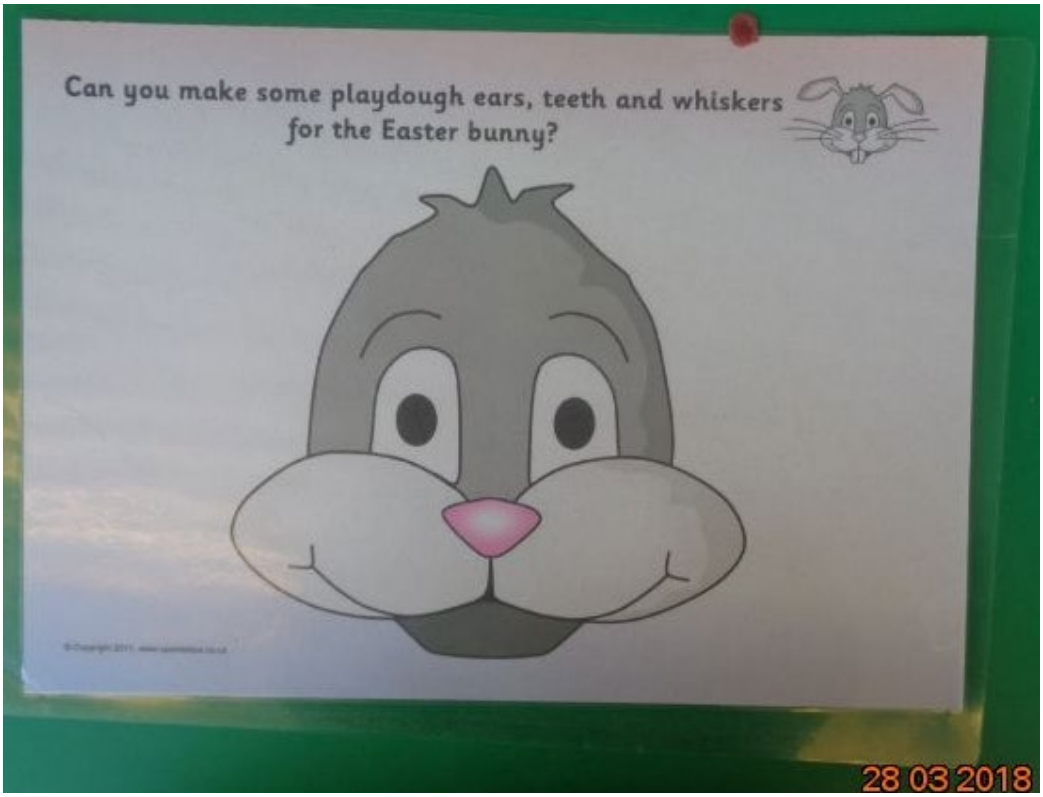


Figure 36. An example playdough mat, date 28 March 2018.



Figure 37. Necklaces representing staff working in an international airport in the role play area, 25 April 2018.

In considering the tools available for supporting writing development, colouring pencils, papers left from previous adult-led activities in the writing centre, blank papers, letter formation sheets and tricky words formation sheets were available in the classroom. In the small playground, children could also reach chalks, colouring pencils, blank papers, papers remaining from previous adult-led activities, letter formation and tricky words writing sheets. Some of the tools were open-ended, meaning that children could write anything they wanted, however, some of them were directive and served one purpose, such as writing letters repeatedly on a letter formation sheet. Since children were creative in reforming the purpose of the directive papers, I added that type of directive paper as an artefact of child-led activities (more discussion is available in the children's experience section).

5.4. The Rules

The rules in the focus AS of literacy pedagogy affect how subjects and the community work to reach the shared object ultimately (Yamagata-Lynch 2010). Therefore, the rules are the mediators between the subjects and community that facilitate acts that are in harmony (Hung et al., 2006). Each activity system has its written formal and informal rules. Specifically, to understand the informal rules, there needs to be careful observation and analysis of the member's actions. As a researcher, I had the opportunity of doing deep observations and my analysis discusses the formal and informal rules that were specific to each component of the AS and that were rooted in the practice of the members in each section of the AS.

Here in this section, I discuss the nature of the informal rules. The subjects and the community members internalised the pattern in the rule formation; the pedagogical actions are categorised into levels of priorities. Each member knew that there were some actions that were more important than other actions. In considering the whole system and all the actions, I argue that adult-led literacy activities are prioritised more than child-led literacy activities, and phonics and writing intervention activities are prioritised more than adult-led literacy activities. For instance,

> Oliver was doing a literacy activity with the class teacher. The aim of the activity was to match the initial sounds of a reindeer's body part name cards on a picture of reindeer. In the middle of the activity, Mrs Green called Oliver to do a phonics intervention with her. After he did his phonics activity, all children had already completed their small-group literacy activity and sat on the carpet to watch Tom and Jerry on the IWB. However, Oliver's half-done reindeer activity was still waiting

for him on the table. The teacher wanted him to complete this while his friends were watching the cartoon. He tried to do his activity gazing at the cartoon (14 December 2017, field notes).

Oliver had to leave his reindeer literacy-art activity to attend the phonics intervention with Mrs Green. There were also incidences that children had to leave their child-led activities when their names were called by the teaching staff. Thus, the prioritisation among the different types of pedagogical actions created a rule of priorities.

The prioritisation rule was evident in the work samples of the children and also the value they were accorded in the assessment. The child-led activities, including literacy activities inside and outside the class, were generally composed of children only. Inside the classroom, the teaching staff were doing small group or one-to-one adult-led activities with some children while the remainder were playing in the corners and on tables with or without other children. Outside the class, however, the teaching staff were generally observant of children. They did not engage in any activities with children in the playground. The work samples from child-led activities were, therefore, less important than the work samples done in the adult-led activities. The teaching staff always warned children to put their work samples from child-led activities in their own trays. Otherwise, they would put them in the bin.

Overall, the rule of prioritising adult-led activities over child-led activities created another rule about the value of work samples. The children's work samples were not recognised as valuable to put in the learning journeys. However, such work samples could indicate not only the children's current schooled literacy abilities but also the nature of the interests that they wanted to engage in.

Conclusion

All in all, the focus class had a clear and schooled literacy focused object that determined the way the teaching staff distributed the role divisions, the organisation of the literacy pedagogies. The next chapter will illustrate the analysis about how parents as community members involved in the process and the experience of children regarding the literacy pedagogies provided in the focus class. Then, I will conclude the section about the viewpoints of the teaching staff over the AS of literacy pedagogies.

CHAPTER 6. FINDINGS: PARENTS, CHILDREN AND TEACHING STAFF

Introduction

In the first section of the previous chapter, I argued that the AS of literacy pedagogies in the focus class promotes teaching staff to create literacy pedagogies, targeting children to reach the 'expected' level for literacy in the EYFS for all children, and for as many as possible to achieve beyond the EYFS framework. Eventually, I commented that it poses the risk of undervaluing child-centred approaches in the provision of their literacy pedagogies. Here in this section, I present another layer of evidence that promotes strengthening the arguments that respond to the overarching research question (1) by analysing children's experience and the parent involvement activities within the literacy pedagogies established in the class and the perspectives of teaching staff regarding aspects of the AS of literacy pedagogies.

This chapter of the findings firstly presents the analysis related to the community members of the class: children and their parents. It focuses on the way the subjects became involved with the literacy pedagogies. The analysis in this section addresses two research questions: In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies? (1.4) and how do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them? (1.3) Finally, stepping back from the acts of the subjects and the community members, the last section analyses the perspectives of the subjects regarding aspects of the AS of literacy pedagogies, which addresses to the following research question: What are the perspectives of the class teacher and the TAs on their literacy pedagogies? (1.5)

6.1. Children and Parents As Community Members

6.1.1. Cooperating with the parents

Parents were amongst the members of the community actively involved in supporting subjects to reach their object by the end of the year. The analysis of documentary data, field notes and interviews with the teaching staff enabled me to form two themes; SSP focused PI and PI for general purposes (see the codes and themes on table 5 in section 3.6). Most of the PI activities were organised to ensure that parents supported children's schooled literacy learning in line with the teacher's literacy practices at school. The teaching staff provided 14 PI activities, 9 of which were directly about promoting literacy learning through SSP in particular.

- For teaching and informing parents about SSP, the class provided a literacy meeting, short informal talks with parents during drop-off and pick-up times, and papers about learning goals for the next half term.
- For promoting schooled literacy PI practices, the teaching staff provided reading books at home, volunteering opportunities for listening to children's reading book in school, and homework.
- For checking/controlling/rewarding parents and their children's schooled literacy practices at home, the staff offered parent evenings, home school organisers for each child, reading reward charts for each child, and weekly school newsletters.

At the beginning of the year, the reception teacher conducted a literacy meeting. In the interviews with parents, all parents mentioned that they had not had literacy education in the way their children were being taught. Knowing the literacy education of parents in England, the teacher taught teaching literacy through the SSP approach: the way of teachers introducing sounds, writing letters, teaching high frequency words. The teacher distributed documents that included the name of each child, a vowel phoneme keyboard, consonant phoneme keyboard, tricky words mat, and handwriting mat (showing directions on how to write letters with arrows, the way Mrs Corbyn taught) to the parents who could not attend the meeting. Those documents were sent to mediate parents' ways of teaching writing and reading in order to achieve the object of the activity system through the SSP teaching approach. Overall, the class teacher provided a good base for further SSP related PI to be done with efficiency at home.

Explaining children's literacy learning process in a very short time also happened during drop-off and pick-up times between the teacher and parents at the entrance, by the door. If the parents had questions on homework, the teacher responded to them. Also, throughout the year, the parents got papers about the target learning goals related to three prime areas and four specific areas of learning and development, as it is divided in the EYFS Framework. For instance, in the first half of the summer term 2018, the learning goals for literacy involved the following statements:

To know how to write their names without name cards

To be able to form all letters correctly

To write a speech bubble

To label types of transport

To write a simple sentence independently – role play writing

To read regularly

To take part in daily phonics sessions (Learning Goals Document for Parents, First half of Summer Term)

Secondly, the class provided PI activities so that children could continue practising their SSP skills. These involved reading books, homework, opportunities for volunteering to listen to children's reading books in school. As I discussed in the 'reading book' in the 5.3.4.4.2 section, each child had a reading book to read both at home and school, therefore they were required to carry their reading books in their school bags together with a notebook called a home-school organiser. Volunteer parents could also join the class and hear children reading their books. However, I only saw Freddie's mother coming to listen to children regularly on Thursday mornings.

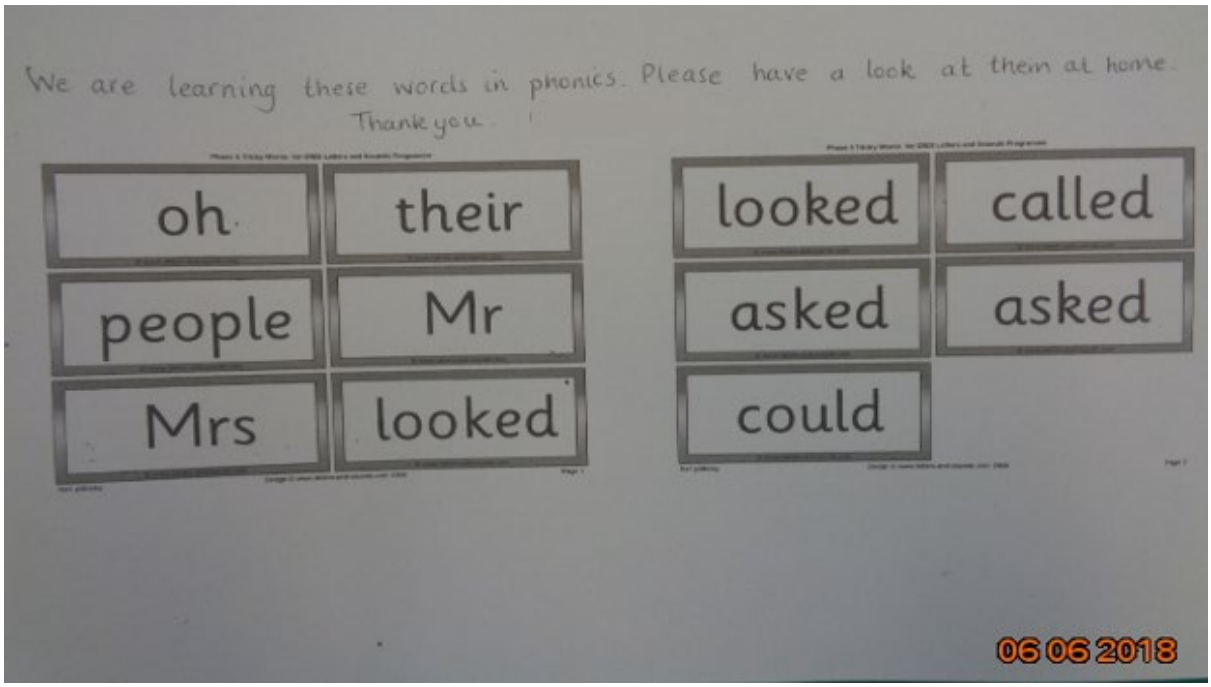


Figure 38. A homework sheet, given to 'higher ability' group children in 06 June 2018.

Also, the children got homework related to phonics. As the year progressed, they received specific homework worksheets depending on their phonics abilities and needs. Thus, I can argue that there was an ability grouping in the types of homework in line with the phonics ability groups. The following example homework sheet illustrates this. The teacher prepared the homework below to improve the

literacy skills of the 'higher ability' children, which was in line with the object of the activity system and the extension of recently learned phonics in the class.

The Figure 38 indicates the eleven high-frequency words, or tricky words, that were taught in the Phase 5 phonics session. Therefore, the children in phase 5 phonics group received the homework. The teaching staff also prepared extra homework for individual children struggling to memorise sounds and read high frequency words. For instance, in 16 February 2018, the teacher wanted Emily to repeat the sounds of ten graphemes with her parents over the holiday and wrote it in her home-school organiser, as shown in below figure 39.

Similarly, the teacher gave some word cards to Megan's mother at the end of the second term to read and write at home. The teacher explained to me that Megan might not get the 'expected' level of development in reading and writing ELGs, if she continued to 'fall behind'. Therefore, Megan received more and specific homework related to her needs.

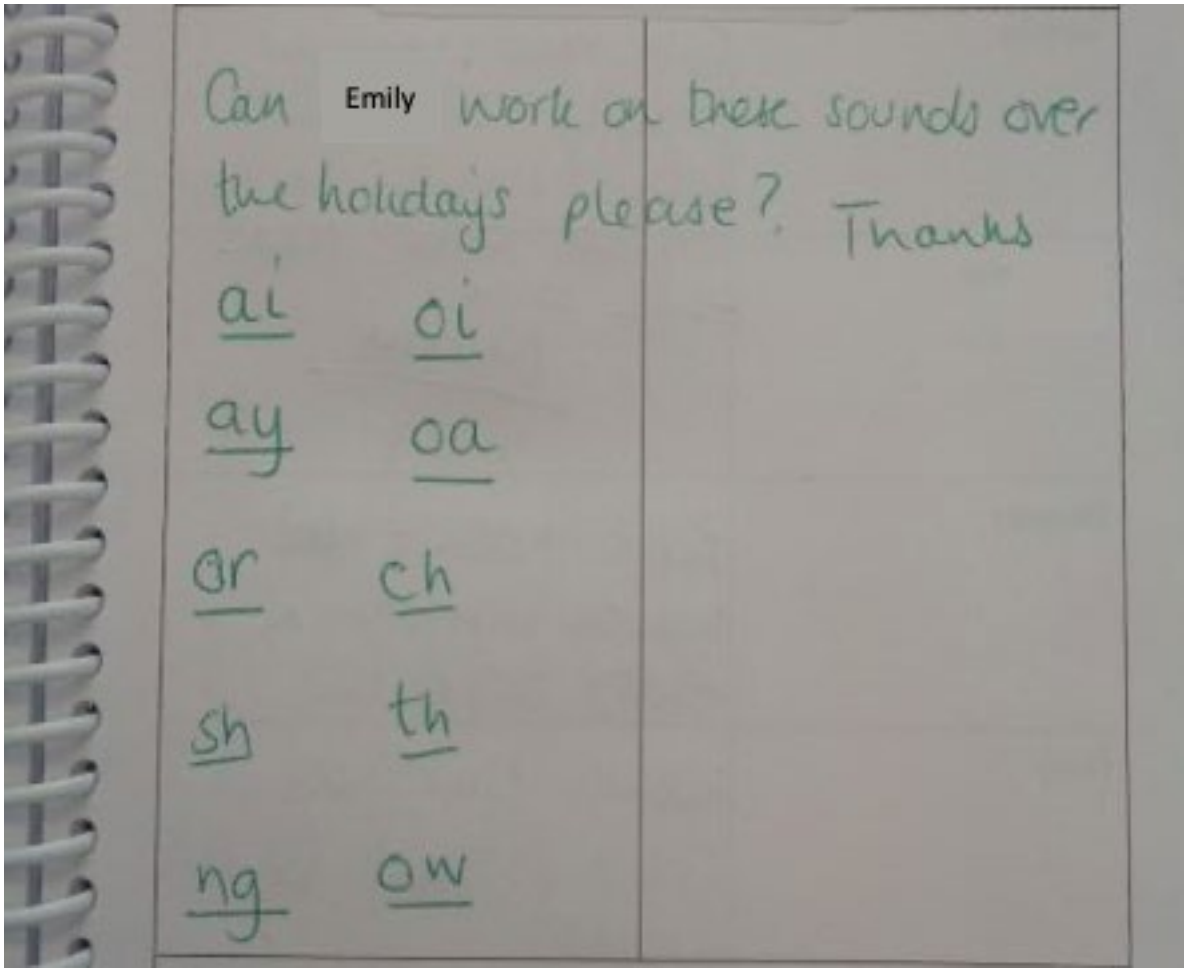


Figure 39. A specific homework activity for Emily, wanted by Mrs Thomas, 16 February 2018.

The surveillance of schooled literacy-related PI activities was ensured with parent evenings, home school organisers, weekly school newsletters, and reading reward charts. Firstly, once a term, the parents met individually with the teacher for approximately 10 minutes after school time. In the meeting with Arthur's mother and father, the teacher explained that Arthur as a summer born child was much better than other children in learning sounds and retaining knowledge, however, he needed to improve his letter formation. Then, she requested them to do more writing activities at home. The mother naturally discussed what they did at home related to writing. Thus, the discussion led the conversation to the point that the mother felt responsible for explaining their home writing activities with her child, with the teacher requesting more letter formation activities. The second tool for controlling PI activities, listening to children reading books at home in particular, was the home-school organiser. The reception teacher wanted parents to hear their children's reading at least once a day and then write a comment regarding their performance, sign and date the home school organiser and sign their children's reading reward chart.

Figure 40 also clarifies that the content of the parent's comments is on the reading ability of the child through SSP, mirroring what teaching staff always did during their schooled literacy teaching. Moreover, if the parents would not listen to their children regularly and record it in their organiser, the teacher wrote a reminder sentence to do so. Like children, the parents received a sticker about 'book reading' PI activity. On behalf of the reading coordinator, the teacher checked home-school organisers and put one of two stickers on the page, dated 16 February 2018. If a parent regularly kept the record of his/her child's reading the teacher put the sticker that mentions 'Thank you for reading at home. It really makes a difference. Mrs. Wilson, Reading Coordinator'. But if a parent did not keep a regular record the parent got a sticker saying, 'Please try to read three times a week. It really makes a difference. Thank you. Mrs Wilson [Pseudonym], Reading Coordinator.' In this way, the parents got a direct evaluation of their specific PI activity. However, some parents, one of which was Arthur's parents, were reading regularly but were not doing record keeping. By chance, I had an interview with Arthur's mother after she got the sticker. While we were talking about Arthur's literacy interests, she disappointedly expressed that they did listen to their child's reading daily, yet they just forgot to write it on the home-school organiser. This conversation showed how the parent was emotionally affected by the surveillance of that specific PI activity.

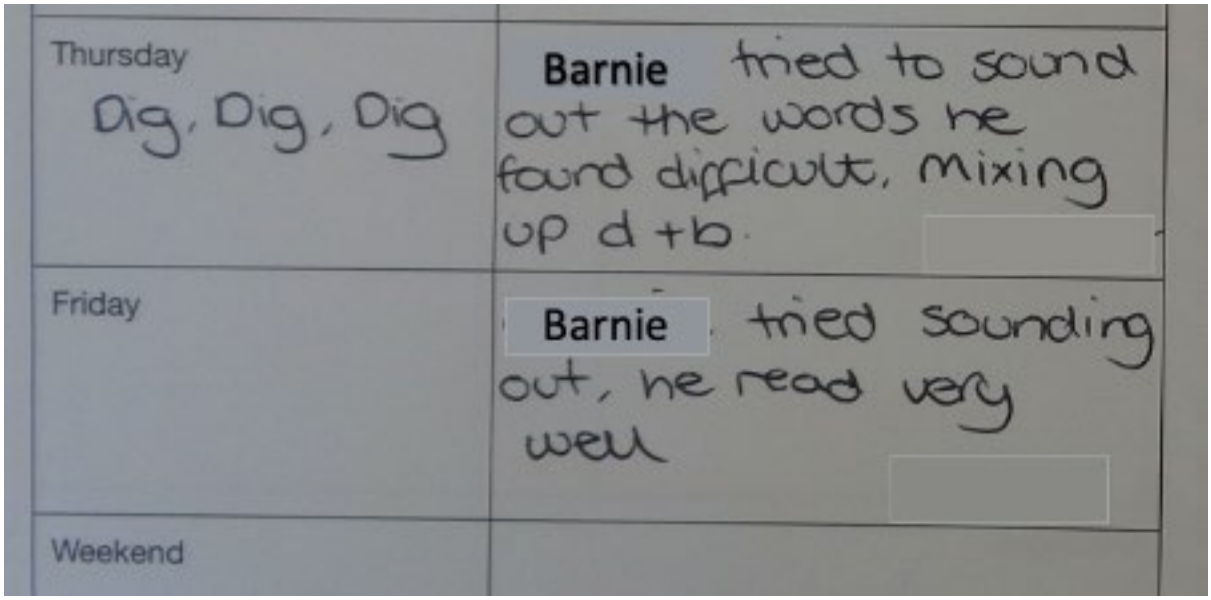


Figure 40. The comments of Barnie's mother on her son's reading in 2 and 3 November 2017.

The teaching staff had an additional way of motivating and checking parents and children to ensure that children read their 'reading books' regularly: this was the 'reading reward chart' for every child and announcement of the certificates in the weekly newsletter of the school. Mrs Smith defined how the system worked as follows:

> The chart is divided into fifty small areas, all numbered. So, each time a parent listens to a child - or grown-up or indeed an elder brother or sister - it is signed in the box and dated. When the child has read 10 times, they gain a bronze award certificate and a sticker. When they've read 25 times, a silver award. And this is celebrated not only in the classroom but also in our school newsletter. So, in fact, the entire school community will know that a child has been awarded that prize. And then, for 50 reads, they get a golden certificate and they're allowed to choose a book, a brand new book to take home. (Interview with Mrs Smith)

The weekly school newsletter was sent to all parents via emails and was hung on the information board at the adult level of sight. The school informed all parents about the children who got a bronze, silver or golden certificate. On the surface, it could be seen as a reward system to children, however I consider this system as an indirect evaluation of the PI activity at home as well, since the audience of the newsletter was the parents.

There were also other PI activities (PI for general purposes) that were not directly targeting informing, teaching or evaluating PI activities related to SSP teaching, yet they could involve literacy. Such PI activities were

- wow letters, weekly foundation unit newsletters [reception and nursery classes], parent questionnaires, informal chats during drop-off-pick-up times, that were all for communication purposes,
- bed time story book reading, a bear guest in the children's house, school open days for parents, that were all about PI literacy practices.

The purpose of the wow stars was to celebrate the approved behaviour of children at home, it might involve children's literacy practices as well. At the entrance of the door where parents dropped-off the children for class, parents could take empty 'wow' letters, fill it with the behaviours they liked in their children and send it through their children to be read by the teacher in front of the class the next day. Then, generally the TAs stuck it in the learning journeys of children as evidence for the teacher's further assessment.

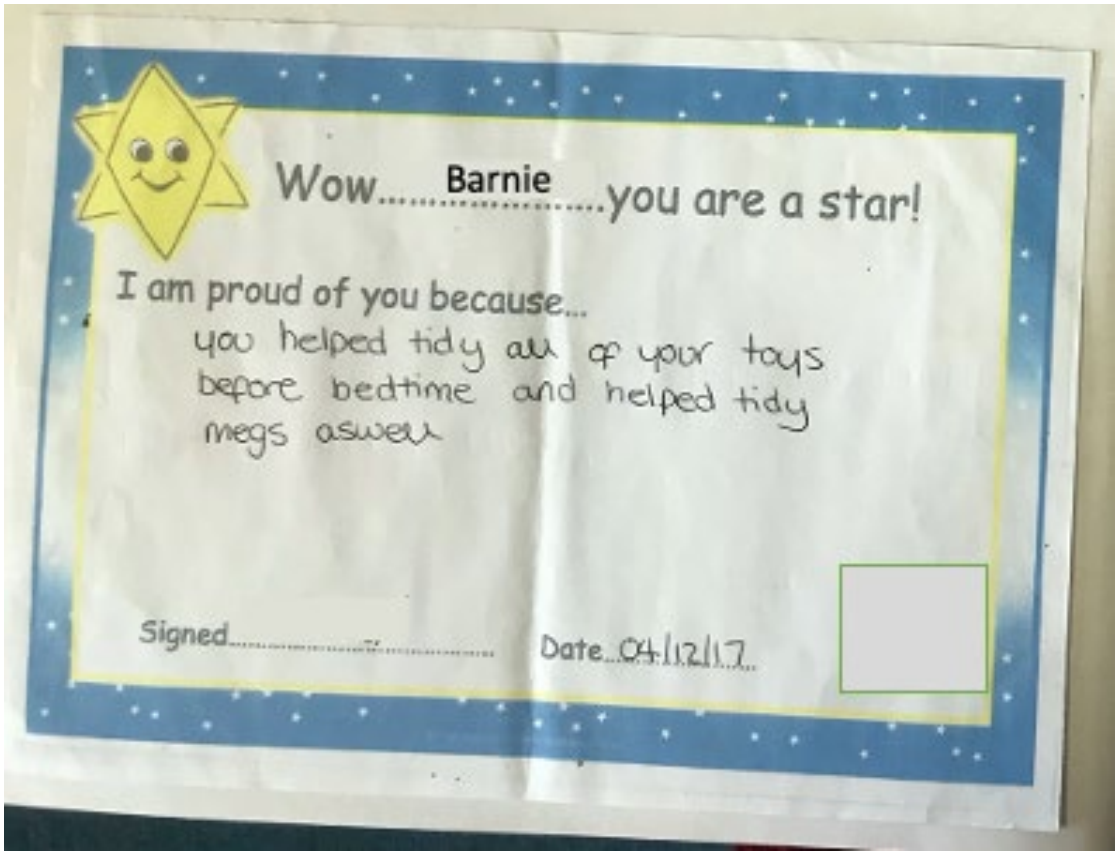


Figure 41. An example wow letter, written by Barnie's mother and added to Barnie's learning journey by teaching staff, 4 December 2017.

Figure 41 illustrates an example 'wow letter' that Barnie's mother wrote for him since he helped tidying his toys. There was also an example wow letters related to literacy. In 15 November 2017, Ted's parent wrote a wow letter for him since he practised writing 'k' letters at home.

Secondly, the parents could learn the contents of the activities to be done in a week from the foundation unit newsletter, which hanged on the door that the parents picked up and dropped off their children. Naturally, some of the activities involved the literacy activities to be done in one week. For instance, the foundation unit newsletter involved the following literacy activities in the week beginning from 11 June 2018: making father's day cards and writing a message, writing instructions on how to plant a seed, reading 'The very hungry caterpillar' by Eric Carle.

