COPING WITH CLASSROOM READING:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUR DYSLEXIC PUPILS DURING THE FINAL YEARS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLING

by

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CHAPTER NINE
INTER-PERSON COPING STRATEGIES FOR CONVENTIONAL READING

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter and the next I move on from discussing aspects of reader identity in order to address the third research question, which is concerned with the specific ways the participants negotiated their way though texts encountered in the classroom:

What strategies for coping with the demands of conventional classroom reading are used by dyslexic pupils of upper junior age?

In order to distinguish traditional linear reading from 'on screen' hyper-text reading (Bearne, 2006) , which will be discussed in Chapter Eleven, the term 'paper-based reading' (Bearne, 2006) has recently entered the literature. I have struggled to find a suitable succinct term to use in the question above as 'paper based' does not describe all the types of reading I wish to discuss in these two chapters, as I will also be referring to texts on traditional black/whiteboards and wall displays. I therefore decided to use 'conventional' as an umbrella term, as the *Oxford paperback dictionary* links the word with 'traditional', and essentially, it is the types of texts that have been present in schools since universal state education began in this country in the late nineteenth century that will be discussed in these chapters.

As explained in Chapter Seven, because most reading that the participants encountered during class lessons when little adult help was available was set at a level that was too difficult for them to read independently, it was these texts that provided them with unavoidable "threats, anxieties and challenges" (Jackson and Warin, 2000, p.378) on a daily basis. The fundamental need then for the participants was to reduce these demands so that the total reading load could be managed in such a way that they were able to function with some semblance of normality as members of the classroom community of learners. In Chapter Three I introduced the notion of

'coping strategies' (Woods, 1983; Breakwell, 1985; Pollard, 1985) as an analytic tool with which to look at the patterned ways pupils deal with difficult situations at school. Data analysis has led to the development of a repertoire of both intentional and non-intentional coping strategies that the participants drew on when they encountered difficult reading in the classroom, and this will be now be presented. Despite the fact that my symbolic interactionist stance, as set out in Chapter Three, blurs the distinction somewhat because of the centrality of a socially defined Meadian self, in the interests of clarity, I have decided to discuss what I will refer to as 'inter-person' and 'within-person' strategies in two separate chapters. For the purposes of this study, I define 'inter-person' coping strategies as those which directly involve interaction with another child or adult during textual encounters, and 'within-person' strategies as those for which the pupil relies entirely on inner resources. Classroom reading was of course encountered in many different teaching situations, but essentially it was only during written tasks of the type usually referred to in the American literature and occasionally in British studies as "individual seat work" (Hall, 2002, p.181) that the participants were able to make use of inter-person coping strategies, and so in this chapter, I focus my attention on these by looking firstly at pupil/adult and then at pupil/pupil interactions.

9.2 Inter-person coping strategies for individual seat work tasks - pupil/adult

In Chapter Eight, much was made of the strong need for pupils with reading problems to maintain self-esteem by 'covering' and 'passing as normal' (Goffman, 1963), and if this impression management view (Goffman, 1959) is taken, then any coping strategy in which other people are directly asked for support must mean loss of face to some extent (Goffman, 1955). The phenomenon of 'classroom help avoidance' (Ryan et al., 2001), as discussed in Chapter Four, therefore commonly occurs particularly amongst low ability pupils of the age of the participants. However, as seeking the support of staff for a multitude of reasons is a culturally acceptable way of behaving in schools, pupil/adult inter-person coping strategies can seem an attractive option for some pupils in some circumstances. There are a number of ways in which the supporting role of adults can be viewed by a pupil who

wishes to solicit help, and I now describe the different coping strategies for difficult reading that arose from each of these.

9.2.1 *Soliciting adult support in order to get assistance with reading*

Perhaps the most obvious way to cope with difficult classroom reading is to seek the help of teachers and other adults, as their institutionalized role in schools, if a communities of practice view is taken (Lave and Wenger, 1991), is as older wiser members of the society who support younger inexperienced members and induct them into its culture (Bruner, 1996). In Chapter Four I introduced the concept of motivational learning goals, and if pupils have a mastery-orientation, then they will be aware that instrumental help-seeking can be a positive metacognitive strategy that moves learning forward (Rogers et al., 1994). However in the current SATurated Y6 classroom environment (Hall et al., 2004), it is likely that many pupils, especially if they have literacy difficulties, will be motivated by performance goals (Dweck, 1986). If that is so, then although some requests for help will represent a genuine desire to aid understanding, the urge for support may be mainly driven by the need to boost marks or avoid censure by giving in work of poor quality.