Moreover, the deputy head conducted parent questionnaires, with the purpose of learning parents' opinions about the performance of the school in general. However, parents' satisfaction can also be affected by the way teaching staff teach literacy to the children. Therefore, I consider that it was a written form of communication that would inform the teaching staff about the parents' opinion on the literacy pedagogies established.

The parents could also talk to the teacher during drop-off and pick-up times. However, this should be very short as other parents came to take their children and talk with the reception teacher. In regard to the topic of their short conversation, Mrs Smith explains that

> I think the main conversation that has been happening in the beginning and at the end of the day, rather than nice things, is problems. Perhaps we don't, to be honest, have the time to share that good news (Mrs Smith, interview).

In relation to PI practices, there were three PI opportunities that were encouraging literacy activities for a purpose. Those activities, however, did not provide evidence for the assessment of children, thus, there was no record about children's home literacy practices in their learning journeys. Firstly, every Wednesday, six selected children got a story bag with hot chocolate powder, a storybook, and a stuffed toy that fits with the character of the storybook inside. The parents should read the story giving the child the toy and a hot chocolate just before sleep. The parents were supposed to bring them back on Monday so they could be given to the next six children on Wednesday. Secondly, three special days were allocated for parents to come and spend time with their children in the class. These days were Christmas, Fathers' and Mothers' days. Specifically, for mothers' days, only mothers were invited and

for the fathers' days, only fathers were invited. In those days, parents could do anything they wanted with children, which might include reading a storybook, jumping or doing drawing with their children.

Further, approaching the third term, the teacher introduced a bear toy in a bag, named Goldie, and an empty diary with the picture of Goldie on. The teacher gave Goldie to a child with its bag and wanted him/her to do an activity (i.e., going shopping or cooking) with Goldie, then write their activity in the diary with some pictures. After, the child brought Goldie and read to the class what she/he wrote. In 26 April 2018, the teacher said to me that they started to do the Goldie diary activity especially in the third term since before that children were not able to write sentences. She further explained that it was not so important for her that parents show the words for children to copy or write on behalf of children, the more important thing for her was children learning that writing has a purpose and that they value writing.

In conclusion, the PI activities could be divided into two groups, SSP related PI activities and contextually relevant PI activities. Considering the structure of them all, I can judge that the PI activities promoting literacy learning were more contextually relevant to children's lives than the PI activities related to SSP teaching. Also, the dominant assumption about children's assessment was visible in PI activities as well. The PI activities were to support children's literacy and phonics knowledge, yet parents did not have a voice in their children's assessment. The work samples done at home, except PI literacy practices, were collected by the teaching staff and put in the learning journey to be evidence for them to judge children's schooled literacy attainment. Therefore, the parents in the focus AS of literacy pedagogy could be described as 'evidence collectors' to prove the level of children's schooled literacy skills against the object of the AS.

6.1.2. Children

This section sets out the perspectives of children regarding the adult-led and child-led literacy and phonics activities at the class level. I introduce six children with notes about their family background and interests at the individual level. I discuss how their individuality is perceived and reacted to by the subjects. I then consider two further cases of a child for whom English was a new and additional language and a child with autism. Both children were members of the community with unique funds of knowledge and identities. Therefore, it was important to discuss the particular actions of the subjects in involving those children in their AS. From there I move on to analysis at the class level in relation to children's agency and autonomy in their literacy learning.

6.1.2.1. Children's views on the regularly done activities

The categorisation of the play-like attitude scale with all children, except Jasper and Jingjing, in the class (see section 3.3.5 for the structure of the play-like attitude scale and see section 3.6. for analysis of the scale) illustrated that the attitude scale's results indicated that the children enjoyed listening to stories rather than sounding out phonemes or doing letter formation repeatedly among adult-led activities, as indicated in Table 15. Listening to Goldie's diary ranked first. In comparison to listening a story book, the activity told the lives of their friends with the bear Goldie. The more the activity was relevant to children's lives the more it was favoured by the children.

Adult-led Literacy and Phonics Activities	**Total Score**
Listening to Goldie's diary	82
Listening to stories from the teaching staff	78
Reading 'reading books'	71
Doing phonics activities on the IWB	44
Learning and repeating sounds with phoneme cards	33
Doing letter formation in handwriting booklet	32

Table 15. The total scores that the adult-led activities received from the classroom survey

By contrast, the least scored activities were directly targeting the achievement of the object of the AS. Through those two activities children could learn the phonemes and write neat letters. The adult-led activities that were decontextualised and required repetition and memorisation were the least liked activities from the class survey.

In relation to child-led literacy and phonics activities, table 16 clearly shows that children enjoy freedom in the content of drawing and writing. Therefore, the total score was the highest in the shed and the writing centre where children were permitted to do anything with coloured pencils, papers and scissors.

The class enjoyed the reading and writing activities that were directive and structured the least. As I discussed, in the letter formation sheets in the tools section, the children had to do only one action,

which was writing the same letters repeatedly. Again, the least liked activities were the ones that assisted subjects in reaching their object in the AS.

Child-Led Literacy/Phonics Activities	Total Scores
Writing, drawing in the shed in the small playground	77
Writing, drawing in the writing centre	74
Playing phonics games on the computer on Fridays	67
Writing on the whiteboard with pen	60
Reading/Writing in the role play corner	55
Reading or looking at the pictures of stories in the morning	48
Reading instructions on the playdough mats and playing with playdough	38
Writing letters in the letter formation worksheets	29

Table 16. The total scores that child-led activities received in the classroom survey.

When looking at both Table 15 and Table 16, listening to a story from the teaching staff scored the second highest (78). On the other hand, the same children gave reading or looking at the pictures of storybooks just after coming to the class as the third lowest score (48). Relying on my observation, I consider that this was mainly because the children did not have permission to chat with their friends in the morning and they had to be sitting silently and looking at/reading a book of their choice. Some children who did not follow the rule were punished and had to write their name on the sad side of the reward list. Thus, I judge that the timing makes a difference to whether children enjoy or dislike the same activity.

All in all, the play-like attitude scale results disclose that the views of the children towards regularly done literacy and phonics activities were open-ended and related to their relevance to children's lives. However, the activities that directly focused on teaching phonics and letter formation were the least popular. Yet, those were the activities that were prioritised, taught and assessed by the teaching staff.

6.1.2.2. The Profiles of Six Focus Children

Interviews with the six focus children and their parents, the field notes from individual observations constituted the findings in this section. I described six children's profile, pointing out their age, family members, their interests in general and literacy interest in particular. To understand each child's

experiences of literacy pedagogies available to them in the class, we need to know about them and their families first.

6.1.2.2.1. Arthur: A Summer Born Child with A Passion for Literacy

Arthur was one of the youngest children in his classroom, having a birthday in July, 2013. He lived with his parents and his brother who was a Year 3 student in the same school. Arthur's mother mentioned that "Arthur likes to play on… he does like computer games, so he likes Mario, he loves Mario Kart. Also Minecraft... Absolutely loves that, building things. But he also likes to play, like, make-believe things, so he'll have like characters and toys and he will sit on his own and make make-believe play." Arthur explained that his second favourite place at home was "Probably, my PlayStation because I play a lot. I've got PlayStation in my house. …I've got PS4. I play football but Minecraft is more better." As his mother said, according to my interview with Arthur, his three favourite places in the school appeared to be the places where children do role-play or imaginary play. They were the imaginary play table, the sand sink and the playdough table, in that order.

Arthur was also interested in written language activities, through which he used literacy in his real and imaginary world. His mother gave an example of a writing activity that he had done at home as follows:

> So, we were cleaning up the garden last week, and he got a bit of paper. I didn't tell him to, he just got a bit of paper and pen, and he was like, "Right, I'm going to write jobs on what we have got to do on cleaning the garden." And he wrote down all on his own, I mean, it wasn't spelt correctly, but phonetically it looked correct. Like, you could read it. It said 'we're going to clean the leaves, then we're going to do the grass, then we are going to do this' so he sorted that out. I didn't say, "Go and write this," so that's the kind of thing."

Also, she continued saying that:

> He makes up stories, like writes little stories, that make sense, but are not spelt correctly. But they make sense, you can read it.
>
> (Interview with Arthur's mother)

All things considered, I view Arthur as a child with a passion for applying literacy in his real and imaginary life. The teacher and I observed the same thing: that if Arthur did not want to communicate with a person just beside him, he kept silent. After calling Arthur several times and not getting any

response from him, I once pronounced his name with a rhyme and then he suddenly looked at me because it was interesting to him hearing his name in rhyme. I, therefore, consider Arthur as a free soul; he responds to the person whenever he wants, yet teaching staff conceived of him as disobedient, especially at the beginning of the year.

6.1.2.2.2. Megan: A Girl Keen on Gymnastics

Megan was born in May, 2013. She had a one-year old sister and lived with her mother and father. Megan's mother reported that "She's really into gymnastics. She likes gymnastics a lot. She's quite sporty. So, anything like gymnastics, dancing; she likes swimming. Anything that's moving." Being aware of her interests, her parents sent her to a dancing club. Moreover, her mother mentioned that Megan liked to write her own imaginative stories and sentences, instead of the homework given by the classroom teacher. Her mother simply explained that:

> When she's in the mood, she doesn't like to do the homework that [the teacher] gives her, but she likes [to] write her own sentences about things. If she comes up to you with her pen and is, "Let's write this." Then she's all for it, but if I say to her, "Let's sit down" and she's like, "No, no, I don't want to."

And later, she expanded her view by giving an example of a literacy activity that her daughter did not like to do:

> When it's something like she wants to write 100 sentences about something she's interested in, but she doesn't want to do the tricky words from school because it's not interesting so she's not bothered.

Supporting the views of her mother, I observed that Megan was not enjoying the whole class phonics sessions and was warned many times by the teacher to concentrate to the lesson. Overall, Megan's interest was in activities in which she could move rather than sit and stay still for 20 minutes, sounding out graphemes and spelling high frequency words.

6.1.2.2.3. Barnie: An Easy-Going, Academic Boy

Barnie was born in February 2013. He was the only child in the family and lived with his father and mother. Barnie's mother stated that "He does karate, he loves karate. He loves fishing, so if he watches

anything on the telly he watches, like, documentaries on fishing. He doesn't watch kids' TV. Yeah, he is a strange child. Yeah, he watches lots of documentaries." Backing up the statements of his mother, Barnie in his individual interview talked about fishing and documentaries. His third favourite place was their living room in his home, since he likes to watch baby animals on Netflix.

Barnie's mother mentioned that "He spends a lot of time reading, he sits in the bed and he's got no toys in his bedroom but he's got a bookshelf and he will just sit and read books when he is in his room. He likes writing, spends a lot of time practising. … He spends a lot of time writing people letters. … He wrote a card to his uncle, said that he was the best uncle, and he wrote that by himself."

Similar to his mother's observations about Barnie's interest in literacy practices, I had plenty of recorded observations that Barnie went to the writing centre and kept writing words and sentences just after adult-led literacy activities. Barnie and I were good friends in that he generally called me to assist him in writing or colouring. Hence, I consider that Barnie was an academic boy who always followed the literacy and phonics sessions with enthusiasm and involved literacy in his daily life. Therefore, Barnie was in many ways a perfect exemplar child for teaching staff since he was always ready to participate in phonics and literacy sessions.

6.1.2.2.4. Emily: Writing and Drawing Bee

Emily was born in February 2013. She lived with her mother, her dad and two year old sister. Emily's mother said "Her activities that she does at home are her drawing, colouring. She loves going to the park. She loves going out on her scooter, you know, and she loves going to play centres and days out at the farm and stuff like that. But she hasn't got any particular interests as in dancing or anything like that."

Emily's mother explained that, "She loves to write. She loves to learn to write…" She likes to write cards to everyone that she can think of, such as her grannies, her parents and her sister. The mother mentioned that: "She doesn't really need to take much encouragement, to be fair, to write. She always wants to write, so, yes, she's got a little notepad and she writes her own little stories in her head and she'll come and sit next to you and she asks how to spell certain words and then… So I won't just tell her. I'll say how do you think you spell it and then she'll tell me and if she gets it wrong I'll say, no, let's try it again, let's think again and then we then eventually get it right and then she'll write it down."

In the individual interview with her, she drew a picture of her colouring bin as her first favourite place in her bedroom. Further, she explained what she does with the colouring bin: "I put in the crayons that don't work anymore and even the pictures that I don't want anymore." As she used her colouring bin a lot in her bedroom, a bin became her favourite material in her home. Thus, it was not surprising that I observed her doing colouring and writing in the writing centre throughout the year. Therefore, I associated Emily with bee who never stopped doing colouring and writing even if she got tired of it.

6.1.2.2.5. Freddie: A Child with an Interest in Imaginary Play

Freddie was born in August 2013. He was the youngest child in the classroom. He had three other siblings and his mother was expecting a baby to be born in September 2018. The ages of his siblings in order, were 8, 6 and 1. Freddie was the third child in the family.

According to his mother, Freddie had a particular interest in "Singing. He loves… He's got a little ukulele, which is like a small guitar. … He'll make up songs and make up words, but also sing things that he knows…" When playing the ukulele and singing songs, he generally wants his father "because his dad plays guitar… They'll play together and sing together." Other than this, he liked to play with jigsaws. Also, "He's quite into pretend play. You know, they'll play with the dollies and the prams and take them on holiday and pack up bags of things to take with them and make dens and all that kind of stuff."

Supporting the observations of his mother, in our individual interview, Freddie stated that "Playing in bedroom" was his first favourite activity at home. When it came to his favourite places in school, Freddie took four corner pictures as his favourite places; the first one was the imaginary play table, the second one was the writing centre, the third one was the role-play corner and the last one was the water sink in the small playground. Of these four places, three of them were designed for children to do role play.

Freddie's mother simply said that "He likes reading." She said that Freddie stuck on a particular story and wanted to listen to it again and again. When his mother got bored, she hid it and introduced a new story book. Freddie also liked writing and drawing, according to his mother:

> …he'll draw pictures, write, kind of, wants to help writing cards and make cards for his friends and birthday cards for people, and letters.

In my observations, the two youngest children, Freddie and Arthur, were generally creating their own imaginary world and playing together both inside and outside the class. They had a strong friendship in that one was often waiting for the other to finish the compulsory adult-led small group activity so they could then keep playing imaginary games together.

6.1.2.2.6. Bonnie: A Girl with a Family History of Dyslexia

Bonnie was born in December 2013. She lived with her mother, her father and two older siblings; the oldest was a male and 15 years old and the middle one was a female aged 6. Bonnie's brother was dyslexic and attending a special school, her mother mentioned. The classroom teacher also explained that Bonnie's older sister had problems in retaining knowledge and Bonnie had a similar problem. For instance, she forgot how to write b letter in March, although the teacher sounded the letter out for her. The class teacher stated that she would discuss this problem with her mother in the next parent evening.

However, Bonnie had a literacy-rich home environment with a supportive mother, who was a qualified nursery nurse. Since Bonnie and her older sister were very good friends, Bonnie was always joining her sister's homework practices and loved doing role-plays with her sister in their dolls-house, the mother mentioned. In her mother's view, "Bonnie loves drawing. … Colouring in or drawing. … She's quite laid-back and a bit more quiet than our [her sister] is, so give her a pen and paper she'll be well away." Also, her mother said that Bonnie loved learning tricky words or high frequency words and bringing the newly learnt tricky words to discuss with her mother. Thus, Bonnie was more interested in work on high frequency words and doing homework with her sisters. Her home learning environment was very similar to schooled literacy practices done in class. Yet, she had problems with retaining phonics knowledge, according to the class teacher, which might have been due to Bonnie's family history of dyslexia.

6.1.2.3. Funds of Knowledge and Identities as a Challenge: Six Case Children

The object of the class's literacy pedagogy created a learning environment where schooled literacy activities and their schooled literacy skills were prioritised most (see the rules, prioritisation of adult-led literacy and phonics activities in section 5.4). Within such an environment, some children funds of knowledge and identities contradicted with the aim of the AS's object. Therefore, the teaching staff

had certain adaptations or specific interventions for the children having contradicting funds of knowledge and identities to achieve the object as planned. Knowing the profiles of the six focus children in this respect helps me to explain how their funds of knowledge and identities were perceived and what kinds of actions were considered necessary for the sake of the object. Being a summer-born, interest in engagement in literacy independently, interest in imaginative plays, disinterest in decontextualised phonics activities, and family history of dyslexia were under the theme of 'funds of knowledge and identities as a challenge'.

Firstly, Arthur as one of the youngest children in the class was in love with learning literacy and applying it to his real and imaginary world, as mentioned in the profile. Relying on my field notes and informal conversations with the teachings staff, I can conclude that even though he was a fast learner in phonics his letter formation was not as good as other children's. It was mainly because Arthur's fine motor skills were not advanced as other older children. However, the teaching staff had the same learning targets for all. To ensure Arthur reached the same level of writing development, he was put into the writing intervention group, he sometimes got more writing activities or did the same activity for the second time (see an example second writing attempt of Arthur in 5.1.1 section), when his peers were allowed to play freely. For example,

> The children had a letter formation session with Mrs Corbyn, the week's focus was on writing x, v and w letters in their letter formation notebook. After completing writing the two letters in his notebook, Mrs Corbyn sent Arthur to the other table and wanted him to write w letters by himself on the letter formation sheets repeatedly, as it is indicated below Figure 42. I did not know that Arthur had to write w letters only. When I saw him writing w letters only, I suggested him that he could do x and v letter formations as well. He responded to me that 'I am not allowed to write other letters'. Wonderingly, I asked Mrs Corbyn to confirm his sentence. She said to me that she asked Arthur to write only w letters, since his w letters were not good.

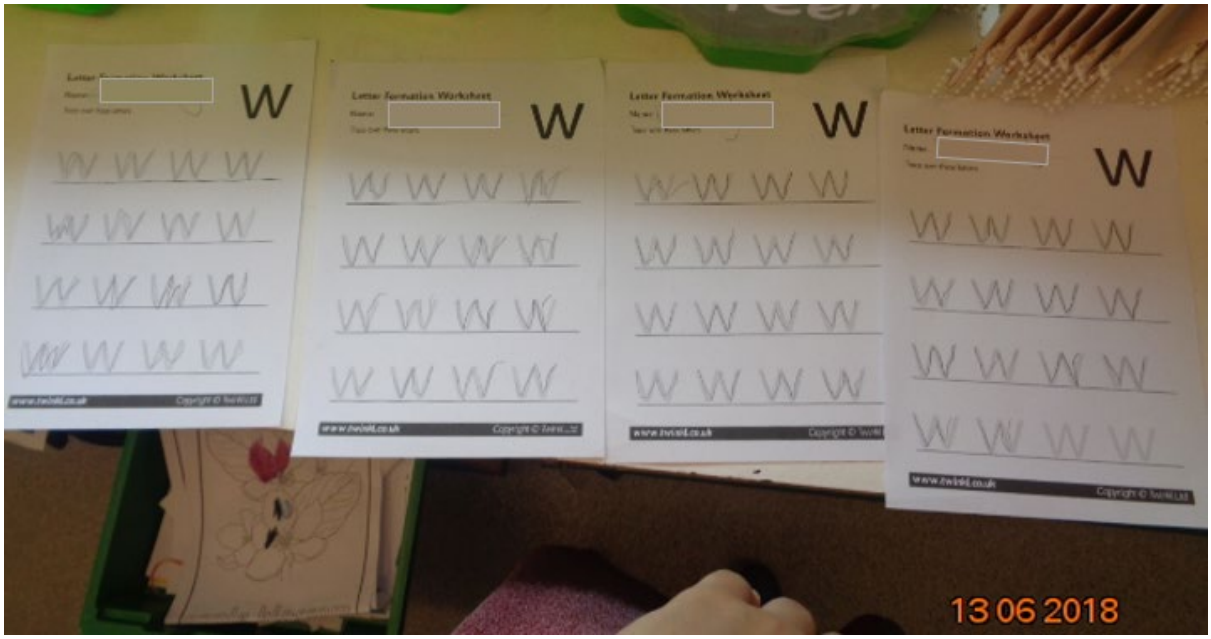


Figure 42. Four pages of letter formation worksheets on w letter that Arthur wrote.

Not being capable of writing the way the TA wanted caused Arthur to write four pages of w letters. Arthur did not even have the freedom of writing other letters. Since the start of the class, Arthur had to sit still and do the phonics session with the class teacher. Just after that session, he did writing with Mrs Corbyn and wrote four pages of w letters. Without any break, he constantly practised phonics and letter formation, which lasted approximately 50 minutes in total.

At the beginning of the year, Arthur was, however, more independent and could decide to write what he wanted. Therefore, I named him as 'free soul'. For instance, in one of my observation days,

> The teacher wanted me to work with Arthur on practising to write the e letter together because she thought that his performance of e writing in "This is my bed." sentence was not good enough. Arthur and I sat by a table, and then I showed the way to write e letter. Then, Arthur started writing a sentence about Mario. He was passionately writing what he saw in Mario by sounding out each phoneme while writing it down. Several times I said to him that we should write e letters instead but he ignored me. I decided to watch him writing what he is interested in most. (field notes, 16 November 2017)

As the year proceeded, he became more obedient and wrote anything the teaching staff wanted. Freddie, the youngest in his class, had similar interests to Arthur. Since the beginning of the year, he

also took extra phonics sessions with other phonics intervention group children on Wednesday afternoons.

Arthur and Freddie had something in common; they were both so much into imaginary games. Whenever they were free, they usually played role-play together. If one of them was called to do an adult-led activity the other was waiting for him.

> In 1 February 2018, Arthur and Freddie made a father snail and a mother snail from playdough and they started doing role-play. Then, the teacher called Arthur to do an adult-led activity. I noticed that Freddie was upset about Arthur leaving the table, I sat near to him and offered to play with him. We kept playing until the tidying-up time came but Arthur could not join us (field notes, 1 February 2018).

Freddie and Arthur had to sacrifice their role-play to follow the guidance of the teacher. Similarly, since Megan was not eager to write decontextualised letters and words or repeat phonemes, her baseline assessment results were low and she was assigned to phonics and writing interventions. As the year proceeded, she got more homework on spelling and sounding out, she did more individualised writing and word reading activity with me and with the teaching staff.

In contrast, Bonnie had a school-like home environment and enjoyed learning sounds and tricky words. She always followed the teaching staff's guidance on literacy sessions with excitement. Yet, she 'fell behind' her peers and the teacher said to me that she will inform Emily's mother that her daughter was mixing up letters at the parent evening. The teaching staff responded to this challenge by putting Bonnie into the phonics intervention group, conducted every Wednesday. I do not mean that she could be diagnosed with dyslexia in the future, but her family history might be a factor for her mixing up letters and having difficulty in memorising sounds and tricky words.

However, not all children's funds of knowledge and identities contradicted the object of the system. Among the six case children, the academic boy, Barnie and the writing bee, Emily, drew potentially perfect child profiles in that the subject's actions could efficiently lead them to reach their objects. They were 'typically developing', five-year-old children who were always ready to learn schooled literacy. Therefore, the teaching staff did not create an additional intervention or action for those children. In sum, the diversity existing in the children's funds of knowledge and identities were

responded with particular actions to reach the object of the system. Some children had to change themselves or sacrifice their interests to fit the expectations of the teaching staff.

6.1.2.4. Funds of Knowledge and Identities as a challenge: Children Learning EAL and Children with Special Needs

The nature of object was ambitious in schooled literacy standards and it encouraged the class to educate the children to reach beyond the reading and writing ELGs in the EYFS Framework. Thus, the children learning EAL and/or having special needs had a more challenging schooled literacy learning journey than other children. Since I did not interview the parents of the other children and individually observe them like I did the six case children, I could not give the same amount of details on the home life and specific characteristics of the remaining children. However, class observations and interviews with the teaching staff provided a rich set of data, so I wish to highlight in particular the experiences of children learning EAL and children with autism and the sacrifices they made throughout the year.

6.1.2.4.1. Children learning EAL

Firstly, children learning EAL had to learn reading English through the SSP approach regardless of their English proficiency. Therefore, the children who just started learning English in their reception class were most adversely affected. There were two children who did not know any English words before joining the reception; Attila was a Hungarian boy from the other reception class and a Chinese girl, Jingjing, was in our class. Jingjing started the reception in April 2018, in contrast to Attila who started the reception in the beginning of the academic year. They attended literacy intervention groups and had a separate morning phonics sessions with Mrs Green, and later, in the third term, with Mrs King I observed the Hungarian boy with the consent of his mother as well since the intervention groups were being done in the focus class.

The two children had to learn schooled literacy in the way their peers had. Learning literacy through the SSP approach greatly supported Attila in decoding words. However, mostly he could not understand what he read due to his low level of English proficiency. In 14 February 2018, for instance, in one of phonics intervention sessions with Mrs Green

> Six children sat around a table. Mrs Green distributed cards having ‘yes’ and ‘no’ words on its surfaces and put question sentences on the table. Each child had to read one question and

> the other five children had to answer the question showing 'yes' or 'no'. In Attila's turn, he was required to read the question, "Can a rabbit yell at a man?" He correctly read the sentence with a very low voice that anyone near him could hardly hear. Mrs Green requested him to repeat with a louder voice and he read again but he still read it very silently. Then, she read it to everyone to answer the question with their cards. Attila showed his 'yes' card to the question he read. She again said the question and Attila again showed the 'yes' card. Mrs Green said that "If you are showing 'no' then it's correct." And she turned her head to the next child for reading another question.

Attila could properly read the sentence relying on his phonics skills. However, he could not understand the question he read and answered wrongly. As in other literacy sessions of my observations, he spoke below his breath while reading because he had a lower self-confidence in relation to his reading ability.

In our informal talk, dated 29 December 2017, Mrs Green stated that "…now he has started to say sounds…. He is starting to use words now. He hasn't used any. Yeah, he is starting. Yeah, he is just starting in his understanding. It's hard what is expected of him, if he doesn't fully understand." Receptive language develops before spoken language and in December 2017, he had not started speaking in English yet. The TA further explained that she could not be sure about his understanding of the phonics sessions. It created a challenge for the TA that she tried to teach literacy with the SSP approach yet she could not hear any sentences from the child.

The literacy learning process of Jingjing was more challenging than Attila's. She joined the class in the third term without understanding English at all. She was always silent in the class. Jingjing's participation in the phonics sessions occurred by writing the target word looking at other children's writing nearby or repeating the sounds after the TA. For instance, in one of the lowest group phonics sessions,

> Mrs King's aim was practising -or and -ee phonemes and writing words that include these sounds. She gave a pen and a whiteboard for each child and wanted them to write the word, 'fork'. Jingjing was looking at her friend's writing and copying from them. Later, the TA wanted the children to read CVC words such as, cat, pen, sun, log and net. Jingjing had to read the word 'cat'. Mrs King pronounced all the sounds in the 'cat' word and wanted her to blend. However, she could not blend and then the TA read the word. (16 May 2018, field notes)

Considering the experiences of two children who started to learn English in the school for the first time, the government's recommended schooled literacy tool, the SSP approach, was not empowering their second language and literacy development to flourish. The ambitious object of the AS of the class, the expectations of the subjects from the children learning EAL, led those children to memorise the sounds and decode them robotically and copy others' writing, in case they could not memorise the phonemes. However, if a reader cannot understand the passage s/he reads or the passage s/he writes we cannot accept those children as readers or writers.

6.1.2.4.2. Children with Autism

Even though the two children with autism, Jasper and Felix, had their own long-term educational plans set by Mrs Thomas, Felix started having morning phonics sessions with other 'lower ability' children from December 2017. Approaching the end of the first term, Felix started to talk with one or several words and his expressive language started to improve as the days went on. However, he could not form sentences. Mrs Cooper said, on 10 May 2018, that they were trying to support his speech to extend into a sentence.

Felix particularly had difficulty in concentration and blending CVC words as Mrs King explains:

> Um, yeah, he participates well but he struggles to concentrate. He is very easily distracted, but he is very capable of doing it now. When we are doing the sounding out, he is very capable. He is just not quite there at blending. So, when we do, so I said /c/, /a/, /t/, he would struggle to blend it together. So, he said to me the word 'cat'. That is what he is facing at the moment. He finds that difficult but his writing is very good, he can write if I say a word. He can sound it out himself. It is just when it is the other way around when he is trying to read it and blend it together, that he struggles with (Mrs King, interview).

Like Jingjing, when he could not write the target word, he secretly looked at other children's whiteboards. It was one strategy that relieved him of coping with the stress of not being able to answer the teacher's question. Later, on 10 May 2018, Mrs King put a rule that the children should turn over their whiteboard after they finished writing so that children like Felix could not copy from them.

Overall, Felix's developmental path was visibly different from all the other children in that class. Felix's expressive language started to flourish at the end of the first term; then, he started to be taught

schooled literacy alongside other native English speaking children without any disabilities. Particularly, blending CVC words and concentrating on learning schooled literacy at least 20 minutes a day were more challenging for him. In the established AS of literacy pedagogy, Felix had to improve his expressive language and phonics skills at the same time. However, he did not have any chances to try out different approaches to learning literacy since the subjects had to follow the recommendation of the government regardless of the children's individual needs. Also, he did not have a chance to focus on his expressive language development primarily, then learn schooled literacy.

Different from Felix, Jasper had his particular difficulties in receptive language, expressive language and literacy development. Jasper could not say his name throughout the year and his understanding of the world was unique, therefore, he got individual sessions with the TAs until the third term and got literacy sessions with Durjoy in the third term from Mrs Cooper when other children had whole-class and small-group adult-led activities. Specifically, beginning to teach schooled literacy at the reception level segregated Jasper from the other children most of the time of school day. He could only interact with the other children when they were free. Thus, I considered that even though the school was a mainstream school, Jasper had a segregated education. This was mainly due to the fact that the object of AS, therefore, the provided literacy pedagogy, was not achievable for him at all. The subjects, thus, created a virtual individualistic class with a TA within a mainstream reception class.

6.1.2.5. Children's Awareness of Their Own and Their Friends' Literacy Abilities

In the AS of the class, improving children's schooled literacy skills was the priority of the subjects. They showed what their priority was in their attitudes towards children's behaviours, in their questions during adult-led activities and in their formative feedback. Also, throughout the year, the children were grouped and then re-grouped based on their summative test results. The teaching staff openly said that there were literacy groups to the class and that children belonged to different literacy groups. For instance, on 19 April 2018,

> The teacher asked all in her whole class phonics group whether everyone read a word. Since it was at the end of the session, Alice came to the carpet and sat there. Esme saw her and said to the teacher that Alice did not read. The teacher responded that she was not in their group and Alice already did hers (19 April 2018, field notes).

Further, the subjects also implied in their speech that children could be compared in relation to their handwriting abilities and they could be praised if they were better than the others, as happened in the conversation below:

> The children were listening to Mrs Corbyn, sitting on the carpet and she was showing how to write v, w, x letters. The class teacher interrupted Mrs Corbyn and she told the class that last week, she went to the other schools and looked at the writing of reception children. In her words, she said: 'I have to say your handwriting is absolutely super-duper. When I look at other children in other schools and look at their handwritings Ohh, it is not as good as [the name of the class] class. …. The reason is because you do such a good work when you're doing handwriting with Mrs Corbyn.' Then, Mrs Corbyn kept teaching the letter formation in front of the whiteboard (13 June 2018, field notes).

In such a classroom, the children were naturally aware of their friends' schooled literacy skills and their own skills. In relation to their awareness of their friends' schooled literacy abilities, I observed the following incident:

> Emily was requesting her friends to write their names and their siblings' names, if any, on a blank paper of hers. After a while, she approached me and asked whether I can write Felix's and Jasper's name for her without asking those two children to write their own names for her (17 February 2018, field notes).

Therefore, I can deduce that Emily knew that the two children with autism could not write their own names and she asked for my help. The children were also aware of their own literacy abilities.

> Megan and I were walking through the class to get a whiteboard and a pen from a box. Megan started talking with Ted and, at that moment, a child called me. While I was listening to the child, Ted asked Megan about the reasons why Megan and I were doing writing and reading individually and Megan said that it is because her writing and reading are not good. After hearing it, I said 'I love to do individual reading and writing activities with all children. After Megan, I can also do the same activity with you as well'. He accepted this at that time but later when I finished doing the literacy activity with Megan, I called him to come but he did not want to (27 June 2018, field notes).

The teaching staff's evaluation turned into children's self-evaluation of their schooled literacy skills. Megan knew that she had to practise spelling and reading more as her schooled literacy skills were not good enough. Therefore, it should not be surprising that children also compared their writing skills among each other, as indicated in the below conversation between Barnie and Kitti.

> Kitti, Megan, Freddie and Barnie were writing w letters on their worksheets. After completing her writing, Kitti went to Mrs Corbyn's table and showed her writing. The TA said to her that her writing was neat and she had done it very quickly. Kitti came back to the table and said to her friends in great excitement that "You know Mrs Corbyn says 'I was super-duper quick and I am super-duper neat.'" Meanwhile, Barnie was writing w letters, remembering that Mrs Corbyn wanted children have sharp points in their w letters.
>
> Barnie: Look how sharp the top one is.
> Kubra: Wow, super.
> .
> Kitti: Miss Firat, shall I show you how sharp I can do it?
> Kubra: Yeah.
> Kitti: (showing her w letters)
> Kubra: Wow, it is really sharp.
> Barnie: But not as sharp as mine though. (13 June 2018, field notes)

The conversation between the two children indicated that the children evaluated their own writing and they compared each other's writing in line with the expectations and assessment of the TA. The priority of the subjects in children's literacy learning at the class level is evident in children's way of assessing their own literacy practices. When I zoom out from the children's conversation and look at the structure of the AS of literacy pedagogy as a whole, I can argue that what matters for the children is similar to what matters for the subjects; their schooled literacy skills.

6.1.2.6. Children Showing Their Agency through Passive Behaviours in Adult-Led Literacy and Phonics Activities

The expectations of the subjects from the community was to focus on schooled literacy practices and reach the expectations exactly the way they planned. The AS was strict enough that children had to follow the subjects' instructions and guidance. Hence, I do not have any fieldnotes that indicate that

children contributed to changing the structure of the adult-led literacy activities during adult-led activities. Yet, I have recorded that children actually showed their agency during adult-led literacy activities in ways that allowed the subjects to understand what they wanted to do. The actions I recorded are hiding their toys, gazing more favourable activities and changing the function of materials.

First of all, some children secretly brought their small toys (i.e., small racing cars) to adult-led activities and hid them under their legs and chairs. The children actually wanted to continue playing with their toys. Since the small group adult-led activities were the activities that all children had to do and came to do when their names were called, the children brought their small toys with them in secret so that they could keep playing after the activity.

Secondly, some children tried to do their adult-led activity staring at more enjoyable activity happening in the class. In the first findings chapter, I mentioned the fieldnote about how Oliver was entitled to do phonics and then literacy-art activity in the duration of time that another child who was not considered as 'lower ability' did only the reindeer literacy activity and watched the cartoon freely in the Rule Section (See section 5.4). Oliver's reaction was not verbal owing to the power of the teacher over children's actions. Yet, anyone could understand that he was trying to the literacy-art activity gazing at the cartoon and that that he wanted to watch the cartoon instead.

Thirdly, some children changed the function of the writing materials (e.g., letter formation worksheet) and re-used them in a way they enjoyed more during adult-led literacy activity time. For instance, in 31 January 2018,

> Children started the day with a phonics activity, led by the class teacher at 9:10 in the morning. Without any break, they had a letter formation session with Mrs Corbyn. It was one of the days that Mrs Corbyn brought structured letter formation worksheets for all tables. Children had to practise writing letters and words until 10:10. Freddie at a table completed his letter formation worksheet, which was on writing l, u and t and started decorating his paper with dots. Ted and David were also bored with the structured writing materials. They drew pictures on the two surfaces of the worksheet. (31 January 2018, field notes).

Children were creative in that they could use directive letter formation worksheets as a tool for their drawing. But the TA did not approve of their behaviour, shouted at them and wanted them to write their names on the sad side of the daily rewarding list.

All in all, the data indicated that children were subordinated by the tight rules of the AS of literacy pedagogy. Therefore, their voice was almost unheard under such a system. An unwanted action by the children against the structure of the system was reacted with punishment. Yet, the children did show their agency in their behaviours.

6.1.2.7. Children's Use of Two Types of Literacy Learning Approaches Simultaneously

Even though the primary teaching approach of the subjects was SSP in teacher-led activities, children profited from both whole language and SSP approaches in their child-led literacy activities. In all my observations, I recorded that children used literacy for meaningful purposes and profited from the context while writing or reading for an end.

> The role-play area was designed into a café that week. Lilly with an apron on invited me to be a customer of hers in the café. I sat at the table, then she handed the menu to me. On the menu, the following words were written; 1 apple, 2 pears, 3 plums, 4 strawberries, 5 oranges, chocolate cake, ice-cream, corn, pickle, swiss cheese, salami, lollipop, cherry pie, sausage, cupcake and watermelon. Lilly asked me, What would like to have? I ordered salami and four oranges, pointing out the words on the menu. In order to write 'salami' word, Lilly looked at the menu and copied from there. However, when she intended to write 'orange', she made use of her phonics knowledge and she put a full stop at the end (7 June 2018, field notes).

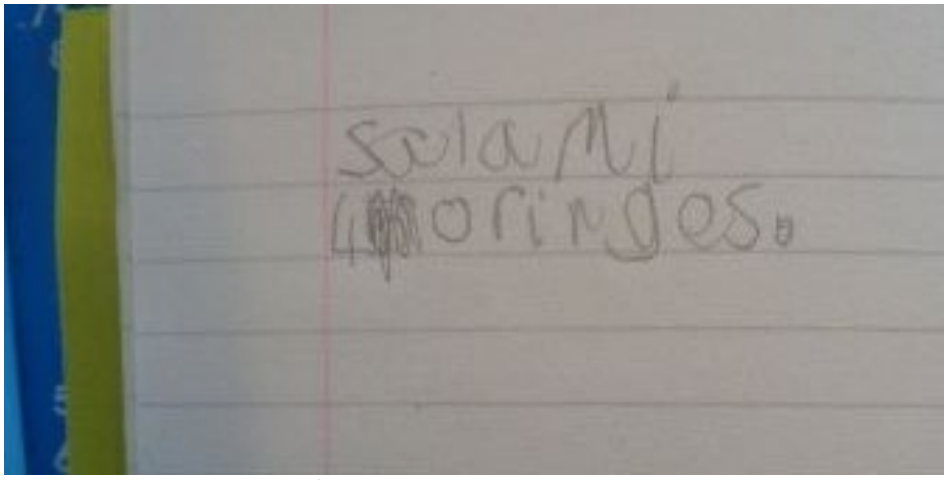


Figure 43. Lilly's writing during role-playing with me

Lilly's writing in Figure 43 indicates that children do not fix on writing using one approach in their writing initiatives, when they are in their free choice time. Also, during the morning story book sessions, I noticed children reading the title and the story by rote, remembering the words from the picture clues of the books as well as using their phonics knowledge for the simpler words. Therefore, children needed plenty of free time for child-led activities and a contextually relevant literacy environment where they could practise their writing and reading skills using the literacy approaches simultaneously.

6.1.2.8. The Use of Literacy in Child-Led Activities

When the children were free to play inside and outside the classroom they engaged in literacy for a purpose. Unlike the adult-led literacy and phonics activities, the writing and reading practices of children were relevant to their real and imaginary life and were mostly done in cooperation with their friends. Child-led literacy activities, therefore, created a community of literacy practice where children enjoyed using literacy for a purpose.

I have divided child-led literacy activities into two groups, as reading and writing, in relation to their purpose. I found five types of reading and four types of writing activities that children used for an end. I made use of the definitions of types of reading and writing activities from the book, *Growing Up Literate: Learning from Inner Cities* by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988). Their categorisation of literacy practices was useful to this particular set of data since I consider that children's literacy practices are context relevant. Yet, different from most adults, children use literacy for a purpose not only in their real life but also in their imaginary worlds. Using literacy in their imaginary world helped them to engage in literacy where they could be exempt from the boundaries of the school. Their imaginary play enabled them to be anywhere in any positions without thinking about the fact that they were in the school. Thus, I added the word phrase 'in their imaginary world' for the following categories; instrumental reading, critical/educational reading, instrumental writing.

6.1.2.8.1. The Usage of Reading in Child-Led Activities

Reading practices were used for five types of purposes and their definitions and examples are given in table 17. The first one was reading print in the environment. As I discussed in the tools section, the classroom was a print-rich environment. The children could look at all the graphemes, numbers, their writing examples on the walls. There were several instances where children looked at the graphemes while writing words and sentences of their own. Further, a variety of story books was also available in the bookshelf of the classroom and in the small playground. The children were observed reading or pretending to be reading story books for the sake of enjoyment. Hence, I consider such reading practices as recreational reading; the children engaged in reading just because they liked to read by themselves.

Types of reading activities	Their Definitions	Example
Environmental reading	"Reading the print in the environment" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.180).	-Reading the graphemes hung over the IWB in the classroom
Recreational reading	"Reading during leisure time or in planning recreational events." (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.139).	-Reading or pretending to read story books in their free times.
Social-interactional reading	"Reading to gain information pertinent to social relationships" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.132)	- Reading or pretending to read a story book to each other -Reading the cards that their friends wrote to them
Instrumental reading in their imaginary world	"Reading to gain information for practical needs of [their imaginary world]" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.125)	- Reading the print in the role play area (caterpillar café, airport, pizza shop) -Reading the writing on a 'credit card' or on a blank paper to do shopping with it
Critical/educational reading in their imaginary world	"Reading to fulfil educational requirements of school and college courses; reading to increase one's abilities to consider and/or discuss political, social, aesthetic, or religious knowledge; reading to educate oneself." (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.152).	- Reading phonics and word cards

Table 17. The types of reading activities that children engaged in their child-led activities.

Moreover, the children did reading related to their social relationships; I categorised it under the type of social-interactional reading. The children's favourite literacy practice was writing cards for cultural and personal events to their loved people. Therefore, the children who received a card as a gift read their friends' writing. Additionally, the children also read or pretended to read storybooks to each other. For instance, in one of the free times,

> Bonnie and Megan were laying down on the carpet with a pillow under their heads. Megan was holding a stuffed penguin toy. Bonnie said to Megan that she would read a bedtime storybook for her. Bonnie told a story looking at the pictures and sometimes asked Megan to point to the pictures of certain animals on the book page they were looking at together (22 March 2018, field notes).

Additionally, all the children loved to engage in role-playing. For some roles, children needed to read "to gain information for practical needs of [their imaginary world]" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.125). Like the example of Lilly's role-playing in the 6.1.2.7 section,

> Barnie invited me to his pizza shop to be his customer. He showed the menu to me and asked me which vegetables I would like to be put on. There were cheese, tomato, pepperoni, ham, chilli, pineapple, peppers and mushrooms. He read some of the names of vegetables including tomato and peppers holding the menu in his hands (17 January 2018, field notes).

In his imaginary world, Barnie became the waiter in the pizza shop. He needed to read the menu to indicate that the shop could prepare a variety of pizzas for his customers. Therefore, that type of reading became instrumental for him to say and show all types of ingredients for customers.

Finally, the children also role played their adult-led literacy and phonics activities as well. Since children had phonics sessions every day from the teaching staff, I observed that children pretended to be teachers and their peers pretended to be her/his students in a phonics session. For example,

> Bonnie, Esme, Arthur and Freddie were sitting on the carpet. Bonnie grabbed the teacher's phonics cards that she used in phonics sessions regularly. Bonnie sat on the bench under the IWB and crossed her legs like her teacher. She started showing the graphemes: qu, ch, ng, t, q, d, g, c, f, e, m, n, o, u, a and s to the other three children. They sounded them out together

doing the specific movement of each sound. Then, Bonnie took some vegetable picture cards and said to the others: “Today, we are going to learn this picture, whose picture is this?”. Their imaginary play continued with Esme pretending to be the teacher of the other three children (30 November 2017, field notes).

This observation indicated that although the repetition of the phonics cards itself was decontextualised and was the second least favoured adult-led activity by the class (see section 6.1.2.1) the children role played it, in the way that children do role playing of almost all events/practices they are exposed to in their real life. By role playing the phonics sessions, they repeated the phonics that they learnt until that time. I can, thus, judge the event as critical/educational reading that happened in the children’s imaginary world.

6.1.2.8.2. The use of writing in child-led activities

In comparison to child-led reading activities, children engaged in writing practices more. Therefore, the examples for child-led writing practices were more varied in my findings. In considering their purposes for writing, I found four categories of writing practices, as indicated in table 18. The first one was recreational writing, meaning that children drew and wrote as they enjoyed doing so. Throughout the year, the children enjoyed drawing and colouring the pictures. Sometimes, they wrote the name of their drawing nearby or underneath.

Types of writing activities	Their Definitions	Example
Recreational writing	"writing during leisure time for the enjoyment of the activity" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.185)	-Drawing, colouring pictures and writing their own and friends' names on the playground floor with chalks - Drawing, colouring pictures and writing the name of their drawings or their coloured pictures
Creative writing	"writing as a means of self-expression" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.187)	-Writing about the computer game played and the documentary watched -Writing about holiday memories
Social interactional writing	"Writing to give information and extend courtesies and greetings pertinent for maintaining social linkages." (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.158)	-Writing cards (i.e., Christmas, Easter, thank you, holiday and birthday cards) to their loved ones
Instrumental writing in their imaginary world	"writing to meet practical needs and to manage or organize [their imaginary world]" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p.182)	-Writing their friends' names on their paper divided with a line and drawing pictures of smiley and sad faces - writing a 'credit card' on a blank paper to do shopping with it

Table 18. The types of writing practices, reported in child-led activities

Moreover, some children enjoyed writing stories about their holiday or computer game or documentaries. Approaching the end of the year, their stories became longer. For instance,

> During their free time, Emily sat on the carpet with a whiteboard and pen. She wrote what she had done on holiday in Cyprus by herself, as illustrated in Figure 44. The story was about what she had done on the beach (23 May 2018, field notes).

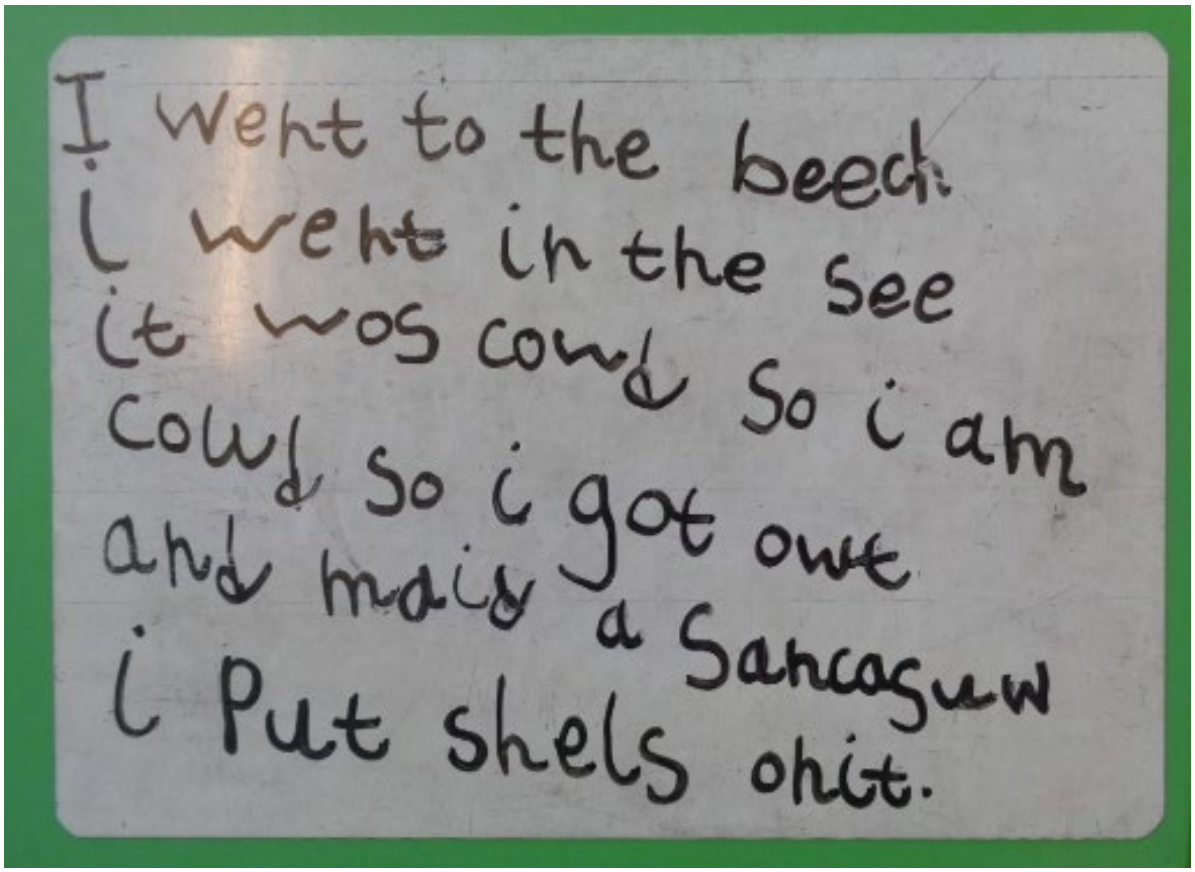


Figure 44. Emily's writing script about her holiday.

Writing cards to their loved ones was the most frequent writing practice of children in their free times. The main motivation for children was that they considered it as a type of gift to give and make their friends, parents and relatives happy. In the definition of Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), this type of writing is referred to as social interactional writing as the cards served the role of extending their interactions with their friends and families. I recorded a large number of cards that children wrote to celebrate the special days, such as Easter, Christmas, birthdays on blank sheets. I also recorded children writing a thank you card over their completed structured letter formation worksheets. It shows the way in which children could actively turn a directive letter formation sheet into a gift.

> On Wednesday, in Mrs Corbyn's letter formation session, Lilly was required to write s letters on the worksheet as seen below Figure 45. After completing it, she wrote a 'thank you' message to her mother and gave it to her as a gift card (2 May 2018, field notes).

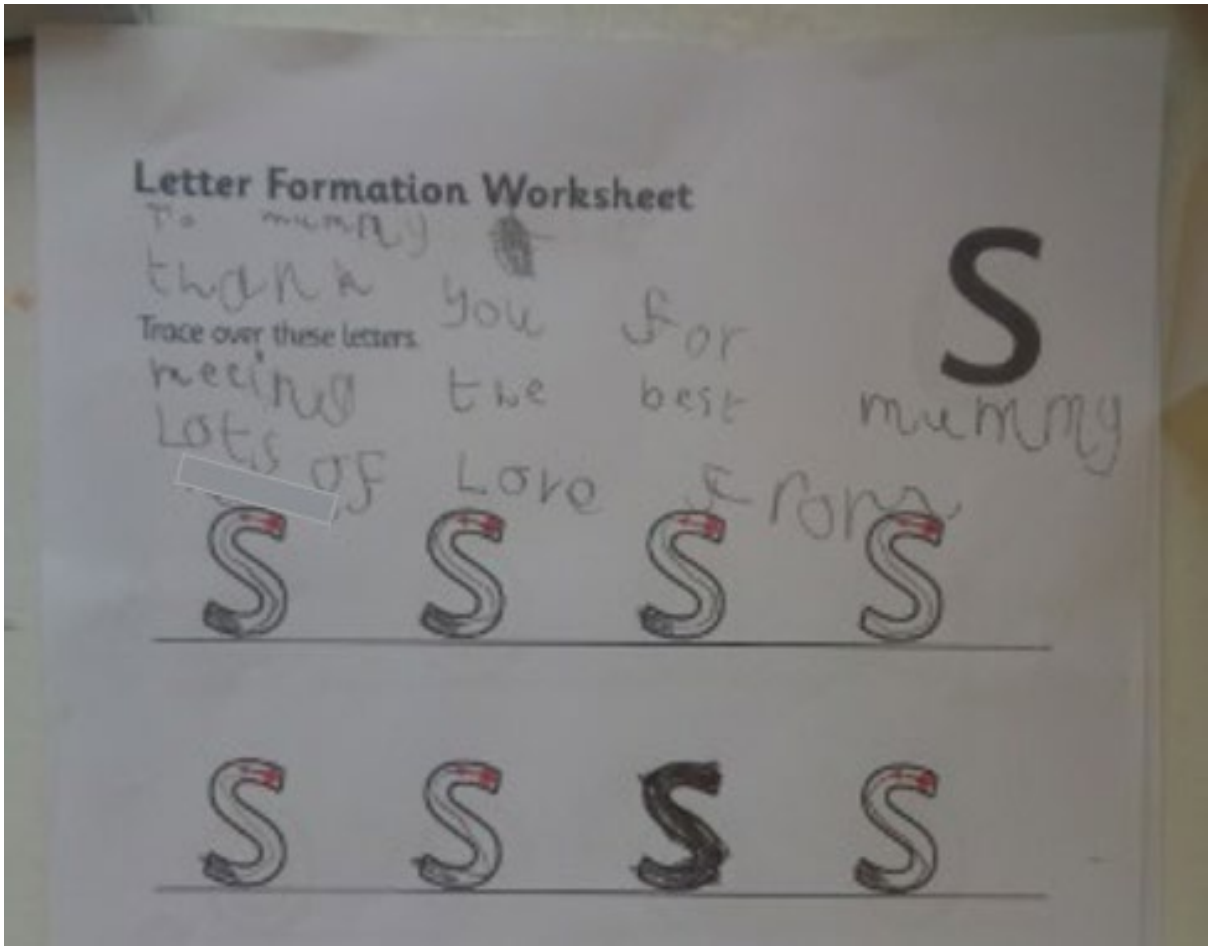


Figure 45. The 'thank you' card of Lilly.

Although the letter formation worksheet came under the category of educational/critical writing she changed it into social interactional writing. In short, children's desire to share their writing existed throughout the year and they were creative in changing the type of writing into the purpose they wanted to serve.

Lastly, the children engaged in writing as a requirement of their role-playing. In other words, writing practice was instrumental to meet their practical needs in their imaginary world.

> In 22 March 2018, for instance, Olivia and Emily were in the small world play table, that was designed as a supermarket table. Emily played the role of a cashier and Olivia had the customer role. Olivia with some toy vegetables and fruits in her hand passed a white paper to Emily imagining that it was a credit card and that she could buy the vegetables with it. Emily refused, saying that it is not a card. In the meantime, Bonnie joined the role play and decoded the sounds of the 'card' word for Olivia to write. Olivia grabbed a pencil from the writing

centre nearby and wrote ‘credit card’ on the white paper as shown in Figure 46. Then, she passed the imaginary credit card to her friend, Emily (22 March 2018, field notes).