The amount of assistance requested by a particular pupil will of course not only depend on their motivational orientation to learning, but also on the way their personalities and social interactions intertwine to create their unique 'pupil careers' (Pollard and Filer, 1999), as discussed in Chapter Three. Amy's pattern of support seeking demonstrates that there is also a dynamic element in this process, as in Y6 she no longer acted the part of the passively undemanding 'quiet child' (Collins, 1996) she had been during Y5, but changed to become a teacher-pleasing dutiful pupil (Reynold, 2001b) who sought help on a regular basis during individual tasks. Amy also often engaged in competence displays both with school staff and with me at the end of tasks when she liked to point out good marks, and although it is difficult to be certain, this led me to feel she was perhaps performance rather than mastery goal orientated. My suspicion was further aroused when I observed her during a KS2 SATS comprehension exercise in Literacy which was being self

marked by the pupils during a whole class 'interactive' session (Burns and Myhill, 2004). The lesson rationale seemed to be "teaching the test" (Hall et al., 2004, p.807) as there was much discussion about "the appropriateness of the various responses in the context of which answer would yield the most marks" (Hall et al., 2004, p.807). As the teacher went though the answers, Amy changed hers if they were wrong or inadequate and then awarded herself the marks for each question as if they had been correct in the first place without drawing attention to the fact that she had obviously encountered problems because of the difficult reading involved.

Given Amy's literacy problems, it might have been expected that she would have been the focus of intermittent unsolicited support from adults in the classroom. However, perhaps because of the devious tactics revealed above and her good behavioural standard by comparison with a number of pupils in her cohort, she seemed to be classed as low priority, a common occurrence for girls with SEN according to Daniels et al. (1999). She was therefore put in the position of having to actively seek adult attention by putting up her hand each time she decided she needed support during individual tasks. The details of Amy's usual pattern of behaviour were captured at the start of the summer term of Y6 in the Systematic Observation given in Table 9.1 below which was completed during another KS2 SAT practice comprehension exercise in Literacy. Prior to the written task, the pupils had to read the booklet from the 1999 test, which was entitled 'Spinners' (Kispal, 2005). During her lunchtime interview, I discovered that Amy had found some parts of the reading easy, such as a nursery rhyme, but other parts hard, such as some spoof old fashioned writing, and so had not been able to complete it in the time available. On this occasion Amy was sitting on her own and so could not use peer support as she answered the questions, but as prior to the start of the task the teacher had told the pupils that they could ask if they wanted something read out, the act of support seeking was legitimized and consequently loss of face minimized (Goffman, 1955).

TABLE 9.1

Amy – Systematic Observation of individual Literacy task, 19.4.2005

Task: to answer comprehension questions on ' The truth about Little Miss Muffet' – part of the 1999 SATs KS2 reading test.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

50 observations (about 8 minutes) coded at 10 second intervals along the rows left to right.

Start

TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	WH	WH	WH	WH	WH
TA	TA	TA	TA	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	WH	WH	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT
TT	TE	TE	TE	TE	DO	DO	DP	DP	MR
TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	TA	MR	TE	TE	TE

Finish

CODES, BEHAVIOURS AND PERCENTAGES

Code	Pupil behaviour	% of codings
TE	On task – engaged (apparent) on own	36
TP	On task –interacting with pupil/s	0
TT	On task –interacting with teacher	14
TA	On task – interacting with adult	24
DO	Distracted – on own (looking around)	4
DP	Distracted – interacting with pupil/s	4
DT	Distracted – interacting with teacher	0
DA	Distracted – interacting with adult	0
MT	Management task	0
WH	Waiting for help	14
MR	Moving around room	4
OR	Out of room	0