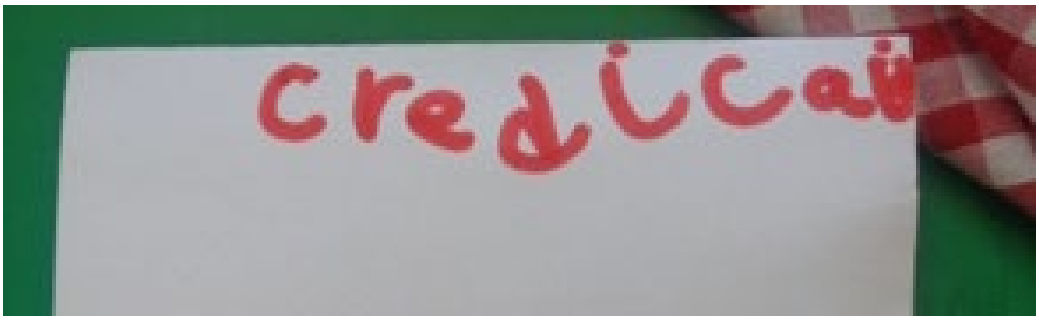


Figure 46. Sofia’s credit card in her role play

In the example, Olivia needed to write a credit card on her white paper to do shopping from Emily’s supermarket. In this imaginary context, the act of writing a ‘credit card’ was instrumental and enabled Olivia to proceed with her shopping.

In another example, the children created a role play which involved the act of writing their friends’ name on a paper divided with a line and a smiley and a sad face drawn in two separate sections. The children conducting role-playing using the smiley/sad side became the teacher and the decision-maker about writing or allowing the writing of their friends’ names on one side of the paper. Although the children were very upset with writing their names on the sad side in real life, they did role-playing of that rule to reward or to punish their friends. Thus, the act of writing their friend’s name in either section had the function of rewarding or punishing their friends in their imaginary play. I, thus, consider that type of writing practice as an instrumental writing.

All in all, drawing, colouring and writing were used for different purposes when the children were free to engage in child-led activities. The freedom of writing anything they wanted also indicated what they liked to do most with literacy. They liked to write in cooperation with their peers, share their writing with their loved ones, and use writing as an instrumental tool for facilitating their imaginary world.

6.2. Subjects’ Views

6.2.1. An increasing struggle between the teaching staff’s beliefs and their teaching practices

The object of the AS was ambitious and created a very complex literacy pedagogy, bounded by strict rules, as I have described throughout these findings chapters. However, after all this discussion, here I need to point out that the teaching staff actually had a great struggle between their literacy teaching practices and their own views about them. For example, Mrs Corbyn said

> I think there is a lot more work for the children to do now than there used to be. There is more pressure on them, if you like, from a lot younger age. To be learning English and the literacy, and the phonics, and the writing. From this age, certainly, they do an awful lot more than they used to … And they don't get that play, they literally have to pick a pencil up and get on with it to now, and it's not as fun for them I don't think. … I think they are too young. I think these are too young to be doing it. When they are only four, some of these children are four when they come in September, and the work that they've got to do, I don't think they are old enough to do. But that's me. I do it because we have to do it. That's our job so we have to do it, and they've got to get the results and the data in for the school, so we just have to go along with it really (Interview with Mrs Corbyn).

Mrs Cooper even considered that the literacy teaching they provided and their expectations of children were beyond the capability of five-year-old children.

> I know they have spellings and things like that and more homework. I sometimes think that even at this age at five years old sometimes it's a lot for them to take in, but I mean we have to do what the government says. I think that's why they're split into ability groups because not all children can pick it up, some pick it up quicker than others (Interview with Mrs Cooper).

In comparison to the past, reception children were forced to learn schooled literacy skills at very earlier ages and the teaching staff felt they had no power to change the literacy system. When thinking about the first part of the object, which is 'to reach the expected level in the EYFS for all,' the teaching staff explained that it was not achievable for everyone.

> Not all children will, because all children learn at a different pace. In a reception class, you may have children who were born very early in September. You may have children that were born very late into August. So, that's almost a whole year. And, you can't, you can't possibly think that every child will get to this level. You can strive for it. And, you can support them in trying to get there. But it's unachievable for some. But it doesn't mean they won't achieve it further down the line. It's just every child is different (Interview with Mrs Smith).

The teacher emphasised that reaching the 'expected' level in the writing ELG is particularly difficult for summer born children. She explained as follows:

> Writing is hard, for summer birthday children it's hard. … I have to think of it as a percentage of their life. It's a big chunk of time never being in school, less than the other children. … …the percentage of your life is less, isn't it? But, when you've only been around for four years, it's quite a big chunk of your life to have not been in school, compared to some of the other children. So, summer birthdays, it's a big gap. Yeah. That's it, you know what it is (Interview with the class teacher).

Mrs King, who was responsible for daily phonics sessions with a summer-born child, the child with autism and the children learning EAL in the third term, thought that special needs children and children with EAL were not able to reach the 'expected' level as well as summer-born children. She expressed her opinion as follows:

> Special needs children, again, probably not. Ummm, especially if their spoken sounds… because it is related to the spoken sounds. If their spoken sounds are not developed enough, then they are not going to be able to apply them to their writing. Again, with Jingjing… if her English is not as developed, then she will not be able to write it down (Interview with Mrs King).

When I consider the whole activity system of literacy pedagogies and the views of the teaching staff, I judge that there is a contradiction between their opinion and their practice. The teaching staff were aware of the fact that some children would not even be able to reach the 'expected' level. However, looking at their teaching practices, there was a massive pressure of teaching schooled literacy on all children, which caused some of them not to develop English well or to miss out on playing with their friends, according to the teaching staff.

This section also illustrates that the motives and the common object of the activity system were not formed taking into consideration the opinion of the subjects. They were completely set by external agencies and the teaching staff, as subjects, had to strive to reach the object as much as they could, putting their own views aside. In such a system, we cannot argue that the agency of the teaching staff exists in shaping and applying their own literacy pedagogy.

6.2.2. Contradictory views regarding the function of assessment

As an indispensable part of literacy pedagogy, individual assessment of children consisted of a very complex set of assessment tools. The teacher was considered as the main person conducting all types of assessments due to her expertise and professionalism. By contrast, the TAs had the responsibility for providing the formative feedback part of the assessment only. Here, I want to discuss the perspectives of the teaching staff on the role of assessment as a whole.

Among four teaching staff, Mrs Cooper, Mrs Smith, Mrs Green and the class teacher, the TAs and the teacher had opposite views about the necessity of the assessment they were doing. However, all of them considered that assessment was for assessing learning outcomes and children's ability in schooled literacy practices. The assessment results could then enable them to review the teaching quality, compare their school with other schools and inform the next year's teacher about the level of literacy knowledge and needs. An example explanation from Mrs Cooper is as follows:

> Well, just, just so you know which children are capable of doing what. And, I think assessment anywhere is always good because especially if it's compared to other schools, you could see what you are doing things right or wrong. So, like, for the baseline assessment, that will come out, every school will have to do that. So, the results that are then there, you know that everybody's done the same thing. So, then you can compare it in a table to see just to see how you're doing, really. So, I think if everybody does the same thing, then that's a good thing. Because you can check, you know (Interview with Mrs Cooper).

The class teacher, however, considered that their current way of doing assessment and its reporting was unnecessary for a teacher with long years of experience. She explained that:

> …when you've been teaching quite a long time, most of the children in there, I can tell you what they're good at and what they need to get better at. And, in terms of the detail of what they need to do, the next steps, I can tell you that without reporting it to anybody or having to write it down. Because it's all in my head and I can say "Well, I know that their letter formation is good, and I can say, he gets his letters back to front and they need to practice that etc." because I've got it all. So, all the baseline and early learning goals, it's formalising that, isn't it, what's in your head. It's getting it down on paper and then passing the information on, and comparing it to other schools, really.

Comparing the schools based on the result of children's individual assessment was not useful according to her:

> Because it's what you're doing in your school, isn't it? So, if you think you're doing a good job in your school and for the children you've got, because all cohorts are different. Like good cohort,

bad cohort, you know. So, I don't think, no. You know, we do what we do, and we do it because we want the children to do well, not because you want to do better than this school or that school.

The class teacher pointed out that it was redundant to report children's learning outcomes and literacy abilities in order to eventually compare the assessment results of all children from a diverse socio-economic background with a different school of children with a different background. Thus, the functioning of the policy level tools produced by the government contradicted the view of the teacher. Nevertheless, the teacher worked very hard and systematically with other teaching staff throughout the year, despite the fact that she did not believe in the significance of the comparative outcomes.

6.2.3. Home literacy experience as an extension of schooled literacy experience

The perspectives of the teaching staff toward parent involvement in children's literacy learning were similar to the purposes of the PI activities they offered to parents throughout the year. All teaching staff believed that parents' contribution was important in keeping children practising their schooled literacy and that home learning should be an extension of schooled literacy practices. For instance, the teacher said that:

> …asking them to help over the holiday. It's just keeping their writing going with some activities name writing practices, letter formation, number formation. So, quite basic stuff… The problem is when the children are in reception, things like pencil grip, and letter formation not embedded enough. They haven't been doing long enough not suddenly disappear in the two weeks that they don't have school. Whereas the older children, you know they can keep going but younger ones if have a big break like that they've got something it goes back to square one. So, if you just keep it ticking over during the holidays which parents could do and that's really helpful (interview with the class teacher).

Also, Mrs Green pointed out the importance of PI as a catch-up opportunity for those children with a potential of 'falling behind' from their classmates. She explained that:

> …I think that if there are any areas where you think they need to probably… they're really not getting or they are really struggling with, you can discuss it with parents and then work out something where they can get involved, if they need extra support at home (Interview with Mrs Green).

Like the class teacher and Mrs Green, Mrs Corbyn wanted parents to support the children in schooled literacy learning at home. However, she was disappointed with current parents' unwillingness to be involved in it. She explained her view as follows:

> I think parents should be more involved than they are. I think a lot of parents just leave it up to us now, they bring them to school at 9 o'clock, and we get on with it and they don't do anything with them at home. And you can see the difference between children who do get the support at home, and those who don't. And I think parents should be more involved. It's their children, it's their lives… … And I think a lot of our parents are not very well educated in a way, and so they are just not interested. They are not high achievers, so they are not bothered about their children being high achievers. … (Interview with Mrs Corbyn).

Mrs Corbyn pointed out that the families coming from low educational background do not give importance to support their children to be 'high achievers'. The phrase 'high achievers' also signifies the way she perceived the possible support of parents: teaching schooled literacy as an extension of school practices. Preparing children to be 'high achievers' in the restricted aspect of literacy, schooled literacy, was only put on the shoulders of the teaching staff, according to her. Thus, she was not content with the current schooled literacy participation of the parents.

6.2.4. Parents as evidence collectors for children's assessment

The function of the assessment was to objectively collect children's work samples as evidence and test children's schooled literacy learning against the object of the AS. Also, due to the unspoken rule that assessment required a higher level of professionalism and expertise in teaching, the class teacher had the major role in children's assessment. By contrast, the TAs had limited and structured formative assessment responsibilities. In such a system of literacy pedagogy, all teaching staff, except Mrs Green who was not sure how to respond, perceived that the involvement of parents in children's assessment process should be in collecting work samples, done at home, as evidence to make a clear and objective judgement from a rich set of evidence about the children's schooled literacy learning outcome.

> I think evidence they provide informs our assessment. … You can use that to inform, you know, some of those boxes that are quite hard to tick, if you're not seeing it. That's really useful. … Mainly because it's quite hard for them to compare like for like, to moderate their judgements what they think would be really good against other parents who might not think something was so good (Interview with the class teacher).

> No, I think the literacy assessment is down to schools and what we know they can do. I mean

it's alright parents saying "Oh, my child can do this; my child can do that" but then when they get into school and you find, oh, well, actually they can't. So, I think you have to keep that separate. Otherwise, parents would have them up here, when really they're down here. So, I think that's best the way it is, yes (interview with Mrs Cooper).

I do think that at school, we know the children better with their reading and writing and what they're capable of. I think if they went home and did some writing, it wouldn't be as focused as if we do here at school, you know, focusing on the capital letters, finger spaces and full stops. Parents wouldn't maybe be pointing out that to children whereas at school, we make sure that is what they do in their writing and reading again, if they make mistakes, I think, at school we are more likely to correct that knowledge than the parents would do at home (Interview with Mrs King).

Mrs Corbyn: Parents don't always tell us the truth. They'll say the children can do something when they can't, so I think the assessment is always just done in school, and parents aren't involved in it at all.

Kubra: Do you think they should be more involved?

Mrs Corbyn: Not unless there is a problem. Not unless there are issues and we need some more support. Otherwise, I don't think they need to be involved in it, I think it's down to the school (Interview with Mrs Corbyn).

As Mrs Corbyn said, they wanted the cooperation of the parents more than evidence collecting when there was a problem. The class teacher explained that:

…if it's EAL, children quite often ask parents to help us because of the language barrier.

The inability to communicate with a child learning EAL necessitated the teaching staff working with parents who could bridge the communication channel between the teaching staff and the child. Eventually, the teaching staff could objectively assess the children against their objects. On the other hand, for the other children, they considered that they were the authority on the assessment part of the literacy pedagogy. Their answers also indicate the role of assessment in the focus AS. In particular, Mrs King's answer clearly pointed out that assessment was for testing children's schooled literacy skills and then correcting them in case they did not follow the rules, such as ensuring children learnt to use capital letters at the beginning of a sentence, finger spaces between words and full stops at the end of a sentence.

Conclusion

The formation of the object being affected by the influence of external stakeholders shaped the way parents were encouraged to involve in their children's literacy learning and their children's experience in the school. I have concluded the chapter with a report of what the teaching staff actually thought about what they did in support of children's schooled literacy development. This revealed to me that the staff are highly constrained by external stakeholders and do not have a sense of ownership of the AS literacy pedagogies that I observed in the researched class.

I discuss the implications of these findings in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings from the previous two chapters with key points from the literature reviewed in chapter 2 to discuss the relevance of the findings within a broader context. It starts with a discussion of the key research question: what matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England. Under the umbrella of the first section, I discuss the pedagogical practices used in promoting children's schooled literacy learning, pointing out the division of work among the teaching staff, the organisation of the literacy pedagogies provided and the parent involvement practices in the class. After that, I step back from the practice and discuss the perspectives of the teaching staff, elucidating the tensions between their practice and views. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of my answers to the research questions posed at the start of this thesis.

7.1. The Priorities that Shaped the Literacy Pedagogies of a Reception Class

Education is a complex goal-oriented system that incorporates the country's political, social, cultural and economic interests in its system (Ozga, 2000). Emphasising one aspect of these interests over the others can, however, create tensions in the system, as has been the case in England's education system recently. The system in England privileges economic aspects of education due to the desire of being a 'knowledge economy' in the global market. In pursuit of taking the lead in trading technologies in the neo-liberal and global market, countries such as England have turned their attention to the education system, particularly the curriculum (Lingard et al., 2013). Since the 2000s, early years education in particular has come under focus (Urban, 2012). It underwent unprecedented reforms with new national and statutory curricula involving pre-defined learning standards: ELGs. Using these, the national government began to assert control over the performance of young children through the use of high-stakes assessments, the 'profile', as an accountability measure (Hursh, 2005).

The first finding is that what mattered was to establish a literacy pedagogy that enabled children to reach the 'expected' level in the EYFS for all and for as many as possible to achieve beyond the EYFS Framework via SSP method primarily. Achieving beyond the 'expected' level was deemed important in order to meet the challenges of future statutory assessments. The teaching staff in the class perceived the expectations of literacy attainment in Key Stage 1 SAT (Year 2) as ambitious. They thought that focusing only on the reading and writing ELGs in the reception year would not provide test results in the Key Stage 1 SAT higher than the national level. The teaching staff, in other words, had to take into consideration possible future test results and prepare their reception children to

perform well in the Key Stage 1 SAT two years later. This was driven by a concern that the school should out-perform others in the league tables, as reported in the annual School Performance Handbook.

One of the main findings of the study, therefore, is that the literacy pedagogies in the classroom were established primarily to meet the demands of external agencies. They include the standardisation of literacy learning and surveillance of result via high-stakes assessment, Ofsted inspections by the government, the creation of the school's own standardisation and surveillance by other teaching staff, including Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers and the other teaching staff in the school. The individual needs and interests of the children as the community members of the class were of secondary importance in determining literacy pedagogies. More specifically, the teaching staff considered that all teaching staff, regardless of the year group they taught in the school, were accountable for the results of high-stakes assessments, since the school success in high-stakes assessments was what demonstrated the success of the teaching staff. As the teacher stated, it was a 'collective responsibility'.

Deciding the worth of a school and its teaching staff through different accountability means, such as performance league tables and school inspections, are seen by some critics as 'a system of 'terror'' that produces a culture of performativity (Ball, 2008). "The performance of individual subjects of organisations serves as measures of productivity or output or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection" (ibid., p.49). The school hence turned into a marketplace that the teaching staff compete with other teaching staff across the country by comparing their 'production' or the 'output' of their service (children's results in national assessments in this study) (Maisuria, 2014).

Due to constant monitoring, surveillance and judgement of the school's performance against set literacy targets, the reception class became a preparation year for literacy in the rest of primary school and its national assessments. The focus class was similar to other reception classes in England in working towards a set of literacy standards formed from the expectations of the external agencies. In November of the data collection period (September 2017 and July 2018), Ofsted released a report titled *Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools* (Ofsted, 2017). The report was about what matters for the headteachers and teachers in preparing their reception curriculum, their pedagogical practices, and the influence on children's 'outcomes'. The implications of the report resemble my findings as Ofsted inspectors concluded that the headteachers of 'good' and 'outstanding' schools believed the ELGs did not align with the heightened literacy standards of the national curriculum after its revision in 2014. The report suggests that they

feel it does not make children ready for the standards in Year 1 and the further standards in primary schooling. Therefore, schools created their own standards with more concentration on reading, writing and maths, which are higher than the ELGs in the EYFS. More importantly, the report emphasised that the participants did agree with the idea that some reception children cannot 'catch up later', since they commented that "children's achievements up to the age of five can determine their life chances." (Ofsted, 2017, p.5). This view also legitimised Ofsted's and, indeed, the government's claim of 'the earlier, the better', and that the reception year is a preparation for the national curriculum (ibid.). My focus classroom is clearly typical of other reception classes in this period in feeling the need to raise expectations of reception children in literacy in order to meet future expectations, which supports the trustworthiness of the study in this aspect.

Ellis and Moss (2014) state that Ofsted's wide range of responsibilities from inspecting phonics teaching in schools to in-service SSP professional training could restrain schools from integrating other literacy teaching approaches into their pedagogical knowledge (see Ofsted's responsibilities in section 2.4.2). This study reached a similar conclusion in that the school felt the need to raise literacy standards through the phonics method. They had a 'collective responsibility' in following the Ofsted's expectations, or more accurately, a 'collective pressure' by the Ofsted inspectors.

With early literacy education being driven by later educational demands, reception has effectively turned into a new Year 1. As Moss argues (2012, p.356), the hierarchy of "assuming the 'lower' educational level, ECE [Early Childhood Education], must serve the needs of the 'higher', CSE [Compulsory School Education]" is too simple, linear and monological, "assuming the child and her learning follow predetermined, sequential and predictable stages… with one-way communication from higher to lower." Above all, Moss argues, it fails to grasp "the otherness or alterity of ECE, making the Other into the Same."

Moss (2012) identifies the otherness of early years education in the following ways. Early years education institutions create a learning environment where children co-construct knowledge in a dialogue with the community of learners where children form their own self-initiated activities with the wide range of artefacts available (Dalhlberg et al., 2007). They are autonomous and active in forming their own learning paths and express themselves and their learning in the ways they prefer (Rubizzi and Bonilauri, 2012). Therefore, the pedagogy is flexible in its targets, responding to the needs and interests of children (Kagan and Kauerz, 2007).

Conversely, under a regime of performativity, the reception year merges into later primary schooling and becomes 'the same'. In the focus classroom, the teacher confirmed that the teaching staff were monitoring reception children's literacy learning progress, "'Well, we need to be doing this so that, in two years' time, they can be here, so, another two years' time, they can be there.'". To meet the literacy standards of Key Stage 1 SATs, an assessment from the higher stage of compulsory education, the school imposed its own literacy standards (i.e., non-negotiable writing standards) and ensured surveillance through progress review meetings. In other words, to fit the early years education into the later primary schooling or Key Stage 1 and beyond, the school created its own de-contextualised, linear, pre-defined literacy standards. This finding is consistent with that of Williams-Brown and Jopling (2021), who found that Key Stage 1 teachers felt more pressured to teach for literacy standards after the 2014 revision. This study adds to early years literature that reception teaching staff working in a primary school also felt the impact of heightened Key Stage 1 in their literacy standards.

Literacy development cannot be categorised into strictly predetermined stages. There could be loose categories, yet the literacy learning journey can differ depending on the children's individuality (Teale and Sulzby, 1986) and their socio-cultural background. The differences can be especially huge in the case of children with special needs and disabilities. Felix, the child with autism in the focus class, was an excellent example of this. Approaching the end of the first term, Felix's expressive and written language rapidly improved. His literacy development was unpredictable and did not fit a linear trajectory.

The obligation of the reception staff to follow the linear literacy expectations from the 'higher' level of compulsory schooling led the reception staff to teach beyond the writing and reading ELGs in the EYFS Framework. Jones et al. (2014) argue that the literacy and numeracy ELGs can inhibit children's 'gradual blossoming' in the reception year as they consider that the expectations are 'too much too soon'. Based on the evidence of my own study, I would argue that the pressure of learning literacy 'too much too soon' is even more severe than Jones et al. (2014) was afraid of.

The future seems to bring more pressure than what I observed in the 2017-2018 academic year. To explain, Key Stage 1 literacy standards require children to comprehend what they read fluently (STA, 2018a). Their comprehension level should facilitate them to make inferences and respond to questions relevant to the focus passage (STA, 2018a). Given the significance to heighten the Key Stage 1 literacy standards by the government, it is no surprise that the 2020 revisions in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2020) have recently brought more fine-grained ELGs in the literacy area, specifically in word

reading, writing and comprehension. The 2017 Ofsted study seems to be a justification for the change in the content of the 2020 revision.

7.2. Working Together in One Class

The reception teaching staff in this study experienced top-down pressure to meet the expectations of a performative education system and to objectively 'prove' children's schooled literacy outcomes to external stakeholders (i.e. upper primary school teachers, Ofsted inspectors). The monologic and hierarchical nature of this relationship was also evident in the workforce division of the staff.

The class teacher held the highest position in the hierarchy, managing the overall provision of literacy pedagogies. She had the specific role of monitoring the schooled literacy outcomes of all children throughout the year and, when necessary, take new actions (e.g., creating phonics ability groupings in the third term) to boost the outcome. Together with the other teachers in the reception and nursery classes, she shaped the general and specific planning of the class, which created a map for the TAs in forming their own small group literacy activities. However, all TAs had the autonomy to plan their own literacy sessions and decide the learning targets as long as they contributed to the specified literacy outcomes of the groups of children they worked with. The efficiency of the TA's teaching was always under scrutiny by the teacher and other teaching staff. This included the head teacher through an analysis of tracking assessment data.

Moreover, the teaching of schooled literacy was distributed in a way that meant that the more expert teaching staff taught the children specified as 'higher ability' to promote their literacy attainment. The top-down pressure in the literacy standards led to a pedagogy that prioritised increasing the number of 'high ability' children. The teacher with the greatest expertise and experience took on the phonics teaching of potential 'high ability' children in the third term, whereas the TAs taught literacy to children deemed 'lower ability' such as, children learning EAL, summer-born children and especially children with special needs and disabilities. Even though the teacher prepared the long-term learning targets, the two children with special needs received the least amount of literacy teaching from the teacher. This actually contradicted the school's policy in that the SEND policy of the school stated that the teacher should work in cooperation with SEND children on a daily basis. It could certainly be argued that these children had more complex literacy learning trajectories than the other groups of children, requiring more expertise in teaching. Nevertheless, they were mainly educated by the TAs instead of the teacher.

Despite the importance of the TAs in the literacy teaching, the assessment aspect of the pedagogy was almost exclusively conducted, reported and monitored by the teacher within the hierarchy. The TAs had a role in formative assessment only and were restricted to following specific 'rules' for formative feedback. That is, they had to write the performance of the child against the learning objective, comment on whether it was achieved with or without guidance and offer advice for the child for future attempts. Supporting the argument of Eaude (2011) concerning the impracticability of objective assessment, the class teacher expressed the view that assessment is subjective, however, the accountability regime they were operating within required them to 'prove' all children's level of literacy attainment against the neutralised definition of their literacy attainment standards. The teacher even created her own baseline assessment tool to mediate her year-long planning and create intervention groups, as she thought that the judgements of the previous teachers were not helpful. In this context, assessment was considered as requiring professionalism and expertise. Assessment was understood to be evaluating children's literacy abilities against objective standards using objective tools. Assessment was privileged over the teaching aspect of the pedagogy, and it was considered that assessment and teaching are separable.

Furthermore, the information flow was top-down, from the teacher to TAs and from the senior TA to the others. The teacher had the authority of making and re-making ability groups of children based on their phonics abilities and assigning the TAs to the groups to teach phonics and/or writing. Among the TAs, the senior TA was in charge of monitoring the performance of the other TAs in line with the teacher's expectations. The informal discussions between teaching staff were mostly about the performance of children in the phonics and writing sessions. This indicates the effects of the regime of performativity on teacher-TA collaboration, more specifically the topic of information exchange between them.

West et al. (2011) argue that the surveillance of teaching staff not only by other teaching staff within the school but also by external stakeholders, such as Ofsted inspectors and local authorities, is due to the infusion of hierarchical and market accountabilities on the English education system. Under such accountability regimes, the teaching staff cooperate to meet the high stakes external accountability requirements (Newmann et al., 1997). In the focus class, the workforce division and cooperation followed the same rationale. To achieve the narrowly defined literacy standards, the reception class had its own hierarchical workforce division, giving the highest power to the teacher who could judge the performance of the TAs through assessing children's literacy skills with ongoing objective, narrowly defined accountability measures, while the TAs were self-directed in their literacy activities

with their groups of children within these narrow goals. In this respect, the school could be said to resemble a corporate business (Ozga 2000); what mattered for the teacher was the outcome of the investments, in other words, the literacy learning outcome of the children. Thus, the TAs' planning and their teaching practices or the nature of the children (i.e., having a disability) were not prioritised topics for discussion among the teaching staff unless they directly impacted the narrow literacy standards.

The workforce division in class was in line with the changes outlined in *Time for Standards: Remodelling the School Workforce* (DfES, 2002). Gunter and Rayner (2007) argue that the policy itself is not right pedagogically, that the reform of the workforce is primarily organisational. To explain, the workforce division, first of all, separates pedagogy into two distinct aspects that can be performed by different staff: teaching and assessment. Secondly, it narrows down the functions of assessment and teaching. That is, although the TAs were self-directed in their planning and teaching, they were aware of the literacy standards that the teacher assessed. The literacy activities performed by the TAs had to contribute to the children's acquisition of literacy standards. This inhibited the formation of culturally relevant literacy pedagogies involving the pedagogical vision of the teaching staff (Newmann et al., 1997). Eventually, the teaching staff are no longer independent in forming their own literacy pedagogies (Hatch, 2002). Instead, they are simply entitled to provide literacy activities that fit the frame of the standardised definition of literacy learning targets. This transformation in schools can be seen as a form of teacher de-professionalisation (ibid.; Connell, 2013).

Similar to Hatch (2002), Ball (2003) and Day et al. (2007) have argued that performativity as a policy technology not only changed the focus of education but also re-defined the nature of teaching as a profession. It created a new sort of teachers and teaching assistants. The ranking of schools by assessment results in the league tables was seen as highlighting the quality of the teaching staff (Ball, 2003). The teacher as the manager of the class has the role of imposing the necessities of performative culture on the TAs, such as making ability groupings and assigning them to the TAs and controlling their efficiency and quality of their teaching through accountability measures (ibid.). In the meantime, the teacher also commits fully to the process of achieving the set literacy standards (Ball, 2003),

In the focus class, the teacher's teaching was skewed mainly towards teaching 'high ability' children, as the year proceeded. Not only children with disabilities, but also other children in the 'low ability' category, had less phonics teaching from the teacher. The children with autism received the teacher's attention least among the 'lower ability' children, since it was expected without any hesitations that

they could not reach the 'expected' level in the ELGs. Instead, the 'high ability' children received their education from the teacher with the highest experience and qualifications. These findings are similar to those reported by Webster et al. (2010) in that the primary (Year 1 and the upper level) and secondary students classified as 'higher ability' by the school received the highest amount of teacher support. Whereas students classified in the 'lower ability' group received a higher amount of TA support. The findings can also be explained with Ball's assumption (2003) that "if this teacher's school managers wanted to extract increases in performance as measured against external targets or competitive averages, they would be unlikely to 'invest' in work with children with special needs where the margins for improved performance are limited" (ibid., p.223). This study indicated that the student performance based investment of the teacher and TAs exists in reception classes as in the case of the study with Year 1 and above levels of schooling (Webster et al., 2010).

On the one hand, the neo-liberal argument behind setting standards is to ensure fairness, especially for children disadvantaged background (Hursh, 2005). On the other hand, however, the current study shows that standardisation of literacy learning actually created inequalities in the literacy pedagogies provided for those children (Taguchi, 2011; Connell, 2013). The 'lower ability' children received differing literacy pedagogies from the teaching staff with lower qualifications and less experience precisely because of their assessed performance against narrow literacy standards. Webster et al.'s (2010) study indicated a negative relationship between the amount of time TAs supported primary and secondary students of 'lower ability' and their learning outcome in the English subject. Therefore, the intense TA support of those children systematically disadvantages them rather than encouraging equality among all children.

Successive governments in England funded several studies relating to early years workforce in 'quality' educational provision (e.g., Moyles et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2007; Nutbrown, 2012). These studies highlighted the significance and necessity of teaching staff with higher professional expertise. However, there is still an ongoing dispute over the early years teaching workforce and its status in England (Cameron, 2020). The source of this dispute stems from the neo-liberalisation of schools by the government. Neo-liberal discourse encourages flexibility in the recruitment of the teaching workforce; the system promotes part-time and contractual employment (Connell, 2013). As a consequence, the schools tend to employ teaching staff who would accept to work with temporary contracts and lower wages. Generally, these teaching staff tend to have lower levels of professional knowledge. This study, as well as previous studies (e.g., Webster et al., 2013), indicate that the primary educators of a certain group of children (e.g., children with SEND, children learning EAL, children from

lower socio-economic family background) are the teaching staff who have lower levels of professional knowledge.

In considering the division of labour among the class teacher and TAs as a whole, it is clear that the teacher had a heavy workload in the reception class, mainly in managing children's literacy learning outcomes. In 2003, the government's reform of the school workforce was established on the grounds that teachers had too many work responsibilities, thus they could not effectively improve children's learning outcomes to the 'expected' standards. However, the study found that the teacher workload is still very onerous. This finding is consistent with what has been found in the mixed method study by Hutchings et al. (2009), that the workload of primary school teachers had not significantly changed since the reform. The new requirements stated in the revised national curriculum and other educational reforms resulted in primary school teachers having to work as intensely as before.

In conclusion, in this section I have discussed how performativity, used as a neo-liberal tool, shaped work division in a social service and changed the division of the workforce, to create circumstances that have similarities with a private corporation's division of labour (Connell, 2013). This is that the teacher, as the manager controlling the product, is intervening in the nature of grouping when necessary, and the TAs as the employees striving to produce the 'expected' level of outcome against objectively defined standards. Shaping the workforce this way created contradictions in the pedagogy and raised concerns about the de-professionalisation of teaching staff as well as fairness in the literacy provision for a certain group of children, including children with SEND, children learning EAL and children from lower socio-economic family background. I move on now to discuss the implications of this workforce division on literacy teaching practice and on children's literacy learning experiences.

7.3. The Organisation of the Literacy Pedagogies

The English early years education system has contrasting discourses in play (Anning et al., 2004; Trevor et al., 2020). On the one hand, relying on the premises of developmental psychology, the system stresses 'child-centred' pedagogy with the contribution of the government-funded studies including the EPPE Project (Sylva et al., 2007) and the suggestions of Ball (1994) in his report on principles of high quality early years education (Trevor et al., 2020). On the other hand, the system privileges a school readiness discourse, that early years education should prepare children for compulsory primary schooling, specifically by teaching schooled literacy skills. I will now discuss how the organisation of literacy pedagogies (from planning, teaching and assessment, physical materials, reinforcement to

informal class rules) is rooted in this pedagogy informed by 'child-centred' pedagogical premises but overridden by a discourse of school readiness.

According to Coltman and Whitebread (2008), the school readiness discourse is privileged through a national curriculum with separate subjects (i.e., literacy in the EYFS Framework), however, they argue that this type of division may result in a 'lack of coherence' or 'artificiality' in the pedagogies for early years children (ibid.). This causes "a divide between the familiar world of the children and the sterile world of hierarchical skills" as it does not have 'functionality' and meaning in the children's world (van Kuyk, 2009, p.963).

In the focus class, the reading and writing aims of resources in Key Stage 1, in the EYFS Framework as well as non-statutory guidelines in the area of literacy learning (i.e., *Letters and Sounds*), drew a map for the teaching staff to make specific plans on schooled literacy expectations and then assess the learning outcome of the adult-led literacy activities. This finding is consistent with the research suggesting that teachers from all school levels, including early years, prepare their lessons in considering the academic learning objectives (Hutchings, 2015). These were particularly high expectations given the pressures from external agencies to the class in relation to children's literacy.

To explain the teacher's planning of literacy pedagogies in the focus class, I separated these into two groups: general planning and specific planning. In general planning, the aim of the teacher was to introduce topics that are culturally relevant, responsive to children's needs and interests. The specific planning aimed to direct children's schooled literacy skills towards predefined standards. The interest of the external forces in children's schooled literacy illustrated its power in practice with detailed, directive policy, school level documents (i.e., *Letters and Sounds*). The children's schooled literacy outcomes from the previous week's teaching were used in teaching and assessment, however, there was no external document that the teacher was obliged to follow in the general planning, where she had limited freedom to listen to the interests of children. I refer to it as 'limited freedom' as she had to fit the topic and its relevant resources into the schooled literacy targets, as defined in the specific plan. Overall, it created a daunting task for the teacher.

The challenge facing the teaching staff was evident in the following findings. First, the nature of adult-led literacy and phonics activities in the form of whole-class, small-group and individualised activities was aimed at making children reach a specified schooled literacy learning goal. The literacy sessions involved more contextually relevant activities promoting children learning literacy than the phonics

sessions. The type of activities in the phonics sessions involved limited types of repeated and de-contextualised activities. Nevertheless, children had to learn and practise their phonic knowledge across all adult-led literacy and phonics activities, thus, the schooled literacy learning targets subordinated children's learning of the content and the function of the literacy activity. The activities were not, in other words, flexible to permit children agency in their content and shape. Children were not permitted to write their creative sentences under adult guidance or read their choice of words and/or sentences and/or stories, which Bennett (2008) warns is the consequence of 'schoolifying' early years education. Looking at the broader context, this approach also contradicts with the desire of producing creative technologies to trade in the global market (Hursh, 2005). If the schools do not encourage creativity in the pedagogies provided for them it may not be possible to have human capitals having creative tradeable ideas in the future.

The over-emphasis of the schooled literacy aspect of learning enabled the teaching staff to evaluate individual children's schooled literacy abilities against the specified learning goal. As the teacher said in the interview, the specific planning involved rigorous assessments with phonics. In addition, the TA workforce was used almost exclusively to boost the schooled literacy skills of the children, except for their roles in taking care of the hygiene of two children with SEND. Thus, the TAs' planning strongly resembled the teacher's specific planning. The children's level of schooled literacy abilities, and the long-term learning and development standards of the two SEND children mainly constituted the tools that the TAs followed in the planning.

The skewed use of the TA workforce in line with the school readiness discourse was evident in the planning of the learning tables. The senior TA, Mrs Corbyn, was the only TA who had the autonomy of designing the learning tables in her Wednesday morning sessions. In comparison to the diversity in the type of materials that the teacher put in other days of the week on the learning tables, the tables on Wednesday mornings were mostly paper and pencil-based activities, not relevant to the topic of the week – they were directive, such as writing certain letters or words repeatedly. Approaching the end of the year, the variety of the materials narrowed further in her sessions. However, on the other days of the week, the teacher planned and set out learning tables and learning corners with contextually relevant materials, where children applied their whole language and SSP approaches in their child-led activities. The lack of balance between the variety of resources caused some children to have adaptation problems.

It can be argued that having a curriculum separated into subjects can ensure the skills (schooled literacy in this context) and concepts are covered in a systematic and step-by-step sequence (Coltman

and Whitebread, 2008). Supporting this argument, the teaching staff taught schooled literacy through the systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) approach, which is a very clearly defined step-by-step teaching approach. The teaching staff made use of the government's non-statutory guidance; *Letters and Sounds* document and a commercial phonics scheme, *Jolly Phonics*, which was used as a subsidiary tool for teaching through SSP. Teaching literacy started from the simple (i.e., single letter phoneme correspondence) to more complex phoneme-grapheme correspondence (i.e., the phonemes of the split-vowel diagraphs) as well as teaching to memorise high frequency words.

Exclusively teaching literacy systematically using synthetic phonics created issues in teaching literacy. The staff promoted children spelling and reading words using the graphemes they had learnt so far, termed 'phonetically plausible' reading and writing. For instance, when a child writes the 'eight' word as 'ait' the staff accepted it as correct since it was phonetically plausible, and the child used the 'ai' and 't' graphemes previously learnt. This created a contradiction in children's learning and a challenge for the staff's teaching. Firstly, this rule did not allow children to attempt to spell correctly until they had learnt all the graphemes in a word. Thus, the boy had to spell 'ait' since they had not learned 'eigh' yet. However, a child could learn how to write or read 'eight' by the whole language approach or by being exposed to the print 'eight' word in the school and/or home environment. Also, a 4- or 5-year-old child could write the 'eight' word non-phonetically (e.g., ght). The same child can even write letter strings, considered as an earlier stage of spelling development, and phonetically plausible words, considered as the last stage before conventional spelling, on the same paper (Bus et al., 2001). Those children's forms of writing are considered achievements, and should be encouraged to practise and explore different ways of forming their own words (ibid.). Otherwise, it is argued that they could experience demotivation and low self-confidence in their literacy learning process (Scott, 2008).

More specifically, relying on SSP knowledge has the danger of misleading children as they transfer their phonic knowledge when attempting to read high frequency words, thirty percent of which cannot be read through phonic knowledge, as listed in the *Letters and Sounds* (Gardner, 2019). In general, the English language does not entirely fit reading though phonetic language (Marshall, 2012). Moreover, some children mixed up writing the correct grapheme as more than one grapheme represents the same sound such as 'ai', 'eigh', or 'ay'. Lastly, the SSP approach requires a heavy emphasis on memorisation of discrete graphemes, which naturally turns into a more challenging learning process for children with a history of dyslexia in their family or summer-born children.

Teaching through the SSP approach shaped the nature of child-staff interaction during literacy and phonics activities. The communication among them became recitational, where the staff started the

conversation with questions and the child selected by the staff member responded (Gutierrez, 1993). This was mainly because the staff had to objectively record the number of graphemes and high frequency words that individual children had learnt or needed to practise further.

In such a learning environment, the responsibility of the teacher is to 'deliver' or 'transmit' the required set of phonics knowledge to children, as is defined in the EYFS framework (Coltman and Whitebread, 2008), and ensure that children have acquired it through objective skill-based assessment tools. This type of interaction simplifies children's learning process, implying that they are passive receivers of the literacy teaching offered and their participation is limited to responding to a question if/when asked. Learning is therefore individual; there cannot be cooperation among children during adult-led activities. Children's learning process is much more complex than this. Individual children's learning is diverse with distinctly different ways of learning to each other (ibid.).

Furthermore, the artificiality in the literacy pedagogies existed in the nature of the assessment tools. The primary aim of baseline, formative and summative assessment tools and the assessment storage and analysis software, EAZMAG, was constructed on the school readiness discourse aspect of the curriculum, which led staff to move focus away from the children's funds of literacy knowledge, of which stayed outside the narrowed definition of schooled literacy standards tested through the assessment tools.

Starting with the baseline assessment with its narrow number of schooled literacy skill criteria, the children's schooled literacy skills were under scrutiny from the teacher. Based on the baseline results, children were allocated to ability groups and some of them started to receive more phonics and letter formation sessions due to their lower scores in the test. Then, the year continued with the formative assessments, which were about assessing children's levels of schooled literacy skills against the schooled literacy learning objective of a specific adult-led activity. The results of formative assessments also informed the future specific planning of the staff. The summative assessments including mid-year interim reports and the EYFS Profile tested the children's literacy skills and ranked them in one of three levels; 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' the ELGs.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, maintained primary schools were not entitled to conduct baseline assessment by the government, even though the government had attempted to establish a baseline assessment testing children's academic areas in 2015. The government's baseline assessment tool resembles the focus class's baseline assessment in that both purposed to assess children's

academic skills. In contrast to the justification of the government in legislating baseline assessment (measuring and monitoring schools' quality, not children) (Lynch et al., 2015), the current study indicated that assessment results contributed to sustain the narrowed notion of schooled literacy and influenced everyday pedagogical practices of teaching staff as well as children's literacy learning experiences. As Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017) warned the early years professionals and policymakers, the results of the baseline testing were assumed and used as the starting point of linear and steady literacy development. The focus class would have been the minority in its application of baseline assessment in England. However, it seems that in the 2020-2021 academic year, it will be one of the schools where baseline testing will be applied as the government produced and legislated a new baseline assessment tool having similar academic skills focused objectives.

In a learning environment where children's agency is apparent merely in the general planning, the children's motivation to be involved in schooled literacy activities is ensured with the intense use of reinforcement tools, mainly via stickers, certificates and story books. The rewards implied that children should complete the expected schooled literacy practices to gain a 'separable outcome' (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) consider that starting from the primary school years, children are required to behave in accordance with the attributed roles given by their societies. As a consequence, children's intrinsic motivation to do something for the sake of enjoyment and their interest in learning is decreased. This study showed that the intensified use of rewards to motivate children learning school literacy skills is the indication that early years children are now bombarded with rewards to do non-integrating activities that appeal to extrinsic motivation, which are decontextualised, repetitive phonics and letter formation activities. The activities that are functional and related to children's lives increase children's intrinsic motivation (Williams and Williams, 2011). Intrinsically motivated children would not need to do a certain behaviour for the sake of a 'separable outcome'.

The reward system could also be considered as a type of assessment since children were rewarded on the basis of their 'right' answers to the staff's questions or expected performance during the adult-led activities. I argue that this pattern of rewarding during the adult-led activities resulted in the 'higher ability' children getting more stickers than the 'lower ability' children. Furthermore, as the intervention group children received different stickers from the TAs just for completing their activities, those children were differentiated by the stickers on their shirts. Therefore, the rewarding of children based on stickers created a subliminal way of labelling the children as being in the group of 'high ability' and 'low ability' in the class.

Considering the assessment tools staff used throughout the 2017-2018 academic year, the only compulsory assessment was the EYFS Profile for the reception level. The class teacher formed her own baseline assessment with a 'tick list' (Coltman and Whitebread, 2008) and interim tests resembling the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Some of the statements and the ranking of children's assessment in the baseline assessment were adopted from the non-statutory guidance document, *Development Matters*. Therefore, this study indicates that the formation and application of the class's own assessment tools were immensely affected by the statutory tests of primary schooling and non-statutory guidelines. Even though the non-statutory guideline was not designed to facilitate the formation of a baseline assessment with a 'tick list', the current study and Brooker et al. (2010) reached the same conclusion in that the document was used as a tool for measuring children's development against age phases, posing the danger of 'labelling' some children. Furthermore, since the nature of interim test resembles the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check, it cannot be assumed that it assesses children's reading skills (Grundin, 2018). Instead, its aim becomes testing children's grapheme-phoneme correspondence, of which is a very restricted view of reading ability (ibid.). Eventually, the organisation of the assessment aspect of pedagogy in the class turned into an 'artificial' skill-based assessment process with a narrowed sense of literacy learning.

Additionally, the over-emphasis of the school readiness discourse created inequalities in the materials or physical tools available to the children of 'higher ability' and 'lower ability'. The materials used by children and teaching staff, including technological and non-technological, changed depending on the type of activity; whole-class, small group adult-led activities or child-led activities. There was a pattern in the range of materials available. First, the IWB was the primary tool of the teacher in teaching children daily phonics. Even though the online phonics games were repetitive and consisted of sounding out the phonemes, blending and decoding the words discretely, the IWB drew children's attention as a multisensory tool. The children were willing to touch the screen, respond to the questions and hear the sound coming after their response. Not surprisingly, the existing quantitative studies also found that technology integration into emergent literacy teaching facilitates children's learning (e.g., Cviko et al., 2012, Segers and Verhoeven, 2002; 2005). The children's interest in learning via technology could be one of the factors in improving their emergent literacy skills.

However, some children, especially the two children with autism, received systematically fewer opportunities to learning schooled literacy via the IWB, even though the previous studies conclude that technology integration into literacy education of children with autism is especially beneficial (Oakley et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2018), which could stem from visualising the information (Miller et

al., 2003). The children of 'lower ability' group had to take the daily phonics sessions with the TAs in a small group while the teacher had daily phonics sessions with the majority of children using the IWB mainly. The fact that the children could not engage with the IWB in their free time caused this inequality to be more visible. The 'lower ability' children were, therefore, neither educated in phonics through the IWB nor did they use it in their child-led activities.

Furthermore, other than the use of the IWB, other materials used in the whole class phonics sessions were generally similar to small-group adult-led phonics activities. The tools were directive, in that they served only one purpose of use, which was promoting children's phonic knowledge through repetition and memorisation. The materials in the small-group literacy activities differed in context, in either whole or small-group phonics activities. The small-group literacy activities, except Mrs Corbyn's writing activity, offered children literacy activities relevant to the topic in the general planning. Yet, each activity involved its own phonics focused learning objective written in the specific planning, with children receiving verbal and written formative feedback based on their performance in relation the objective. The children's enjoyment, learning of the topic and their further interest related to the topic were not included in formative assessments. Mrs Corbyn's writing activity every Wednesday morning was, on the other hand, more restrictive and repetitive. They followed a commercial letter formation booklet and taught how to write letters in a conventional way.

The staff had individualised adult-led sessions, listening to children reading their 'reading books', matched to their level of SSP proficiency. The aim of the activity, therefore, was to enable children to improve their reading development via the SSP approach. The book bands however, were not suitable for all children. In the focus class, the two children with autism had a different individualised session, which was aimed at enabling those children to eventually start reading the books through an SSP approach. The TA, Mrs Cooper, prepared the pictures of story characters and asked the children to match the pictures with the written names. After they had memorised the names of the book characters, they would move to the first level of the book band. Thus, the function of the new material was to facilitate the two children in having a smooth transition to using the book bands like all other children in the class. In other words, the two children's individual needs were responded with the production of a new learning tool, which would mediate the teaching staff's support and evaluate those children's SSP skills while reading.

However, Solity and Vousden (2009) found that children's real books also offer suitable resources for reading high frequency words and practising their grapheme-phoneme correspondence skills together

with high quality teaching of phonological awareness. In contrast to 'reading schemes', real books have a meaningful story, written with rich vocabulary. There is no skill-based hierarchy among children's books. Thus, children can select books that are interesting or exciting to them. Eventually it could encourage children to read with high motivation (ibid.). Providing real books to the focus class children, however, may not mediate objective assessment and ranking of children's reading skills against SSP focused stages. Thus, changing the types of books for children would further require a substantial change in literacy pedagogies provided.

Children were offered a diverse range of physical materials in their child-led activities, which offered the opportunity for them to engage in creative literacy practices using their choice of literacy approach. For instance, role play corners and playdough mats constituted literacy resources relevant to the topic of the week and blank sheets with different colours and pencils promoted children completing writing practices in a non-directive way. The current study did not have the aim of exploring the effectiveness of literacy environment on children's emergent literacy skills, however it is important to include the study results of Guo et al. (2012) having that study purpose. Researchers found that having quality literacy materials in a class environment does not have a significant impact on children's literacy learning process. The interaction of teaching staff with children using quality literacy materials makes a greater contribution to children's certain emergent literacy skills.

Nevertheless, in the focus class, children mostly engaged in physical materials alone or with their peers. Children had to stop their child-led activities whenever the staff called them to an adult-led activity and children had to stop their adult-led literacy activity whenever they were called for the phonics or writing intervention activity conducted by the TAs. This was mainly due to the prioritisation of adult-led literacy and phonics activities over child-led literacy activities. This created a hierarchy of importance in the classroom where adult-led schooled literacy was valued over creative literacy practices. In a similar way of thought, the work samples created in child-led literacy activities were less important than those from adult-led literacy activities. Therefore, the staff did not use them as a value for children's literacy assessment, despite its implication of children's current level of literacy skills without the presence of an adult, as well as their interests.

Overall, it can be suggested that the effort of the teaching staff in creating the materials for planning, teaching and assessing was to mediate the literacy standards set by external agencies. In other words, the teaching staff strived to make what was different the same by creating pedagogical materials and applying pedagogical practices so that children with different needs could adopt the literacy

pedagogies of the majority in the class. Surrounded by the accountability measures of the performativity agenda, the teaching staff, and the teacher in particular, used their agency in the topic of the general planning and organisation of the literacy environment for child-led activities. But their agency was not powerful enough to take into consideration or value the children's own creative literacy practices and regard the work samples from child-led activities as worthy of shaping the overall literacy pedagogies in the researched class.

7.4. The Children's Experience

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, there has been a pressure on children to be adult-like as soon as possible (Elkind, 1981). Particularly in the cognitive area of development, children have been placed in fierce competition and if they miss developing their skills as fast as others, there is a chance that they will not be able to compensate later in life, that the 'late bloomers' will be considered as the 'losers' in their community (ibid.).

The current study shows that the children in the focus class were hurried to be 'conventional literates' as fast as possible, mainly through the 'first and fast' SSP approach. Since the beginning of the school year, children started to learn phoneme-grapheme correspondence; later in the year, they learnt how to encode and decode words with the graphemes they learned; this was then followed by requiring children to read sentences in their 'reading books' or the target sentences with comprehension. All three components constitute what is required to be 'conventional literates' (Sulzby, 1992). However, considering literacy development from a scientific angle, 4- and 5-year-old children are generally not considered to be ready to start such conventional literacy learning. According to Chall (1983), an acclaimed cognitive psychologist who developed a staged theory of reading development, children should start conventional literacy skills from 6 and 7 years old, and start learning phoneme-grapheme correspondence, encoding and decoding words in those years. Also, several studies indicate that teaching academic skills earlier does not necessarily provide long-term academic achievement (Marcon, 2002; Suggate, 2007; Suggate et al., 2013). Hence, teaching schooled literacy via the SSP method from very early ages does not seem to be a beneficial strategy in reflecting the efforts of the teaching staff and children in academic achievements.

With power and authority in their hands, adults (i.e., policymakers, parents, teaching staff) create a dominant discourse of the child, childhood and literacy pedagogies. Using the findings of this study, it is apparent that the reception children were conceived as needing a carefully designed and implemented pedagogy to be successful conventional literates in the quickest time. Children are considered not capable enough to decide and form their own learning path, thus, adults should create

a learning environment for the children (Moss and Petrie, 2005; Canella and Viruru, 2012). Their literacy development in the start of the year was primitive, so there needed to be adult-led literacy activities and objective assessments to advance their development (Canella and Viruru, 2012). In the end, the literacy pedagogies provided in the class simplified children's development by conceiving that development as step by step; that the earlier step prepares for the later (e.g., Phonics phases) (ibid.). Overall, this creates a universal vision of a 'natural childhood' which disregards the diversity of childhoods across the classrooms and eventually the world (Canella and Viruru, 2012). In sum, even though we live in the 21st century, it seems that assumptions of child and childhood, of which emerged during 17th and 18th centuries are still impacting the literacy education of early years children.

Children come to schools with rich and unique funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and funds of identities (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014a). In considering the context of the current study, the political, cultural and historical beliefs and ideologies mediate the nature of children's funds of knowledge, which could be the physical environment in the school and home, the nature of adult-led activities, and more importantly the dominant discourse about child and childhood in the aspect of literacy learning. Children, as active subjects, internalise the cultural-historical resources available to them, create their own interpretations and define their desires, their needs and overall sense of themselves, accordingly. This becomes children's 'funds of identities' (ibid.).

This study showed that repetitive, decontextualised phonics activities that target children's learning of grapheme-phoneme correspondence, decoding words and blending phonemes into words were the least favoured activities of these children. On the contrary, children enjoyed listening to and reading stories the most. They especially enjoyed listening to stories of their friends' day with a bear named Goldie. This finding is in line with van Kuyk's (2009) argument that schooled literacy discourse dominant pedagogies, which he names as 'sequential pedagogies', are mainly enacted through decontextualised adult-led activities, and in turn, the activities become 'artificial' and redundant in children's perspectives. Children enjoy activities that are contextually relevant and meaningful to their lives.

Even though child-led activities in this study refer to the children's engagement with their literacy-related practices without an adult nearby, all the materials available for children's use were presented by the teaching staff. Some of them were close-ended or directive (i.e., letter formation worksheet), while others were open-ended or non-directive (i.e., colourful papers or cards). The study indicated that the children enjoyed having the freedom of writing and drawing their own way. Therefore, they preferred writing and/or drawing in the writing centre and in the shed, where they could find colourful

papers with different pens and pencils. On the other hand, the directive and repetitive materials that were for a specific activity, such as writing letters in the letter formation worksheet, were liked the least. Hence, it could be argued that the materials in the learning environment should be open-ended so that children could express their fund of knowledge through diverse means.

Children's experience of schooled literacy learning would change depending on their previous knowledge of schooled literacy, their individual opinion, and their perceptions (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014a). As commenters state, the funds of identities are subjective in their nature (ibid.). In what follows, I discuss how six case children with unique funds of knowledge (personal interests, opinions, characteristic, prior knowledge, family and personal backgrounds) and two groups of children (children learning EAL and children having special needs) adopted their identities to fit into the 'hurried child' image presented through the schooled literacy discourse.

First, Arthur, who was a literacy enthusiast and enjoyed using literacy in his social life, had activities (especially in the area of 'neat' letter formation) when other children were free to play. His fine motor skills were not developed as well as his five-year-old peers' and this difference was responded to with extra writing activities in the class. A consequence of dividing children's learning and development into separate areas can be that the assessment of children's learning is restricted to one aspect of focus (Fleer and Richardson, 2004) whereas all areas of development and learning are linked to each other. When observing children's writing skills, we can observe their hand-eye coordination, fine-motor skills, concentration, their attention span, their knowledge about the content, their creativity and more. However, in Arthur's case, the literacy activity that aimed to improve his fine-motor skills led to him having to put his literacy interests aside and repeatedly write certain letters to achieve 'neater' writing.

Similarly, Megan's desire to learn and use literacy in her topic of interest could not find a place in the literacy pedagogies provided in the class. Her lack of interest in adult-led phonics activities and SSP focused homework resulted in her 'falling behind' in schooled literacy skills in comparison to her peers. Therefore, she received extra phonics/writing interventions, phonics sessions with me and extra phonics homework with her parents. However, having a space for engaging literacy activities that are of her interests would encourage her to learn literacy with motivation and she would spend a similar amount of free play time as her peers.

Children also sacrificed their play and other child-led activities for adult-led school literacy activities. Arthur and Freddie, as the youngest children in the class, were very close and keen to do imaginary play together. However, their play was interrupted due to one of them being called to participate in adult-led activities. I observed their sadness and the change in their actions after the playmate left the other for an adult-led activity. This is further evidence of the impact of prioritisation of adult-led activities over child-led activities on children's social and emotional well-being.