The Systematic Observation, which was completed while Amy was answering the questions, shows that she was on task for most the time, but only worked on her own for four short bursts of about one minute each, which made up 36% of the total codings. After each short task engagement she put up her hand for help, waited to be noticed, which in all made up 14% of the codings, and then received a roughly equal amount of support from either the classroom assistant or teacher, which amounted to

another 38% of the total codings. In her lunchtime interview, Amy confided that she often had to wait quite a while for help, and perhaps this was why during the latter part of the coding period she more proactively moved across the room to an adult and initiated an interaction. This pattern of help seeking and support provision followed by task re-engagement enabled Amy to attempt to answer most of the questions in the booklet, although the fundamental problem of not being able to read the text independently meant that she still did not get them all correct. However, her coping strategy certainly did enable her to produce a task response which was on a par with a number of other pupils, and so, although not as positive as if she was mastery learning orientated, could be considered a successful tactic for a pupil who is performance motivated.

9.2.2 *Soliciting support from adults in order to manipulate them to do the reading*

As discussed in Chapter Four, maladaptive motivational styles for learning can develop in pupils who have reading difficulties, and support-seeking from adults can sometimes be a manifestation of these damaging stances. Janie, like Amy, often sought help with tasks that involved reading, but frequently her aim seemed not to be to gain assistance, but rather to manipulate the adult into doing the reading and subsequent written work for her. Janie usually prefaced her request for support with the phrase "It's too hard for me" (Interview transcript, 26.11.2004), and if cajoled would then become tearful with the result that the adult sometimes gave in. Similarly during lunchtime interviews she would often refer back to tasks with the past tense version of what I came in my fieldnotes to call her 'too hard' mantra. Nichols and Miller (1983) set out the three stages of development of the concept of level of difficulty of tasks in relation to ability through childhood, and Janie's words suggest that she was still operating at the immature 'egocentric stage' which applies when children "discriminate tasks on the basis of their subjective certainty of being able to complete them" (p.952) rather than making an objective or normative judgement.

Although Janie's judgement was indeed sometimes sound in that the reading and/or written work was beyond what she could be expected to complete independently,

there were also times during the first part of the spring term of Y6 when she was generally disaffected, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, when the mantra seemed to be more related to avoidance of effort for tasks that were set at an appropriate level. Although it seems paradoxical given her rationale for help-seeking, her behaviour was symptomatic of 'self-worth protection' (Covington, 1992), which as explained in Chapter Four, results in tasks set at the right level being felt to pose the most threat to the pupil (Jackson, 2002). The problem for Janie was that she 'cried wolf' too often in this way while going through her disaffected patch, and even though as time went on, her requests became more genuinely for support rather than effort avoidance, the staff tended to ignore her in the hope that this would encourage her to be more self-reliant. An example of an occasion when this happened during a practice comprehension test near the end of the spring term of Y6 was captured in my fieldnotes:

> About half way through the time allotted Janie put her hand up and waited for help. The teacher was busy with other pupils and after about a minute Janie put her hand down and started to work again for about a minute.
> (Fieldnotes, 18.3.2005)

Unfortunately over time the staff ploy did not result in Janie developing a more independent way of working, and she then had to rely on more covert tactics such as listening in when the teacher interacted with the pupil next to her, or engaging in 'involuntary peer support' (Raveaud, 2005), a strategy that will be described later in this chapter. If none of these coping strategies worked, and she still had problems with a task, she would become openly upset, and at that point support would be provided by an adult, but by then she was not in an appropriate cognitive state for learning (Gentile and McMillan, 1987). Certainly, then, in Janie's case, the coping strategy of attempting to manipulate adults into doing the reading, rather than supporting her with it, seriously backfired, and could not be said to be successful on any level. A symbolic interactionist interpretation of Janie and Amy's different experiences with regard to the support they received when they requested help, suggests that pupil's personalities and learning motivations affect the way that others

interact with them as identities are constantly re-negotiated within the classroom community (Pollard and Filer, 1999). Janie and Amy were treated very similarly in Y5 in terms of the help they received from adults, but as their pupil career trajectories (Pollard and Filer, 1999) diverged, with Amy becoming classified as a conformist hard working pupil, and Janie as a disaffected work-avoiding pupil, so the way their solicitation of support was dealt with changed too.