Some children enjoyed decontextualised phonics activities and reading high frequency words repetitively. Bonnie was one such case. She enjoyed learning and practising high-frequency words, and doing homework with her sister at home. Yet, compared to other children in the class, she had difficulties in retaining schooled literacy knowledge and sometimes mixed-up letters, according to the teacher. Her family history of dyslexia could have been a reason as to why she experienced difficulty regardless of being interested in phonics and having a stimulating home environment on phonics learning. As Grundin (2018) points out, children's approach to reading words can differ. For instance, a child can read a word by recognition. The exclusive use of the SSP approach therefore does not give space for children using different approaches.

Children learning EAL however, had more challenging literacy learning journeys than the previously mentioned children. As the image of 'natural child' differs more vastly, the children's literacy learning experience becomes more complicated for those children. The children learning EAL were entitled and supported to learn English literacy and English language simultaneously with the same teaching methods and materials as native English speakers. Attila could learn the mechanics of reading and writing through SSP, however, he could not understand what he read or wrote. Conventionally, to consider that a person reads, that person should understand what he reads. In the case of Jingjing, her schooled literacy practice was verbally repeating after the TA or copying other children's writing. The two children had to study harder and learn faster than the other children in order to fully participate in the literacy pedagogies established in the class.

Since autism is a spectrum, every child with autism has a unique development and learning path with individual oral and written language development. Depending on their perceived developmental delay, they received different amounts of one-to-one literacy and phonics adult-led activities with the TAs. The greater the perceived developmental delay, the more they were segregated from the class level activities. Jasper only had a chance to interact with his friends during their child-led activity times. The ambitious literacy standards made the segregation of those children with autism legitimate in the

eyes of the community. Everyone could agree that literacy learning targets were not achievable for those children. Nevertheless, it leads us to beg the question 'what is the purpose of inclusive early years education if children with and without disabilities can only interact/socialise in their free times?'

Despite the issues identified in the literacy pedagogies described here, it is clear that the teaching staff were not engaged in easy work. The diversity in children's funds of knowledge created challenges to the staff's teaching of schooled literacy practices (Pappas, 1999). They had difficulties in understanding what the children learning EAL had gained from the teaching, mainly because their English receptive and, indeed, expressive language was not sufficient to communicate in this context. Felix had difficulties in extending his speech into sentences as well as concentration and blending the CVC words. Felix at the reception stage had difficulty in reading real words. When he started Year 1, he would be required to read non-words as in the Phonics Screening Check. A study found that year 1 children with autism have difficulty in reading non-words in particular. A child with autism, for instance, had to take the Phonics Screening Check twice in Year 1 and 2 as the child could not read non-words but was fine with reading real words (Clark, cited in Clark 2017). From both sides, the schooled literacy learning through the SSP approach with its ambitious standards was a struggle to teach and to learn. Nevertheless, all of them had to be educated under the same literacy pedagogies and its assessments.

One of the most recent government-funded studies, the SEED project, also revealed that the participant English early years settings were not adequately responding to the individuality of children and preparing their pedagogies in response (Callanan et al., 2017). What is more, is that as the formality of early years settings increased the children's gain from the social-emotional aspect of development decreased (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2018a). Although the current study cannot assert the impact of schooled literacy pedagogy during the reception year on the children's social-emotional development during their later primary school years, the current study reached the conclusion that children were emotionally affected by the 'sequential pedagogy' (van Kuyk, 2009). The SEED project overall highlighted the necessity of integrating children's funds of knowledge (e.g., children's interests, home experience, the nature of parent-child interaction, children's need) into the English early years pedagogy (Melhuish and Gardiner, 2020).

In sum, the dominant discourse of childhood in our time is important in understanding the way we read between the lines of children's funds of identities (Esteban-Guitart and Moll, 2014b). The assumptions of childhood that dominated the teaching of schooled literacy were images of hurried

childhood, a child who is not capable, whose literacy skills are primitive in the beginning and who needs systematic sequential schooled literacy learning (Canella and Viruru, 2012).

Each child had to re-shape and re-form their identities in culturally accepted ways or sacrifice something of themselves to fit into the descriptions and characteristics of the adults' ideal discourse of childhood in the aspect of schooled literacy learning. Otherwise, their differences could create difficulties in their adaptation to their immediate context and create problems in their interactions with the teaching staff.

Children's adaptations to the demands of the external environment did not happen unconsciously. With the staff's explicit expressions and behaviours of what matters in children's literacy learning, children were made aware of their friends' schooled literacy abilities as well as their own. In some instances, the children's self-evaluation turned into comparisons of their letter formation or handwriting skills with their friends'. Previous studies researching the reflections of neo-liberalisation of secondary schools found that students internalised the performativity culture and evaluated their abilities and individual performance by comparing with those of friends' (e.g., Wilkins, 2012a, 2012b; Keddie, 2016). This study illustrated that reception children also reflected themselves in relation to the prioritised values of neo-liberal discourse.

In previous studies (e.g., Roberts-Holmes, 2019; Braun and Maguire 2020), primary and early years teaching staff expressed that that children's well-being is adversely affected due to being in 'lower ability' groups. Similarly, this study found that the children internalised who they were in relation to schooled literacy discourse. It sadly made some children feel a deficit sense of self in relation to their peers whose schooled literacy abilities were judged to be better, and who were therefore put into 'higher ability' phonics groups by the teaching staff. Also, it created a danger to the 'lower ability' children experiencing a sustained feeling of 'being unsuccessful' in their future school experience.

Vygotskian perspectives, however, do not accept that children absorb the adults' guidance and direction the way it is. Children show their agency through co-constructing shared knowledge in their social environment and the cultural-historical nature of the situation. However, in the focus class, their agency was not strong or powerful enough that the teaching staff could hear their voices and re-shape the literacy pedagogies in the class. I did not record any evidence that disclosed children's agency in shaping the structure of the adult-led literacy and phonics activities.

Yet, the children subtly indicated their views, through which adults in the class could have understood the children's intentions. Children showed what they wanted to do during the compulsory small group adult-led activities. For instance, the children brought their small toys when a member of the teaching staff called them to do a small group adult-led activity or they secretly looked at another activity going on while they were doing a compulsory adult-led activity. The children's behaviours could be interpreted as suggesting that the children did not have adequate time for free play opportunities. This was particularly the case for children deemed at risk of 'falling behind' as they received even more adult-led literacy, phonics activities. Secondly, children's agency was observed in their intention to change the nature of the directive letter formation worksheets. In the focus class, children drew a picture on the worksheet after repeatedly writing the specified letters. When the TA noticed their drawing, the children had to write their names on the 'sad side' of the daily reward system. Therefore, I conclude that although there are small attempts that can indicate the children's agency, they were either not seen or were responded to with punishment.

When children were free to engage in child-led activities, however, they decided the nature of their activities and engaged in various literacy practices for diverse purposes. They were flexible in using two different approaches, namely whole language and SSP approaches in their literacy attempts. I acknowledge that children approached becoming conventional literates by improving their emergent literacy skills with culturally meaningful literacy practices (Pappas, 1999). Therefore, I included children's emergent literacy practices (i.e., their reading attempts of storybooks, their drawings or scribbles in the writing centre) into literacy practices as well. However, it should not be surprising that the below discussion and the relevant findings in Section 6.1.2 may not reflect all the emergent literacy practices and children's emergent literacy skills since the variety of children's emergent literacy knowledge can change depending on children's attitudes and the types of which their communities (school and families mainly) enabled them to engage in (ibid.).

Through comparing two different ethnographic studies' categorisations of the types and uses of writing and reading (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983) in the researched communities with their own, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) created a comparative framework for the types of literacy uses in the everyday life of the three studies' researched communities. For the current study, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines' frame enabled identification of the wide variety in the types and uses of literacy that children engage within their free playtime. The current study found that children use three broad types of reading activities: environmental, recreational, and social-interactional reading in real world. Also, they engaged in recreational, creative and social interactional writing in their real world.

Furthermore, in their purposeful literacy practices, children made use of available materials provided by the teaching staff. Even though some materials were directive, such as letter formation worksheets, they turned such directive materials into a literacy tool, whereby it served to have a social function (e.g., a 'thank you' card). The children were creative in reshaping the available materials to serve the literacy practice in their minds. Supporting the argument of Neuman and Roskos (1991), I also argue that the 'authentic literacy contexts' with their relevant materials encourage children to engage in literacy as a cultural and purposeful practice. Also, I add to the argument that children are creative enough to re-structure the nature of directive materials and fit them into their purposeful literacy practices. This is not to say, however, that there should not be contextually meaningful literacy situations, but to emphasise the creativity of children in re-constructing the nature of such literacy tools.

In addition, literacy served varied functions in children's imaginary worlds. The literacy types I observed were instrumental and critical/educational reading as well as instrumental writing in their imaginary world. As with other activities in daily life, play has its own purpose, and its rules shape the behaviour of the child during the activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, those types of literacy practices that children engaged in during their imaginary play had their own rules and purposes, leading children to use literacy for functional purposes.

The roles that were given to each player could abruptly change during their imaginary or pretend play. In other words, children were free to exchange roles with their peers whenever they wanted. 'The more capable peer' could scaffold the other during their literacy practices. The flexibility in exchanging roles enables them to play cooperatively, implying that every child can teach the other in their imaginary play. Neuman and Roskos (1991) made the important point that children's literacy knowledge and experience differ for each person. Therefore, the definition of 'the more capable peer' can alter depending on the literacy use in their specific context of the imaginary play. This ambiguity, however, is advantageous in that all children have different and valuable funds of knowledge in the aspect of literacy experience that they can use and scaffold for their peers in line with the rules of their imaginary play (ibid.). It could also foster children's desire to involve literacy-related actions without having a hierarchy in their literacy engagement together.

In considering participants in the child-led literacy, the findings also illustrate the lack of involvement from the teaching staff in child-led literacy activities that involved imaginary play, despite plenty of studies indicating the invaluable place of child-led activities and its importance in children's literacy development (e.g., Neuman and Roskos, 1991; Neuman 2000; Wohlwend, 2008). The reason was

mainly that the teaching staff were busy with doing small-group adult-led activities that target children's academic skills (i.e., literacy, math, phonics and writing interventions) (Bassok et al., 2016) during some children's free playtime. There was not an opportunity inside the class where all children, the teacher and the TAs, engaged in child-led literacy activities. As it was found in the study of Wohlwend (2008), child-led activities were not the priority of the staff among other types of adult-led activities, which contributed evidence (children's learning outcome against the set learning objective) towards the accountability agenda. Therefore, they were always open to being interrupted by an adult through calling a child or his/her playmate for an adult-led activity.

In brief, child-led literacy activities enabled the children to practise their literacy skills in a contextually meaningful and engaging environment within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Without the pressure of writing the 'correct' schooled literacy knowledge in child-led literacy activities, the children freely experimented with their literacy skills together with the scaffolding of their peers, when needed (Scott, 2008). However, when considered in the broader context of all of the literacy pedagogies provided in the focus classroom, I can fairly argue that the system does not yet recognise the value of child-led literacy activities.

7.5. Involving Parents

> "Despite playing such an important role in children's lives, parents are marginalized by the system – they are *disenfranchized* and *disempowered* in all sorts of ways." (Laing, 2011, p.68, italics original).

The above quotation is from a parent who applied for parental exemption for the EYFS Framework for her summer-born four-year reception child and yet her request was rejected by the local authority. She was specifically against the idea of 'target setting' and 'one-size-fits-all' educational approach believing that it can lead to mental and emotional problems in her child such as low self-confidence or anxiety. Supporting her view, the findings of this study indicated that most of the PI activities particularly focused on transmitting teaching schooled literacy approaches through SSP, which I argue created a deficit model of parents. There were fewer PI activities for promoting literacy learning which was more contextually relevant to children's daily life at home. The impact of this was to suggest that the staff were hierarchically more powerful than parents, leaving the parents to perceive that 'Teachers know better.'

Firstly, the parents' childhood memories of learning literacy would be different from current literacy education in the focus class, therefore, parents, especially the ones having their first children, needed

to be trained in how to teach SSP as an exclusive method. In a literacy meeting at the beginning of the year, the teacher introduced the SSP approach to parents and phonics materials, similar to the materials that the staff used in phonics sessions and Mrs Corbyn used in her letter formation sessions. Thus it was not considered that the parents could adequately support their children's literacy learning with the intervention needed to address this.

Throughout the year, the staff encouraged the parents to practise the SSP approach with their child via 'reading books' and homework. From the start, the children received reading books matched to phonics levels. As the year progressed, the type of homework became specific to the phonics ability groups in the class and individual risk of 'falling behind'. Hence the phonics levels of children became a determinant in deciding which homework tasks they would take home.

Since the teaching staff gave great importance to SSP focused PI activities done at home, they ensured the surveillance of the PI activities related to phonics knowledge in several ways: parent evenings, stickers on home/school organisers, newsletters, and reading reward charts. The parents' verbal and written comments on the performance of their children on letter formation and reading through phonics resembled the teaching staff's comments. This indicated that those phonics focused PI activities shaped the perception of the parents towards the performance of the children. The written materials were further put on children's learning journeys as evidence of their phonics abilities. Therefore, the parents fulfilled the role of an additional TA, continuing to improve children's phonics knowledge via SSP approach and recording their phonics abilities under the management of the teacher. In this way the teaching staff brought the parents into the schooled literacy pedagogies, working towards the overall objective of meeting and exceeding children's performance in high stakes assessments.

The second type of PI activities that promoted literacy learning for an end relevant to children's home life were fewer in number. Other than the PI literacy activities for communication purposes, the PI literacy practices, namely bedtime story book reading, a bear guest in the children's house, school open days for parents, were encouraging children and their parents to engage in literacy for a purpose. Children were not forced to read and write phonetically and the parents could support them in the ways they were more comfortable with, though those practices did not have a value in the assessment of children for the teaching staff. Therefore, the parents and their children were more free in their literacy practices without thinking of the outcome/output of children's learning and it was more relevant to their home experience.

The expectations of the teaching staff were in line with the PI activities they offered to parents. All of them signified the importance of parents, yet the aspect of literacy that the staff considered the parents should participate in was the children's schooled literacy skills. As 'volunteer TAs', the staff considered that parents could extend schooled literacy activities to be done at home and support potential 'falling behind' children to catch up their peers (as it happened to Megan having extra SSP focused PI activities).

However Mrs Corbyn was not satisfied with the involvement of parents, particularly parents with low educational backgrounds, believing that 'low achiever' parents are unwilling their children to become 'high achievers' in school. Furthermore, although the teaching staff had strong views on PI in teaching and doing schooled literacy practices at home, they did not have the same strong perspectives towards PI in children's assessment. Parents as volunteer TAs were considered 'evidence collectors' for a better objective judgement of children's schooled literacy skills. Parents were accountable to bring pieces of evidence of their SSP focused worksheets to school.

The reasoning behind the staff views was that parents did not have adequate professional knowledge and ability to assess their children's schooled literacy skills objectively, which moves us back to the assumption of 'Teacher knows better'. Yet, there was one exceptional condition under which parents could get involved in more than evidence collecting. When the teacher could not assess a child's skills due to a problem such as a communication issue between the teacher and a child learning EAL. Parents could provide a bridge between two parties and ensure the teaching staff can assess the children's skills against their pre-defined standards.

Through SSP focused PI activities, the parents were considered to be key adults in transferring schooled literacy activities to home. Yet, the assessment was not regarded as suitable for parents to get involved in. I interpret that this perspective has its roots in the school readiness discourse regarding assessment. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, all types of assessment tools were formed within the narrowed definition of schooled literacy, leaving children's funds of knowledge outside the definition. Similarly, documentation was used for objectively evidencing the children's learning output against the pre-determined standards (Plum, 2012). The parents were, therefore, perceived that they could bring children's work samples for supporting the teachers' objective judgement regarding the children's level of schooled literacy outcome. There was little place for assessment to be used for more comprehensive purposes with the democratic participation of all community members, including children and their families.

Overall, the perspectives of the teaching staff rely on the deficit model of parenthood in literacy learning, especially in the aspect of the assessment. However, we need to be cautious about the context that the staff were working in. The policy level interventions over every element of pedagogy alongside its objective assessment tools narrow the literacy teaching and its definition into a contextually isolated set of skills, which led parents to have a hierarchically lower position in the literacy pedagogies provided by the teaching staff.

In England, as a requirement of market accountability, state schools have to attract parents to reach their capacity in the enrolment of students since they are funded by the government based on the number of registered students (Acquah, 2013). Thus schools are required to be accountable to parents in that they need to publicly show their results from the previous year's high-stakes tests and Ofsted school inspection reports. After registration of children, however, this study showed that parents and schools change the roles; parents become accountable to the class teacher and the TAs, particularly in SSP focused PI activities. From the beginning of the year, they took literacy training, then they had regular homework and were obliged to listen to their children reading 'reading books', daily, if possible. They were responsible for the evidence of their work with their children in different ways. I name this as a 'parent accountability' system.

However, a parent accountability system related to SSP focused PI activities would neglect the richness of the parent's past experiences of literacy learning and their unique knowledge of their child. As parents' childhood memories of literacy learning differ from the way their child is learning schooled literacy through SSP, this inhibits parents from using approaches they are more comfortable with. In contrast to this, Taylor (1983), in her five-year long ethnographic study with six American families, indicated that each parent supported their children's literacy learning journey in a unique way. The childhood memories and the individual experiences of parents in supporting their children's journeys on the route of becoming literate made them unique. Rather than considering parents as deficit in the way they support their children, Taylor's study points out that what parents actually know is valuable and rich enough to create literate children with individual home literacy experiences.

Yet, giving such literacy training implied that the teaching staff knew the scientific way, which is teaching literacy through SSP in the focus class (Mac Naughton and Hughes, 2003). That assumption side-lines and ignores parents' unique knowledge of their own children (ibid.) and positions them less in power in relation to the staff (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015; Mac Naughton and Hughes, 2003; Laing, 2011).

> …parental knowledge of the child is anecdotal, subjective, ad hoc, individualized and applicable only to specific children. In much early childhood literature concerning parent involvement, parental knowledge is 'other' than professional knowledge in that it is inadequate, misguided or just plain wrong! (Hughes and Mac Naughton, 2000, p.243).

After the necessary intervention with parents and educating them about the 'right' type of literacy learning (schooled), the contribution of the parents was ensured and approved through the differentiated SSP focused PI activities based on the perceived phonics ability of their children. Hughes and Mac Naughton (2000) argue that educating parents about teaching via the SSP approach is related to the desire to encourage parents to be the 'teachers of literacy'. In considering the limited scope of parents' responsibilities attributed by the teacher in the focus class, this is more a volunteer TA of literacy role than a 'teacher of literacy', evidenced in the nature of the parents' written feedback on their children's reading of their 'reading books'.

The SSP focused practices of the parents as 'volunteer TAs' were always under the scrutiny of the teacher. Parents were entitled to send written evidence or defend themselves verbally about their practices with their children in their home but were accountable to the teacher for their practices and for evidencing their practices. Unless they conformed to the parent accountability agenda, parents got verbal and non-verbal warnings such as stickers on their children's home-school organisers. The harshest reality of parent accountability would be ''labelling' of those parents who do not conform to be 'teachers of literacy' (Hughes and Mac Naughton, 2000). The authors explained it as follows;

> Parents who resist becoming involved as teachers – especially as teachers of literacy – risk being labelled not just ignorant but also neglectful of their 'duty' to their child and to the nation. Such a view of 'parental duty' assumes a consensus about the nation's assumed goals. Parents who question those assumed goals and seek an alternative base for their involvement in their children's education face marginalisation, with their particular knowledge ignored or dismissed (p.244).

Not surprisingly, the target parents of the teaching staff become the parents from lower socio-economic family backgrounds and ethnic minority groups. However, those parents' working hours in their jobs generally are higher than those of other groups of parents, which would inhibit them from being involved in their children's literacy learning process in the way the teaching staff expected (ibid.).

The well-known ten years long ethnographic study by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) elegantly showed that even though all families valued their children's education and hoped for them to be successful in their academic life, neither white working class nor black working class communities' oral and written language traditions (i.e., the type of questions asked by the parents, the function of literacy practices in their homes) fitted well with the schools' way of teaching literacy to their children. The learning experiences of those two communities of children, especially the ones from the black working-class community, were not facilitating their school learning, on the contrary, the children of black-working class families were considered as disobedient to the rules and being lazy in the lessons. However, children from mainstream white and black communities started life with stimulating and responsive learning environments that encouraged them to not only say the names of the objects but also discuss about events with their parents. Their narrative communication skills enabled them to have a smooth transition to the school and achieve higher grades in their academic life.

However, all children have their unique funds of literacy knowledge that they created with their community members. The study of Ellis et al. (2020) found that teachers noticing each child's cultural and social capital -children's funds of knowledge, cultural practices and identities- perceived the value of literacy as a social practice, the variety of literacies done at home and attempted to create pedagogical practices relevant to children's social world. In the current study, on the other hand, since the teaching staff's view about parent involvement merely encompassed the cognitive aspect of literacy they were not satisfied with PI activities in schooled literacy.

Overall, parent accountability positioned parents in a hierarchically lower position than the teaching staff. There are parallel relationships for school accountability; teaching staff having a lower level of position than the Ofsted inspectors. Even though I argued that parent accountability was only exercised over SSP focused PI activities, the findings show that there is an inward intrusion to home literacy practices through the remaining PI activities as well. The PI activities promoted learning literacy for a purpose, especially bedtime stories, but the implication is that parents are not aware of the importance of these. Such PI activities are clearly important. However, I argue that parents already know that their children love to listen to stories from their families. Those intrusive activities together with SSP focused activities create a deficit model of parenthood, in literacy learning especially. Parents could feel inferior in their own cultural, historical way of supporting their children's literacy development. There is a danger of forming dependent and voiceless parents in the literacy learning process of their children.

7.6. From Teaching Practices to Perspectives

> This structural and individual schizophrenia of values and purposes, and the potential for inauthenticity and meaninglessness is increasingly an everyday experience for all. … Beliefs are no longer important, it is output that counts. Beliefs are part of an older, increasingly displaced discourse (Ball, 2003, p.217).

Ball's explanation above clearly reflects the dualism that exists between the staff's views and their practices. However, the performativity regime, along with its accountability measures, causes the teaching staff to put their beliefs aside and do what the government having a hierarchical position ordered them to do.

First of all, the teaching staff perceived that the literacy standards and, therefore, the expectations from children at very young ages increased within years. Schooled literacy standards have increasingly pressured children. 'Inauthenticity and meaninglessness' and 'not fun' schooled literacy activities were taking most of the time of children in school, causing them to sacrifice from their playtime, according to staff.

Mrs Corbyn seemed to feel this pressure in particular when wanting children to do letter formation. She was not flexible in giving them a break with other 'joyful' activities (i.e., getting angry at two children due to drawing pictures on their letter formation worksheets). The contradiction between her view and practices illustrates how teaching staff were feeling obliged to do things that they do not believe in.

Moreover, the teaching staff believed that the literacy standards were not achievable for some children, including the five-year-olds. One TA connected that reality with the reason why they had ability groups in the class. Notably, according to the teacher, the writing ELG in the EYFS was too much for summer-born children. In considering the findings of this study, however, the children's letter formation can be related to their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination or attention span and more. The writing standards do not acknowledge the interplay of various developmental abilities and the possible difficulties that summer-born children can experience.

While the teacher discussed the situation of summer-born children in teaching towards writing standards, the TAs who worked with the certain group of children (i.e. children with autism, children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family backgrounds) spoke more specifically

regarding those children. For instance, Mrs King considered that children with special needs could not achieve the literacy standards in the EYFS because of their expressive language skills. The children learning EAL had similar challenges in learning literacy in English since their English expressive and receptive language skills could not develop enough to support their literacy learning process as their native English speaking peers

Regardless of what they believe, the staff expressed their powerlessness in changing their literacy practices in line with their above perspectives Mrs Corbyn, in particular, defined their schooled literacy teaching as part of their profession. Even though they do not support the literacy pedagogies established in their reception classes, they obeyed the government's expectations of them. Braun and Maguire (2020, p.440) define the contradiction between the staff's perspectives and their obedient practices as a 'doing without believing'.

Whilst there was an agreement over the unrealistic expectations in schooled literacy learning from reception children, the teaching staff did not have consistent ideas regarding the function of the assessment. However, I should note that the teacher had prominent roles in all types of assessments conducted in the class; the TAs were only responsible for the formative assessment part of it. Firstly, all staff that I interviewed explained that assessment enabled them to learn children's schooled literacy outcomes and their current abilities, which seems a narrowed vision of the purpose of assessment. They could, for instance, identify children's interests, their learning journey, their peer relations during the activity and more. Their view was that the assessment results could be used for evaluating their teaching quality, making comparisons their results with other schools' and informing the next year's teachers regarding the schooled literacy skills of children at the end of the reception.

Secondly, in considering the use of assessment for teaching and school comparison purposes, the TAs and the teacher had contrasting perspectives. For instance, Mrs Cooper viewed assessment as useful as it enables schools to teach 'the same thing' and self-evaluate their practices in two binary aspects; 'right' or 'wrong', expressing one of the purposes of the English accountability system (Harlen, 2007). On the contrary, supporting the arguments of Hursh (2005) and West (2010) regarding the function of school inspections, the teacher considered that the use of children's assessment results for school comparison in 'league tables' was not beneficial since the location of schools matters in respect to being in an affluent area or deprived area. Most importantly, she added that "we do what we do, and we do it because we want the children to do well, not because you want to do better than this school or that school". With that sentence, she implied the 'meaninglessness' of league tables and the meaning of the teaching profession for her. Her opinion acknowledges Hatch's argument (2002);

accountability should be an ethical part of pedagogy, its function should be for children's benefits. Nevertheless, the teacher had an excessive amount of responsibilities in those areas and gained the trust of not only the other teaching staff in the school but also the local authority. Mrs Thomas was an excellent example of a teacher who was an expert in 'datafication' (Roberts-Holmes, 2015) of the education at the one hand, and who believes it is a redundant system on the other hand.

The findings of the government-funded SPEEL project are in agreement with the function of formative assessment in that there is an insufficient understanding of the functions of formative assessment in early years pedagogy (Moyles et al., 2002). The issue of narrower views towards assessment could be attributed to differing professional qualifications of the teaching staff. The EPPE and SPEEL studies highlighted that quality pedagogies are more likely provided by the early years workforce with high educational qualification (ibid.; Sylva et al., 2007). Nevertheless, Cameron, in her recent article, (2020, p.68) admits that the English early years "workforce mostly split around low-status childcare workers on the one hand and graduate teachers on the other." The case class in this study could be one of the examples of English reception classes, where there is 'split workforce' with varying views on primary aspects of literacy pedagogies.

In conclusion, the teaching staff experienced a real struggle between their beliefs about play-based, child-centred education and their 'schoolified' adult-led teaching practices. The accountability agenda and its high-stakes consequence over the school and the teaching staff dominated their child-centred perspectives in education (Wohlwend, 2008). Thus, they could not spare much time for free play. Instead, they strictly concentrated on teaching schooled literacy skills to children as what matters in shaping the literacy pedagogies in the reception classroom.

Data-driven early years education and the use of its results for determining the quality of the school inhibit educators from taking account of the unique nature of its community members (children, their families, local community) (Urban, 2008). This study explicitly indicates how this happened in the case of certain groups of children's education (e.g., children with SEND, children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family background) in the focus class. Therefore, it de-professionalises early years educators, not leaving any space for them to critically analyse their data-driven pedagogy (Urban, 2008).

In the above findings, the teaching staff were well aware of the difficulty of teaching 'not-fun' adult-led activities for all children with diverse needs, yet they were also aware that they did not have the professional agency to change their pedagogy following their own judgements (Ball,2003; Osgood,

2006; Urban, 2008). Therefore, agreeing with the argument of Urban, in the focus class, "Practitioners are left in an impossible situation: they are expected to act professionally – within a professional system that is largely *unprofessional*, considering the key requirements of the field." (2008, p.146, italics original).

Conclusions

The findings of the study provided clear answers to the research questions. The following is a summary of the knowledge produced through my ethnographic case study of one English reception class.

- The overarching question: What matters in shaping literacy pedagogies in a reception class in England?
  - The teaching staff felt obliged to meet the standards of high-stakes accountability measures set by the external agencies. Therefore, the primary drive for creating their literacy pedagogies became the literacy learning outcomes of children from high-stakes national assessments. The individual needs and interests of children were of secondary importance.
  - Regardless of the year group that the teaching staff taught, all staff felt responsible for the children's assessment results since the school success/failure in the Ofsted inspections means their collective success/failure.
  - The school created its own de-contextualised, linear, pre-defined, phonics focused schooled literacy standards, which were higher and more complex than the reading and writing ELGs in the EYFS to have a smooth transition from reception to upper levels of primary schooling. In other words, the early years education merged into primary education and became a preparation year for the later primary education and its national assessments.

- Sub-research question: How do the class teacher and the TAs work together to promote children's literacy learning?

  - Through standardisation and the performativity agenda with its high-stakes assessment tools, policy-makers, Ofsted inspectors, and other teaching staff in the primary school were hierarchically higher than the EY teaching staff. The same trend followed within the workforce

in the class as well; the teacher having a more elevated position than the TAs, and the senior TA having a higher place than the other three TAs.

- The content of the informal discussion between the teacher and the TAs was mostly about children's performance in phonics and writing activities, indicating the power of the performativity regime on teacher-TA collaboration.
- The teacher had constant control over the reception children's schooled literacy outcomes through monitoring children's learning outcomes. The TAs had the autonomy of planning their own schooled literacy activities as long as they increased children's schooled learning outcomes.
- The education system prioritised 'higher attainers'. Thus, the more expert teaching staff taught the children deemed 'high attainers'. The 'lower attainers'- generally children with SEND, children learning EAL, children from lower socio-economic family background - received schooled literacy education from the less expert TAs.
- Since the objective tested assessment results could help the teaching staff claim that they are teaching towards the set standards by the government, assessment was prioritised over teaching, with the teacher having the overall management of the assessment data throughout the year.

❖ Sub-research question: How do the class teacher and the TAs organise their literacy pedagogies?

- The literacy pedagogies established in the class made the class an 'artificial' learning environment that resembled "the sterile world of hierarchical skills" (van Kuyk, 2009, p.963).
- The teacher had 'limited freedom' in the aspect of listening to children's voices. She had to fit the topics that were of interest to the children with the relevant resources and schooled literacy standards.
- Conceiving children's literacy learning as linear and using synthetic phonics teaching as an exclusive method inhibited children from experimenting with different spelling word strategies, which could lead to low self-confidence and low motivation in children learning literacy (Scott, 2008).
- The responsibility of the staff during the adult-led activities resembled 'delivery' methods of education (Coltman and Whitebread, 2008).
- The interaction between the staff and children followed a recitational type of communication; the children were only allowed to talk when the teacher asked a question during the activities.

- Altogether, the nature of adult-led activities implied that children were passive receivers of the phonics knowledge transmitted by the staff. Learning was seen as individual; peer learning was not encouraged in adult-led activities.
- The desire of the external agencies to put literacy development and school quality within their objective standards narrowed down the function of assessment in the early years; assessment meant testing children's schooled literacy outcomes against objective learning targets, reporting objectively, comparing between classes and across schools within the LA and country.
- The teacher formed her own baseline, interim exams and interim reports which resembled the structure of national assessments including the EYFS Profile and the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Thus, the form of all types of assessments turned into 'artificial' skill-based assessment process with a narrowed sense of literacy learning.
- The 'higher ability' children had more chances to learn phonics through the IWB than the 'lower ability' children, creating inequalities in the physical materials children could access in the class.
- Even though children had diverse types of physical materials presented for child-led activities, children were interrupted to do adult-led activities, which were privileged over the child-led activities.
- In respect to the work samples created in child-led activities and adult-led activities, the children's writings in adult-led activities were considered more worthy in doing formative assessment and using for record-keeping. The work samples done in child-led activities were not regarded as indicative of the fund of knowledge each individual child owns.

❖ Sub-research question: How do reception children experience the literacy pedagogies made available to them?

- The children least enjoyed de-contextualised, repetitive sound-letter correspondence activities, encoding and decoding words. On the other hand, their favourite activities were listening and reading storybooks. Among them, listening to the stories about their friends' one day with a bear guest was listed as the most favoured.
- The materials presented for child-led activities varied in relation to being directive or close-ended or open-ended. Children enjoyed having freedom in choosing the literacy-related practice they want to do. Therefore, writing/drawing in the sheds was the most favoured

activity in contrast to writing letters repetitively through directive materials, such as letter formation worksheets.

- The more children with autism had delays in their development, the more they were segregated from the class level activities. The ambitious literacy standards made the segregation of those children with autism legitimate in the eyes of the community.
- The children learning EAL were forced to learn literacy through SSP without comprehending the meaning of the words/sentences.
- Regardless of the diversity in children's funds of identities, the generic adult-led literacy and phonics activities led children to make sacrifices from their interests and their playtime.
- The teaching staff explicitly implied what they valued in children's schooled literacy learning. In line with their comments over children's schooled literacy skills, the voice of the staff turned into children's voice in self-evaluating their literacy skills. Thus, it created a deficit model of self for children perceiving themselves as 'not successful' in schooled literacy skills.
- Contrary to the government's insistence on using SSP exclusively in literacy teaching, children were flexible in applying the whole language, and SSP approaches simultaneously. Their literacy attempts were meaningful in their real and imaginary worlds.
- In their independent play, children experienced various types of literacy activities in cooperation with their peers. They scaffolded each other in their literacy attempts, when necessary.
- Imaginary play created a new world for children to experiment with diverse types of literacy activities within the imaginary role they had. The physical borders of the classroom no longer determined the kind of literacy practice.

❖ Sub-research question: In which ways do the teacher and the TAs involve parents in their literacy pedagogies?

- Market accountability necessitated schools to register students until they filled the student capacity of schools and to attract parents through their 'school performance' results, evaluated against the 'common school performance standards', and the previous year children's test results from high-stakes national assessments. After registration teaching staff and parents changed roles; parents became accountable for their contribution to their children's schooled literacy learning through the SSP approach mainly with providing evidence.

- The majority of PI activities concentrated on improving children's SSP skills. However, there were more contextually meaningful PI activities for supporting the children's literacy learning for an end.
- Using SSP as an exclusive method of literacy teaching and encouraging parents to support similarly created deficit models of parenthood. Parents were trained to help their children's schooled literacy skills since parents' literacy learning experiences were different to the current literacy education system in England. Therefore, parents' cultural use of literacy was not perceived as carrying significant values in their children's literacy journey.
- The children's phonic knowledge became an important factor determining the type of SSP focused homework as the year progressed. The parents, thus, received differentiated homework and the parents of 'lower ability' children received more SSP related homework.
- The teaching staff gave more value to SSP focused PI activities and ensured the surveillance of the activities through constant control and management. Overall, the parents were turned into 'volunteer TAs' supporting their children's schooled literacy skills mainly.

❖ Sub-research question: What are the perspectives of the class teacher and the TAs on their literacy pedagogies?

- The performative culture in England, along with its high-stakes accountability tools, oppresses the staff's child-centred approaches to early years education (Wohlwend, 2008) and creates 'schoolified' early years classrooms. As a result, the system forces the teaching staff to present literacy pedagogies that do not reflect the philosophical bases of early years education.
- The teaching staff do not feel ownership of the activities they offered to children. They believed it was a part of their professional responsibility to carry out what was prescribed by the government.
- The staff believed that the oppressive amount of inauthentic and repetitive adult-led literacy/phonics activities inhibited children from having enough playtime with their peers.
- The ELGs in writing and reading are not achievable for all, the 'lower ability' children were generally summer-born children, children learning EAL and children with autism.
- Although the views of the teaching staff between the TAs and the teacher were different, their understanding of the function of assessment had a similar narrowed sense; evaluating teaching quality, objective comparisons among schools based on children's test results, a tool for informing children's level of schooled literacy to their next year teachers.
- In contrast to the TAs, the teacher with long years of professional expertise in all types of assessment believed that school comparisons based on the 'league tables' were not

meaningful. The demographic features of the local community can be an essential factor affecting the test results of the school, which cannot be under the control of the teaching staff.

- In line with the functions of PI practices, the teaching staff shared similar views about PI in children's literacy learning; they supported the parents to be part of the literacy practices as a bridge for schooled literacy practices done at home, yet they did not generally consider cooperation with parents in their children's literacy assessment. Parents could provide them with children's work samples, which could inform the teachers' objective judgements about the children's schooled literacy outcome.
- A TA argued that parents with low educational level do not have the ambition of having children of 'high ability' in schooled literacy. These parents are potential employees with long hours of working time (Hughes and Mac Naughton, 2000). However, they become the target groups of parents being accused of non-supportive to their children's schooled literacy learning.

This section discussed the study findings and evaluated them with the relevant literature. The next chapter involves the alternative pedagogies from sociocultural perspectives, the significance of the current study for me as an outsider of the English early years education, the contributions of the knowledge, policy level and pedagogical suggestions, limitations and recommendations for future researchers.

CHAPTER 8: WIDER PERSPECTIVES, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the literacy pedagogies provided in an English reception class of a state primary school through an in-depth ethnographic case study. In this final chapter of my thesis, I open up a discussion of possible alternatives that might reduce the contradictions and challenges that I identified in the findings chapters and that I discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter continues with a discussion about this study's contribution to knowledge in the literature, its limitations and some suggestions for future research. I end on a personal note, discussing the significance of the study from my own perspective as a researcher whose work will be in the Turkish educational system.

8.1. A New Perspective on the Literacy Pedagogies

Until this chapter, this whole thesis has elucidated the consequences of privileging school readiness discourse in the organisation of literacy pedagogies at the reception stage. An alternative approach seems essential to change the contradictions in the literacy pedagogies provided.

Nicholson et al. (2015) argue that we should first examine the epistemological basis of school readiness "in order to analyse the implicit and often uncritiqued assumptions framing readiness discourse." (ibid., p.194). The readiness discourse signifies that 'true' knowledge is gained through objective scientific methods (Usher and Edwards, 2003). Therefore, it is independent of its cultural and historical context and rationale in its claims (ibid.). Building on these epistemological assumptions, children's development (literacy development in this study) is divided into linear, decontextualised stages, placing the responsibility of being ready for school on the individual children and their families (Nicholson et al., 2015). Each stage requires objective knowledge to be gained by the children; in the current study, the 'true' knowledge constitutes the ELGs in the EYFS and literacy targets in the primary curriculum. Early years education, therefore, turns into an artificial social service where the teaching staff aim to transmit the 'true and objective' knowledge (narrowly defined literacy skills in the national curricula) to the children, and its acquisition is tested via high-stakes assessment tools (Trevor et al., 2020).

The literacy pedagogies established in the current study could be very different, if the curriculum were based on the epistemological assumption that the nature of knowledge is pluralistic and open to the subjective interpretation of people, including children and their families (Nicholson et al., 2015). This assumption allows for learning targets and teaching approaches that could be open enough so that, depending on the historical, contextual and individual factors, the teaching staff could adapt their pedagogy in a way that was responsive and reflexive to the needs and interests of children. The school would then have the view that they needed to be 'readying' their teaching approaches and strategies in ways that meet the individual needs, the interest of children and their families, instead of 'readying' the children for compulsory schooling (ibid.). In the authors' explanations,

> Children's readiness would be then understood to be highly dependent upon a range of non-static variables, including social and cultural (the relationships and socio-cultural values, routines and beliefs shaping children's learning and development) and political (the short and longer term "stakes" and goals influenced by the experiences of privilege and inequity reflected in families and communities) contexts (Nicholson et al., 2015, p.195-196).

The current education system in England creates the fear that "if there is no agency then there is no subject, and if there is no 'free-standing' subject then educational intervention…either becomes futile or a subtle form of indoctrination." (Usher and Edwards, 2003, p.29). As a first step towards change to a more democratic literacy learning environment, there would need to be flexibility in the definition of literacy targets in the national curricula (both EYFS Framework and primary curriculum). The government's non-statutory guidelines such as *Letters and Sounds* would be replaced with guidelines enabling teaching professionals to choose their own teaching approach, considering their children's interests and needs (Gardner, 2019). In such an environment, the teaching staff would then be able to value the diversity in the literacy practices offered not only in the school but also in children's home (Heath, 1983). Learning children's funds of literacy knowledge requires the teacher to more engage in child-led activities and interaction with the parents.

The planning aspect of the literacy pedagogies would then allow the staff to focus on promoting child-centred pedagogy. They would no longer need to tackle fitting the topic of children's interests and materials with one-for-all schooled literacy targets of the day. The teaching staff shaping the activity in children's zone of proximal development would create the possibility of all children have a sense of achievement, which would then eradicate the narrower sense of grouping children as 'high ability' and 'low ability', a categorisation that dictates the culture of the class. Further, the TA workforce could be used for cooperative literacy activities together with the teacher, instead of TAs taking the role of

another teacher responsible for pushing forward 'low ability' children with additional phonics and writing interventions to the pre-defined literacy standards.

Whilst the SSP approach provides a very clear, linear way of teaching schooled literacy systematically, using it as an exclusive method gives the idea that one teaching strategy fits for all, which is not the case (Ellis and Moss, 2014; Marshall, 2012). Due to the nature of the English language, the heavy emphasis on learning discrete phonemes through memorisation systematically leads some children to fall behind, particularly as I have noted previously, summer-born children and children with a history of dyslexia in their families. Some researchers argue that a socio-cultural approach to learning needs to be part of the system so that the complex nature of learning and teacher-child interactions can be recognised and valued (Roberts-Holmes, 2020). Adopting a sociocultural approach to literacy pedagogies, the teacher's task would no longer be to 'deliver' the prescribed teaching strategy and ask questions in a recitational script to ensure whether children have received the 'true' knowledge. They would rather co-construct the shared knowledge in a democratic, contextually meaningful environment. The power of the teacher over the children would not be as visible since the teacher would be involved in the activity as facilitators contributing to the development of flexible activities through expanding the topic and answering the questions posed with other learners in the community. The interaction between the teacher and the children and among children could then be conceived of as 'responsive and collaborative' discourse (Gutierrez, 1993).

Having acknowledged the complexity of learning, the learner, the learning environment and the assessment would be an "internally led, subjective and deeply attached process rather than an externally driven, objective, detached process." (Pascal and Bertram, 2016, p.60). When I consider the assessment tools and their functions in the literacy pedagogies of the focus class, the ultimate aim of documentation as a component of the assessment is to evidence the literacy teaching practice and children's learning outcome against their pre-defined success criteria to external stakeholders (Ofsted inspectors, other teaching staff in the primary school) (Plum, 2012), which relies on the school readiness discourse.

Stobbs et al. (2017) assert that children's learning journeys, used in the focus class as a tool for documentation, were similar to learning stories in the early years curriculum of Te *Whāriki* in New Zealand. Basfard and Bath (2014) argue that this contradiction is one kind of 'game' that the teaching staff in England are required to play. On the one hand, the teaching staff have to assess children against pre-set learning objectives, which gives information about how far children's learning outcome is that they are 'ready' for primary school. On the other hand, learning journeys give the impression

that assessment is done in cooperation, where the learning processes of children are presented as journeys that involve a detailed account of the context in the class community.

The premises about learning that underpin these aspects of the 'game' are very different. The content of learning stories that have been used as the primary assessment tool of the early years education curriculum of New Zealand since 1996 relies on a socio-cultural theoretical base. This approach provides a contextually detailed story of children's learning dispositions together with the other people (teachers, peers and parents). Children as competent human beings are perceived to be "*social actors* with opinions and views of their own." (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.2, italics original). Therefore, children have an agency in co-constructing the shared knowledge and the learning culture together with the other members in the community and contribute to the content of their own learning stories.

Furthermore, the focus of the learning stories is to make children's learning dispositions visible to all stakeholders, including teachers, parents and children. Carr defines learning dispositions as "being ready, willing and able to participate in various ways: a combination of inclination, sensitivity to the occasion, and the relevant skill and knowledge" (2001, p.21). It encompasses a wide range of aspects regarding children's funds of identity and funds of knowledge. To capture children's learning dispositions, it requires a contextually detailed description of children's actions with multiple tools, such as photographs, video cameras, open-ended field notes, parents' and teachers' comments. However, it should also appeal to children's worlds in a way that they can get interested in the process of assessment and actively construct their own learning stories with other stakeholders. Through reflecting their learning and interests on their learning stories, children could recognise that their funds of identities are valued by the class, encouraging more child-centred literacy pedagogies.

Some commenters, however, argue that although Te Whāriki consults schools, puts children's dispositions as the core of its flexible framework and promotes child-centred pedagogy, overall it shows a successive route in children's development (Soler and Miller, 2003). Therefore, the pedagogy provided and the learning stories of children as an assessment tool may not entirely reflect children's co-construction of their subjective interpretations, their knowledge, interests and their creativity. It may restrict their cooperation with the teaching staff in their shared meaning-making process (ibid.), calling for a more fundamental shift from less linearly structured national curricula to more socio-culturally inspired philosophies.

Different from EYFS and Te Whāriki, Reggio Emilia as a 'socially and culturally embedded philosophical approach' (Stremmel, 2012, p.134) does not set loose or flexible pre-defined learning and

developmental guidelines in advance. The conceptualisation of curriculum as evolving and emerging without having a national framework and/or exemplar guidelines makes Reggio inspired pedagogical documentation thoroughly embrace socio-cultural perspectives in practice. Through project-based learning opportunities and ongoing dialogues with parents and children, the community members create their broad and loose learning objectives, which are subject to changes in line with the children's interests and needs (ibid.; Fyfe, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015). Hence, I conceive pedagogical documentation would be more authentic to the context, and the agency and cooperation between the teacher and community members (educators, parents and children) would be more visible in children's learning, even though learning stories and pedagogical documentation encourage the use of multi-sensory tools for capturing the ongoing learning. To explain, pedagogical documentation provides opportunities for

- Observing children's learning in action
- Assessing children's learning, interests and needs via multisensory tools
- Involving the viewpoints and contributions of the community members (parents and children) in a collaborative way
- Re-thinking and reflecting on their own practices and positions in children's learning
- Doing future planning based on the previous pedagogical documentation
- Re-structuring their emergent curriculum that involves the agency of all community members (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, Fleet, 2017; Fleet et al., 2011).

Overall, detailed pedagogical documentation can be considered as a valuable tool for accountability since it reflects the complex nature of learning in context, the professional decisions of the teaching staff in every aspect of pedagogy (Fleet, 2017) and "the learning paths that children are taking and processes they are using in their search for meaning" (Fyfe, 2012, p.274). However, it is the policy-makers' understanding of 'accountability' that determines the value of the pedagogical documentation (and the value of the 'tick list') (Coltman and Whitebread, 2008) in the approach to assessment that I observed in the focus class.

The English education system as I experienced it in 2017-18 and the Reggio Emilia approach differ fundamentally in relation to questions of purpose and use. In England, the accountability agenda sets the purpose that schools should be answerable to the external agencies such as local authorities through the evaluation of Ofsted inspectors and students' test results in national exams (Newmann et al., 1997). On the other hand, in Reggio inspired schools, the accountability agenda can be considered as internal since it is used to be answerable to the internal agencies such as other teachers in the

school or children in the class. The internal accountability agenda contributes to the development of future learning plans in cooperation and setting learning targets by being responsive to their school culture and respectful to the individuality of children. Therefore, in Reggio Emilia schools, pedagogical documentation can be a precious tool as an accountability measure since it can make the complex, socio-cultural nature of learning 'visible'. This contrasts sharply with the English context in which the external accountability agenda privileges the learning outcome of children against the pre-defined learning standards (ibid.), "measuring productivity according to an arbitrary set of narrowly defined outcomes" in Hatch's terms (2002, p.461). Therefore, in my view, there is a great need for change in the English system regarding the functions of accountability.

Furthermore, in contrast to England's sequential discourse regarding children's literacy learning, in Reggio Emilia classrooms, children's learning paths are not conceived as linear, from simple to complex. Instead, Rinaldi compares learning processes to a 'spiral' (Edwards, 2012) in which "ideas, opinions, and thoughts must be expressed, revisited, reflected upon, and expressed again, children consolidate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings into meaningful and cohesive wholes" (Hewett, 2001, p.99). The activities do not target children's learning to be improved in a linear sequence. If there is no conception of linear learning processes, there would not then be ability groups within the same classroom. Roberts-Holmes (2019) in his most recent study with early years and Key Stage 1 teachers concluded that ability grouping in early years damages children's self-esteem, their own perceptions of themselves as a learner.

As mentioned earlier, the ideas and interests of children in specific topics guide educators to create project-based pedagogies in cooperation with children and their parents and the activities are mostly encouraged to be in small groups rather than whole-class (Edwards, 2012). The teacher, as the facilitator of children's learning, enriches the environment with the materials relevant to the project they planned together. The materials in the classroom are presented to mediate children's creativity and the learning of their focus project. Therefore, the materials are relevant to the theme of the project, yet they are open-ended, giving children the possibility of expressing themselves creatively and subjectively (ibid.). Inequality in accessing certain materials, especially the use of IWB, as happened in the researched class, among children due to ability grouping, would not be possible in such Reggio-inspired classrooms. Children working in small groups would have the opportunity of accessing all types of materials that would mediate their learning.

Since their educational philosophy is rooted in socio-cultural perspectives, the Reggio educators value the subjectivity of knowledge that parents bring through diverse parent involvement activities

(Rinaldi, 2006). The expectations of the teachers in the focus class that the parents should teach the 'right' knowledge through the so-called 'first and fast' teaching method do not exist in Reggio classes. Thus, the educators do not consider that teachers know better, and parents need to be trained to teach literacy first, to support their children's schooled literacy skills. Rather, the contribution of parents is encouraged in every aspect of education and the school's governance; each parent could find a place in the aspect that they find themselves more confident to be involved with (Rinaldi, 2006).

Parent involvement through diverse types of activities saves schools from the "the dangers of excessive bureaucracy" (Gandini, 2012, p.118) between parents and teaching staff. Parents are considered as active members of the school community having a voice in the generation, application of the projects and pedagogical documentation of their children's learning (Stremmel, 2012). Through open-ended discussions and interactions, teachers and parents could create an innovative educational context in cooperation (Edwards, 2012) and enable teachers to perceive parents "not as a threat but as an intrinsic element of collegiality and the integration of different wisdoms." (Gandini, 2012, p.123). Importantly, seeing the open interactions of their parents and teachers could enable children to internalise this particular democratic culture and apply it in their social relations with their peers (Edwards, 2012).

In this part of my concluding discussion, I have attempted to underline the point that before we can think about possible practical changes for the improvement of literacy pedagogies, we need to analyse, then, change the dominant assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge. This is an inescapable conclusion from my research. The current assumptions about the nature of knowledge that dominates English schooling are not inevitable, and they run counter to the beliefs of many early years educators. This brief discussion of alternative approaches to early years education is included to suggest the ways in which systems based on socio-cultural discourse can enable all stakeholders, including policy-makers, educators, children and parents, to embrace educational innovations and different ways of thinking about this educational stage.

However, my study has focused on the realities of everyday life in early years classrooms in England at the end of second decade of the 21st century and I conclude this final chapter with a section signifying the current study's contribution to knowledge, discussion of some of its limitations, the significance of my research for the work I intend to do in my own country and finally practical suggestions for Turkey and England.

8.2 Contribution to Knowledge

The culture of performativity and standardisation, along with its accountability measures, has been imposed on the everyday pedagogical practices of schools in England across all levels; from early years education to teacher education at the universities (Hursh, 2005). However, there is a scarcity of research concerning the way primary and early years classes have formed and established their pedagogies as the standardisation and 'datafication' of literacy learning has elevated (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2018; Roberts-Holmes, 2019; Braun and Maguire, 2020).

After I started my PhD journey in January 2017, one book and two articles relevant to my research topic to a certain extent were published. In 2018, Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes published a research book that focuses on the experiences of teaching staff from different primary and early years education sectors in relation to the data-driven education system of England. The authors used Foucault's 'disciplinary power' concept and Deleuze's concept of 'societies of control' as a theoretical framework. The researchers especially focused on the impacts of the baseline assessment (published by the government in 2015) on teacher's pedagogies and their perspectives in general. Therefore, the discussion of their findings primarily relied on the authors' interpretations, critics of the baseline assessment and its impact on early years education and its underlying philosophies. Secondly, having been influenced by the Foucauldian perspectives, Roberts-Holmes (2019) focused on the impact of Phonics Screening Check (Year 1) on early years and primary school teachers' ability grouping practices and their perspectives about children's experiences of ability grouping. Thirdly, Braun and Maguire (2020) published a small scale study that explored the perspectives of six teachers from two primary schools on how they enact the educational policies on assessment. The study findings, consisting of interview data sets, provided insights into the growing accountability pressure on teachers and their feeling of teaching above the standards.

Different from those three studies and their theoretical approaches to the research topic, I have approached the research holding socio-cultural perspectives and constructed the study following its premises. I paid great attention to observing and attempting to document the socio-cultural context of the researched area and the participants' "patterns of behavior" (Heath and Street, 2008, p.38) in the focus class. CHAT as an analytical framework was especially useful in illustrating how the teaching staff's actions were influenced by historical, cultural and social factors (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). More importantly, it encourages spaces to discuss the agency of human and non-human components in the system. The nature of physical materials available for children's use also gave insights into the aims and the ways the focus class presented literacy pedagogies.

As a socio-cultural researcher, I perceive and assume that the schools' interpretations of the policies and their adaptation into pedagogical practices can change depending on contextual elements, such as the physical structure of the school, the number of teaching staff and their qualifications, the school's budget, and the individual circumstances of registered children (i.e., children's funds of identities: including EAL, disabilities and low SES families) (Braun et al., 2011). Therefore, ethnographic studies in the current research area carry their own originality due to the schools' contextual diversities and understandings of the policy documents in shaping their own pedagogies.

In considering the findings of all four studies, all contain similarities pointing out the negative impacts of performativity and its accountability tools on pedagogies and perspectives of teaching staff in general. The current ethnographic case study however, provided an in-depth and comprehensive narrative of one reception class's establishment of literacy pedagogies to achieve 'what matters' for the focus class. This study differed from the previous three in demonstrating the complexity within the target setting process of the school in reception children's literacy learning process throughout one year, and the influence of external agencies in that process including the Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers. The study of Williams-Brown and Jopling (2021) indicated that Key Stage 1 teachers felt the heightened literacy standards after the 2014 revision. This study adds that this pressure is also felt by reception teaching staff.

Previous studies on teaching workforce and the role distributions among the teaching staff generally focused on primary (Year 1 and later) and secondary schools. Sosinsky and Gilliam (2011) therefore stated that there is a need for further research that could explore the position of teaching assistants in early years. This study therefore makes a direct contribution towards the early years workforce division and the nature of interactions among the teaching staff. The study illustrated that the focus class work division is based on neo-liberal discourses. The class turned into an 'edu-business' (Lingard et al., 2013, p. 552); all teaching staff had the autonomy of forming their own literacy pedagogies as long as they contribute to children's schooled literacy learning outcome and the teacher was the manager of the class, controlling the outcome (schooled literacy learning) regularly. Informal interactions between TAs and the teacher were generally regarding the 'performance' of the children in the schooled literacy activities.

This study indicated that performativity agenda infused into literacy planning, teaching, assessment, reinforcement and the nature of informal rules in the class. The previous literature argued that the school readiness discourse together with the marketisation of schools would create inequalities in the education provision to some children. The present study provides a full account of 'how' the

inequalities and contradictions occurred in the provision of literacy pedagogies. I add that the inequality is even evident in the physical materials available to some children but not others (e.g., children with SEND, children learning EAL). This study demonstrated the ways in which the teaching staff perceived children's funds of knowledge and identities and enacted to make what is different the same.

The studies of Braun and Maguire (2020) and Roberts-Holmes (2019) indicated the impact of ability grouping on primary and early years children's self-perception and well-being through reporting teachers' views. This study explored the consequence of ability grouping on reception children's experience through participant observations and found that ability grouping drew a deficit sense of self for those children in the 'lower ability' category. The study sheds lights on how the children attempted to re-form their identities in a way that is more acceptable and aligns with the desired childhood discourse in schooled literacy learning. Lastly, the study makes a direct contribution with its 'parent accountability' term, illustrating how the class created a parent accountability system in SSP focused literacy activities to be completed at home.

8.3. Limitations of the Current Study and Recommendations for the Future Research

All research studies have limitations. I would like to highlight four limitations of the current study, alongside some suggestions for future research.

Firstly, my study pointed out the invaluable part parents play in their children's literacy development. However, I did not have the chance to observe children in their homes, due to being a stranger to the researched class mainly. I did not have an existing relationship with the researched class members and their parents before entering the research field. Particularly, researchers having connections with reception classes or parents may consider studying the home literacy experience of the children and their reflections on children's experience in schools or vice versa. They could collect data through doing in-depth home observations, repeated interviews and collecting documentary data.

Secondly, asking the advice of the reception teacher in the selection of participants (parents and focus children) raises the issue of representation with the research giving voice to particular children and their parents but not others. Although I attempted to make other children's voices and lived experiences visible via the ethnographic approach, the stories of the six focus children were more in-depth and vivid. Researchers interested in conducting similar research designs could use alternative participant selection processes to include children at higher risk of marginalisation (including children learning EAL and children with SEND, for example). However, this could raise practical and other

ethical issues around parent confidence levels and perceptions of schooling affecting their willingness and access to taking part which would all need to be fully considered within research design.

Thirdly, the ethnographic case study took place in one reception class and its members only. Therefore, through participating in the class as a member of the class for an extended period of time, I could reflect its contextual complexity on the findings of the study. The complexity within the established literacy pedagogies makes the study unique with the findings relating to a particular school and class members (teaching staff, children and parents) and their actions and perceptions. I suggest that more ethnographic studies should be conducted in different areas in England, which could elucidate the differing consequences of data-driven educational reforms in their pedagogies.

Lastly, with the development of technology and its tools, ethnographic studies could involve mimicry, gestures, physical movements as well as verbal communication of the participants. The researcher could elucidate the perspectives and experiences of the participants more vividly and in-depth (although the use of technology could also lead participants to behave less naturally). Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in video recordings is more complicated than any other data, since the children's clothes and the physical environment of the class could lead the participants and their living places to be identified (Robson, 2011). Therefore, consideration of the ethics and analysis aspect of the raw data could take a fair amount of the researchers' time. However, it would provide an additional dimension in the researched topic.

These are important considerations for moving the field forward, I believe. I want to end this thesis though on a personal note, reflecting on the significance to me of the work I have been able to do as a researcher sponsored by the Turkish government who has had the privilege of being able to look so closely at life in an English classroom before I begin my work in Turkey for the Ministry of Education.

8.4. Personal Significance

In the introduction to this thesis, I wrote about the educational reforms in my country, Turkey. The current phase of reform is scheduled to be completed by 2023. It seems that Turkey's educational system has the potential of resembling other countries (e.g., England) and schools might turn towards "edu-business" models (Lingard et al., 2013, p. 552). This study, however, has indicated that English educational policies, at the mercy of globalisation and neo-liberalism ideologies, have given rise to the destruction of fundamental features of early years institutions, particularly in the literacy development area. Early years classrooms for four and five-year-olds have become an artificial social place where the focus of adults has increasingly become on the 'output' or 'outcome' in academic

areas and testing the efficacy of their services via high-stakes accountability measures (Coltman and Whitebread, 2008).

Furthermore, even though the first principle in the EYFS Framework signifies that "Every child is a unique child…" and the fourth principle underlines that "Children develop and learn in different ways … and at different rates." (DfE, 2017, p.6), the current research indicates that the literacy pedagogies established in the case study class could not fully enact these principles in supporting children's literacy development due to the powerful forces of school readiness, ideologically formed SSP teaching methods, school performance and accountability measures. These led the reception children to receive schooled literacy activities and to prepare for the primary school years' more complex schooled literacy targets and its national assessments.

With the recent and abrupt increase in the flow of immigrants escaping from wars and poverty to Turkey, the diversity in young children's funds of knowledge and identities has been widened more than ever (see 1.1 section in the introduction). Neo-liberal governments assert that having high learning standards with objective accountability measures is the indication of 'fair education' (Hursh, 2005). However, it is not the case, as this study explicitly illustrated how inequality infused the literacy pedagogies of the teaching staff, and the everyday lives of the children and their families. One centralised early years curriculum with de-contextualised, universal learning and developmental goals may make Turkey's efforts to offer a fair education in vain, leading some children to be systematically disadvantaged, as happened to children learning EAL, children having a summer birth date, and children with special needs and children from low socio-economic families in England.

As a candidate educational expert in the Turkish Ministry of National Education after completing the PhD, I completely agree that Turkey should legislate to make early years education compulsory and free for all five-year-old children (for younger children as well, if resources are available) across the country in the shortest possible time. However, considering early years education primarily as an investment in the economic wealth of the country and enacting reforms on the basis of neo-liberal ideologies may put Turkey in the same trap that England seems to me to have fallen into.

Beginning from the philosophical aspect of early years education, I suggest the Turkish early years education, which covers birth to 72 month old children, should rely on socio-cultural theories primarily while acknowledging the contributions of other theoretical perspectives. Currently, the curriculum mainly relies on developmental psychology principles; therefore, children's development is divided into subjects, having their own developmental targets based on the stages of age (MoNE, 2013).

Similar to England, Turkey's conventional literacy education is based on the phonics method (MoNE, 2019). However, the Turkish early years curriculum does not allow early years educators to start teaching letter-sound correspondence, which is the most complex emergent literacy skill, and accepted as the beginning stage of conventional literacy instruction. With respect to writing development, early years teachers do not teach letter formation to children (MoNE, 2013). Conventional literacy teaching is conceived as the primary school teachers' responsibility. I think these rules are the consequence of having a positivist approach towards literacy learning; viewing literacy as stage based from simple to complex. However, this approach could inhibit some children's literacy learning interests from flourishing. There is no established Turkish policy document that answers the question of whether early years education will encompass letter-phoneme correspondence and letter formation aspects or more when the early years education becomes compulsory.

In sum, I judge that Turkey aims to adjust to the similar neo-liberal, universalised educational trend through its upcoming educational reforms, having some ambiguities in literacy education across different levels of education. In what follows, I give some suggestions that could inhibit Turkey from having consequences similar to those I saw in the English system. These suggestions will particularly be helpful for me, as I will start my profession with evidence-based suggestions for Turkish early years education and create grounds for more research studies in the area of this thesis, in collaboration with my potential colleagues in the ministry. Yet, the suggestions below are not specific to Turkey; I believe that they could certainly be helpful for the English education system since they arise from the findings of this current study.

8.5. Practical Suggestions for Turkey and England

- Suggestions on educational philosophy:

  - As a first step, both countries need to change their philosophical stance from schooled discourse to socio-cultural discourse in shaping the educational system. They would not, then, perceive that there is one 'true' knowledge that can be reached through positivist scientific methods (Usher and Edwards, 2003). That way of looking at knowledge could change the perceptions in almost every aspect of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

- Suggestions on educational policy:

- The standardisation of learning and development creates school/class level standardisations, which puts pressures on teaching staff and, thus, on children, as the current study found. Hence, the early years curriculum should be flexible enough to allow the professionals to create their own learning targets in line with their children's needs and interests.
- The borders of the teaching profession would be re-defined within socio-cultural perspectives, giving the full autonomy and spaces for forming and deciding their own pedagogical approaches in their teaching practices.
- Policy-makers should invest in pre-service and in-service education of early years teachers so that they could use their autonomy in the light of their professional expertise instead of observations of other teaching staff.
    - Teacher education should involve all types of literacy learning approaches. It could involve top-down and bottom-up literacy learning approaches. Depending on the individuality of children, the teaching staff can make their teaching 'ready' for children (Nicholson et al., 2015).
    - Drawing from the findings, it seems that there needs to be a good base of professional knowledge about the functions of assessment, the variety of assessment types to all teaching staff.
    - Their professional education should prepare teachers to "know what they are doing, why they are doing it and be able to reflect in a collaborative way with colleagues and parents about the success of their programmes." (Smith, 1996, p.62) as well as to enrich their pedagogical practices emphasising cultural diversity in the classroom (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019).
- Rather than having an external accountability system, the accountability system of the countries should emphasise being primarily accountable to the members of their school community. To put in another way, having strong internal accountability could enable the staff to be accountable to their colleagues and parents within the school (Newmann et al., 1997) and plan their lessons by taking children's funds of knowledge and identities into account, as happens in Reggio Emilia inspired schools.
    - The staff could create their own set of learning standards, commit to collaborating with the staff in the schools and form their assessment tools feeling responsible to their colleagues as well as children and their parents (ibid.).
    - As this study pointed out, the high-stakes external accountability agenda created a heavy workload of 'datafication' and its management, for the teacher mainly, which decreased her teaching and interaction time with children, especially the children with SEND,

children learning EAL and children from lower socio-economic family background. Thus, there is an urgent educational reform needed for saving teaching staff from redundant 'datafication' responsibilities.

- Suggestions on educational research:
  - There needs to be strong cooperation between the government and universities. The countries need to have in-depth and comprehensive ethnographic studies that could make visible the subjective experiences and perspectives of the community members; the teaching staff, children and their families.
    - Since Turkey has a large national landscape with its cultural diversities, ethnographic studies could be conducted across many areas of the country. It could enable the formation of its new emergent, flexible curriculum to have the voice of its diverse communities.
  - Policy-makers, academics, teaching staff, and parents could create a cooperative climate where all significant others in education can have a voice. That could inhibit the sense of hierarchy among the members in different institutions, and the members within the schools.

- Suggestion on educational practice:
  - Socio-cultural perspectives do not perceive that development is linear, instead, learning and development are considered as a spiral shape (Edwards, 2012). That perception should guide educators from forming fixed ability groups. Also, the inequality in access to physical tools needs to be analysed and addressed.
  - Teachers and children should co-construct the learning environment, including adult-led and child-led activities in line with children's funds of knowledge and identities.
  - The scope of assessment in practice would encompass the methods that could make children's subjective learning process visible (Pascal and Bertram, 2016) in cooperation with the children and their parents.
  - Assessment would be an informal aspect of pedagogy and objectively collecting evidence against the pre-defined learning targets would not be on the staff's agenda. In such a learning atmosphere, the type of activities (adult-led and child-led) and the work samples from the two forms of activities would be both equally important, informing all stakeholders about children's learning journeys.
  - Pedagogical documentation could be a good option for making children's 'learning visible' and indicating "complexity [of children's literacy learning] as a strength that can meet systematic

accountability and employer requirements, as well as generating professional pride and unexpected insights as part of being with young children and their families." (Fleet, 2017, p.11).

- As in Reggio classrooms, children could create their project-based learning activities and work with the staff as facilitators (Edwards, 2012). In this way, there would be no tolerance for the segregation of some children due to being in the 'lower ability' group.
- The materials presented in class would be open-ended, meaningful to children's lives. Children having access to culturally relevant materials in play would engage in culturally functional literacy practices, with other literate members in their community (Neuman and Roskos, 1991).
- To strengthen the cooperation between the teaching staff and parents, the first change in schools would be to perceive parents' subjective knowledge towards literacy, literacy learning and their children as significant (Rinaldi, 2006). Then, welcoming families' cultural use of literacies could create a learning atmosphere where all children could see the traces of their home literacy practices. Both parents and their children would feel a sense of ownership in classrooms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The topics of the first interview with teaching staff

The pseudonyms of the teaching staff interviewed in the first term	**Interview topics**
Reception teacher: Mrs Thomas	-Their educational and professional background -their changing views regarding literacy teaching throughout their professional life -views and practices regarding parent involvement in children's literacy learning -the workforce division and collaboration among the reception teacher and other TAs -the nature of intervention groups and the teacher's role, if any
Teaching assistants: Mrs Corbyn, Mrs Smith, Mrs Green, Mrs Cooper	-their educational and professional background -their views regarding literacy teaching throughout their professional life -their role and responsibilities in the focus class -the nature of their cooperation with other TAs and the reception teacher, if any -the nature of intervention groups and the teaching staff's role, if any -views and practices regarding parent involvement in children's literacy learning -literacy teaching experience with intervention group children

Appendix 2: The topics of the second interview with teaching staff

The pseudonyms of the teaching staff interviewed in the third term	Interview topics
Reception teacher: Mrs Thomas	-demographic description of the school environment -the structure and application of assessment process including baseline, formative and summative assessment -their views regarding the role of assessment in literacy pedagogies - views regarding the Early Learning Goals in writing and reading in the EYFS Framework - planning of literacy environment in the class
Teaching Assistants: Mrs Cooper and Mrs Smith	-the process of planning their intervention group activities -the structure and application of assessment process including baseline, formative and summative assessment -views regarding the Early Learning Goals in writing and reading in the EYFS Framework -their views regarding the role of assessment in literacy pedagogies -views regarding the Early Learning Goals in writing and reading in the EYFS Framework
Teaching Assistants: Mrs King	-her educational and professional background -literacy teaching experience and planning with intervention group children -views and practices regarding parent involvement in children's literacy learning -views regarding the Early Learning Goals in writing and reading in the EYFS Framework - the structure and application of assessment process including baseline, formative and summative assessment
The SEND teacher	-her educational and professional background -her role in the literacy learning process of children with special needs -her interaction with the reception teaching staff, if any
The deputy head	-her educational and professional background -her role in the school and in the reception class, if any -her role regarding preparation and application of parent questionnaires in the reception class -the function of data storage end analysis software, EAZMAG, its use in reception children's literacy learning process
The literacy coordinators; writing, reading and phonics coordinators	-their educational and professional background -their roles as literacy coordinators in school -their roles as literacy coordinators at reception class, if any -their interaction with the reception teaching staff in supporting children's literacy development, if any

Appendix 3. Information Leaflets and Consent forms

Information Leaflet for the Early Years Educators and School Managers

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Researcher: Kubra Firat -- Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham

I am conducting a research study as a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. I would appreciate it if you could read this information and think about giving me permission to do research in your school/class. If, after reading this information sheet, you are willing to take part in the research, could you please sign the attached consent form?

Aims of the research:
The research project focuses on literacy learning provision supplied by the school for children in a Reception class. I want to understand more about how teachers involve parents in children's literacy learning processes and how the EYFS Profile influences literacy teaching and parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. I am also interested in finding out about children's responses to the literacy activities offered to them in the class.

During the research
I would like to conduct the research by working as a volunteer in the Reception class for two days each week for ten months. While assisting the teacher, I would be observing the classroom, taking field notes, taking photographs of displays and pupils' work, collecting documents related to literacy teaching and making some audio-recordings. Later in the year, I wish to focus particularly on six case study children. Also, I hope to conduct interviews with teachers, the six focus children and those children's parents. Interviews with children are planned to be done via a funny puppet game. The puppet will ask questions about their literacy experiences and the literacy activities that they enjoy doing.

Anonymity of the personal information:
Information collected in the study site will be stored in a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher (myself) will be able to reach it. After completing my degree, I will keep the recorded information for seven years in line with the regulations of the university. After seven years, I will destroy the information recorded. In the doctoral thesis, there will not be any personal information that may lead to the identification of participants. The school and participants will be given pseudonyms.

Benefits of taking part in the study:
I hope that the findings from my study will contribute to understanding of children's literacy learning in Reception classes in the UK and in my home country of Turkey.

Findings of the study:
The results of the current research will be written in my doctoral thesis. A summary of the study and its results will be presented to the participating school and parents.

Thank you very much for sparing the time to read this information leaflet. If you have any queries, I am ready to explain the study in more detail.

Contact information:

Kubra Firat -- e-mail: kubra.firat@nottingham.ac.uk -- Phone number: 0744 872 76 30

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form for Early Childhood Educators

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Researcher: Kubra Firat

Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham
Could you read the statements below and sign the form, if you want to participate in the study?

1. I acknowledge that I have read and understood the study and its detail. I had the chance to ask queries related to the study and have my questions answered.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

3. I understand that the researcher will ask for the consent of all participants, including children.

4. I understand that some of the data for the study will be audio-recorded, that my personal information will not be indicated in any parts of the research findings and the collected information will be deleted after seven years of graduation.

5. I understand that the documents collected will include observational notes, teaching plans, teaching materials shared with parents and pupils' work, and that my name and the school's name will not be in any reports of the study.

I agree to take part in the above study.

Signature of Teacher

_____

Name of Teacher

_____

Date

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Information Leaflet for Parents to do Classroom Observation

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

I am conducting a research study as a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. I would appreciate it if you could read this information and think about giving me permission to do research in your school/class. If, after reading this information sheet, you are willing to take part in the research, could you please sign the attached consent form?

Aims of the research:
The research project focuses on literacy learning provision supplied by the school for children in a Reception class. I want to understand more about how teachers involve parents in children's literacy learning processes and how the EYFS Profile influences literacy teaching and parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. I am also interested in finding out about children's responses to the literacy activities offered to them in the class.

During the research
I would like to conduct the research by working as a volunteer in the Reception class for two days each week throughout ten months. While assisting the teacher, I would be observing the classroom, taking field notes, taking photographs of displays and pupils' work, collecting documents related to literacy teaching and making some audio-recordings.

Anonymity of the personal information:
Information collected in the study site will be stored in a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher (myself) will be able to reach it. After completing my degree, I will keep the recorded information for seven years in line with the regulations of the university. After seven years, I will destroy the information recorded. In the doctoral thesis, there will not be any personal information that may lead to the identification of participants. The school and participants will be given pseudonyms.

Benefits of taking part in the study:
I hope that the findings from my study will contribute to understanding of children's literacy learning in Reception classes in the UK and in my home country of Turkey.

Findings of the study:
The results of the current research will be written in my doctoral thesis. A summary of the study and its results will be presented to the participating school and parents.

Thank you very much for sparing the time to read this information leaflet. If you have any queries, I am ready to explain the study in more detail.

Contact information:

Kubra Firat - e-mail: kubra.firat@nottingham.ac.uk - Phone number: 0744 872 76 30

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form for Parents to Do Classroom Observation

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Information Leaflet for Parents

Name of Researcher: Kubra Firat

Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham

Could you read the statements below and sign the form, if you want to participate in the study?

1. I acknowledge that I have read and understood the study and its detail. I had the chance to ask queries related to the study and have my questions answered.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

3. I understand that the researcher will ask for the consent of all participants, including children.

4. I understand that some information for the study will be audio-recorded, my child's personal information will not be indicated in any parts of the research findings and the collected information will be deleted after seven years of graduation.

I agree to my child taking part in the above study.

_____

Name of Child

_____ _____ _____

Signature Name of Parent Date

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Information Leaflet for Children to do Classroom Observation

Hello all,

I am Kubra. I am a student at the University of Nottingham. I am interested in how you are learning to read. If you agree, I would like to take notes, record your voice and take the pictures of your drawing and writing. (Show the consent form to the class) There are two faces, one is smiley and the other is sad. If you don't mind me looking at your work and talking to you about your reading and writing, please colour the smiley face. And if you do **not** want me to look at your work and talk to you about your reading and writing, please colour the sad face.

If you are happy to help me, colour the smiley face.

If you don't want to help me, colour the sad face.

You can change your mind any time. And if you don't want to help me, I really don't mind.

Do you have any questions about what I'm doing?

Thank you very much all.

Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

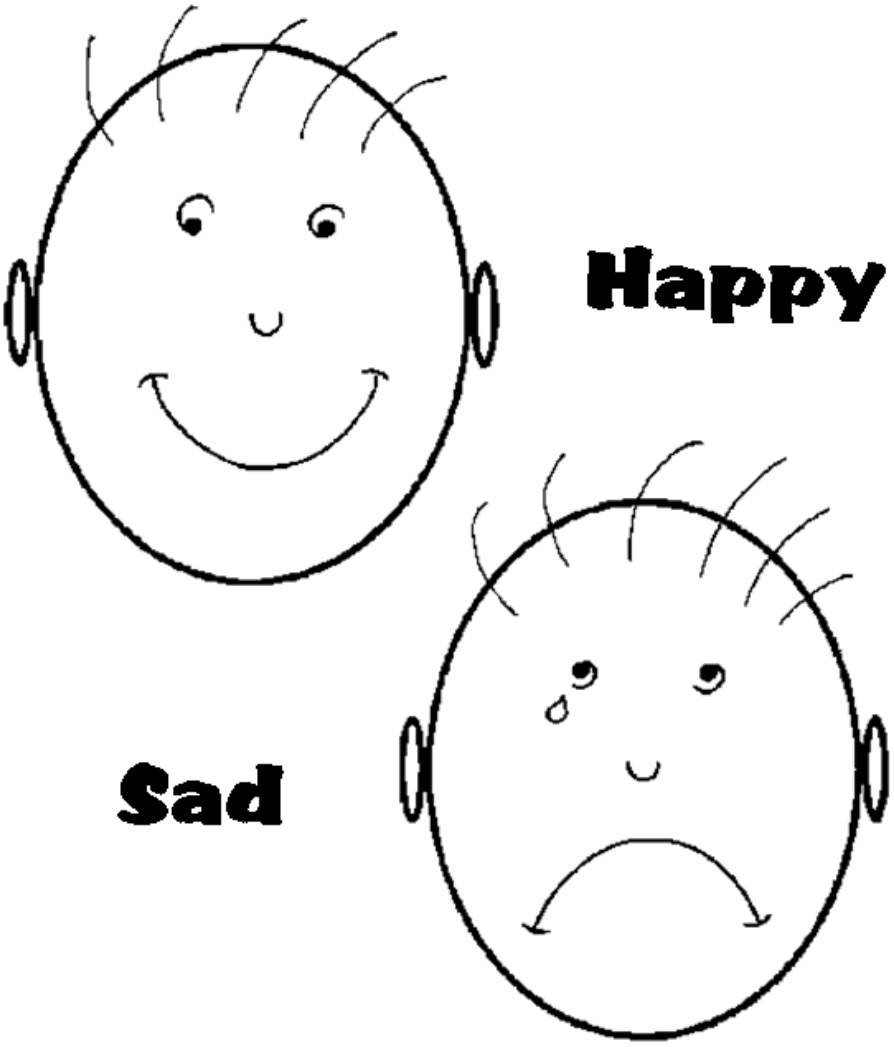
1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form for Children to Do Classroom Observation

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Name of Researcher: Kubra Firat

Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham



Information Leaflet for the Parents of Six Case Children

Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Researcher: Kubra Firat - Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham

Information Leaflet for Parents

I am conducting a research study as a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. I would appreciate it if you could read this information and think about giving me permission to do research in your school/class. If, after reading this information sheet, you are willing to take part in the research, could you please sign the attached consent form?

Aims of the research:
The research project focuses on literacy learning provision supplied by the school for children in a Reception class. I want to understand more about how teachers involve parents in children's literacy learning processes and how the EYFS Profile influences literacy teaching and parents' involvement in their children's literacy learning. I am also interested in finding out about children's responses to the literacy activities offered to them in the class.

During the research
As part of my study, beside working as a volunteer teaching assistant, I want to observe your child in the class. If you allow me to do so, I will record your child's interaction with literacy related materials (e.g., books, pencils, drawing) and your child's involvement in literacy activities through audio-recorders and taking photographs of your child's drawings, and writings. Also, I want to interview with you and your child on the topic of literacy at a time that suits you. Your child's observational reports written by the teacher, his/her EYFS Profile result at the end of the year, records of communication channels, materials between teachers and you (e.g., fliers, communication books etc.) are kindly requested, which will help me to learn your child's literacy learning journey and your position in that process.

Anonymity of the personal information:
Information collected in the study site will be stored in a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher (myself) will be able to reach it. After completing my degree, I will keep the recorded information for seven years in line with the regulations of the university. After seven years, I will destroy the information recorded. In the doctoral thesis, there will not be any personal information that may lead to the identification of participants. The school and participants will be given pseudonyms.

Benefits of taking part in the study:
I hope that the findings from my study will contribute to understanding of children's literacy learning in Reception classes in the UK and in my home country of Turkey.

Findings of the study:
The results of the current research will be written in my doctoral thesis. A summary of the study and its results will be presented to the participating school and parents.

Thank you very much for sparing the time to read this information leaflet. If you have any queries, I am ready to explain the study in more detail.

Contact information:
Kubra Firat - e-mail: kubra.firat@nottingham.ac.uk - Phone number: 0744 872 76 30

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Consent Form for Parents of Six Children to Do Individual Observation and Parent/Child Interviews at School

Information Leaflet for Parents
Literacy Learning from School to Home: An ethnography

Researcher: Kubra Firat
Doctoral Student in the School of Education, University of Nottingham

Could you read the statements below and sign the form, if you want to participate in the study?

1. I acknowledge that I have read and understood the study and its detail. I had the chance to ask queries related to the study and have my questions answered.

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

3. I understand that information collected may be used in reports by the researcher but that my child's and my name will not be in any of these reports.

4. I understand that some information for the study will be audio-recorded, my child's and my personal information will not be indicated in any parts of the research findings and the collected information will be deleted after seven years of graduation.

I agree to my child taking part in the above study.

I agree to take part in the above study.

_____

Name of Child

_____ _____ _____

Signature Name of Parent Date

Supervisors' names and e-mail addresses:

1. Professor Christine Hall
   e-mail: christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk
2. Supervisor: Associate Professor Joanna McIntyre
   e-mail: joanna.mcintyre@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 4. An example field note, describing an whole class, adult-led phonics activity

The context: There were three teaching staff in the class; Mrs Cooper, Mrs Green and Mrs Thomas. Mrs Cooper was doing a one-to-one activity with Jasper, Mrs Green was doing small group literacy activity with four children; Felix, Alice, John and Attila.

The activity: The learning aim of the activity was to practise writing CCVC words. The class teacher was responsible for doing the whole class phonics activity with the remaining class. Children were sitting in front of the IWB with a horse shoe shaped structure, where they all could see the teacher near to the IWB. All children had a small white board, a pen and a rubber.
Mrs Thomas, sitting on the chair and looking at the class, spelled the word, 'swim' and then wanted them to write the word 'swim' on their own boards individually. While children were trying to write the target word, Mrs Thomas repeated the same word many times. Since she could see each child's board, the teacher warned particular children that they were writing the word wrongly and wanted them to be more careful. One of them was George; the below conversation passed between the two.

Mrs Thomas: First word, we're going to write, 'swim'. Listen, /s/, /w/, /ɪ/, /m/. 'swim'. Off you go, think carefully about those first two sounds. I want to hear them and see them. swim (repeating the words several times) (talking to the whole class)
Mrs Thomas: George, you've still written 'sim'. Listen, 'swim' /s/, /w/, which sound are you missing? /s/, /w/, have another try please (Looking at George).
George: (He wrote the 's' letter.)
Mrs Thomas: There is your sound /s/, what sound can you hear that needs to go next to it? /s/, /w/.
George: (writing the /w/, next to /s/.)
Mrs Thomas: Right, that goes next.

After all children had finished, she requested the children to show the board. All children raised their board to the position that the teacher could see each child's writing. Then, Mrs Thomas grabbed a small board and wrote the word pronouncing each sound with emphasis. Also, she described how to start writing the letters of the word. The activity continued with writing the words 'clip' and 'plan' and the interaction continued in a similar way. (7 February 2018, field notes).