9.2.3 *Expecting that adults will provide unsolicited support with tasks involving reading*

Asking adults for help, as in the above two categories, is an intentionally strategic way of coping with the demands of difficult reading, but some pupils develop a more habitual expectation that constant unsolicited support will be provided. This is not surprising given that some pupils with formal recognition of significant special needs receive so much adult attention that they become habituated to it because they are rarely left to get on with tasks on their own (OFSTED, 20004b; Reedy, 2005). Of the four participants, Russell was the only one who was in danger of being in this position because his LEA SEN statement entitled him to a number of hours of support. I quickly became aware during the preliminary fieldwork year that he had developed an over-close relationship with his designated classroom assistant, a situation that had perhaps arisen because she was a neighbour and so saw a good deal of him out of school. The unfortunate consequence of the attention was that throughout Y5 he showed classic signs of 'learned helplessness' (Burden, 2005) as described in Chapter Four. This was evidenced by his expectation, based, admittedly on experiencing years of severe problems with literacy learning, that he was bound to fail with any task involving reading if left to his own devices. His only coping strategy was therefore to assume that adults would provide unsolicited support and in effect do the work for him. The school seemed to become aware that the situation was not helpful for moving his learning forward, and at the start of Y6 re-organised the available support staff so that he was assisted by a different person who interacted with him in a supportive but less 'motherly' way. However, when I talked to Russell during the autumn term of Y6 about the Literacy Challenge that was

discussed in Chapter Eight, it became apparent that habitual coping strategies are hard to change when well entrenched:

R: I can't understand that book record thing.
RA: Can't you? No, I noticed you hadn't actually.
R: So I just leave it and the teachers will do it for me.
R: Right – I noticed you hadn't filled it in.
R: (Giggles in an embarrassed way)
(Interview transcript, 15.11.2004)

Russell's behaviour seemed to be reinforced by the operation of the 'looking glass self' effect (Cooley, 1902) described in Chapter Three, as during Y6 all the staff continued to designated him as 'needy' (Benjamin, 2002), perhaps because his problems were formally labelled in a way that the other three participants' were not, even though their functional literacy levels were not very different. A good example of this positioning occurred during the autumn term when it was decided that Russell should learn to touch-type using an internet keyboard programme (Crivelli, 2006) and the newly designated classroom assistant was put in charge of the initiative, and was supposed to sit with him while he practised. One day when I was following Russell, she did not appear the appointed time, but the class teacher told him to start his ten minute session anyway. I sat close to the computer so I could observe, and it rapidly became obvious that he was perfectly capable of going into the programme, remembering the lesson he was on, and then practising independently as it was designed to be self- checking. However at lunchtime the classroom assistant came up to me and apologized for being unavailable, and then thanked me for stepping into the breach and helping him. I told her that he had seemed fine on his own, but during his interview that day I decided to ask him for his evaluation of the need for support:

RA: ...do you need somebody with you to do that or are you okay on your own?
R: I'm okay on my own.
RA: Yes – I could see you were.

R: It's ??? (inaudible) cos it doesn't matter if you get it wrong because it just gives you all the answers.
(Interview transcript, 24.11.2004)

This was in fact an early sign that as Russell matured, he was starting to be able to think more readily in a metacognitive way (Myers and Paris, 1978), and during the spring term he began to make comments that showed he was becoming aware that successful learners are self-reliant (Cotton, 1995). Despite this though, remnants of his former support dependent attitude continued to be revealed during individual Literacy tasks captured in Systematic Observations. However, conversely there were times when Russell indulged in 'classroom help avoidance' (Ryan et al., 2001), as described in Chapter Four, when he should have sought adult support. The particular occasion when this was very clear was during Literacy near the end of the spring term of Y6 when the task was a SAT-type comprehension exercise entitled 'No more school'. The pupils had been told they could ask for help with the preliminary reading, but Russell decided that he would rely on within–person resources rather than solicit support. In his lunchtime interview he read part of the text and needed a good deal of help, and he then explained why he had decided not to seek support:

RA: OK right, you needed a bit of help with that.
R: Yes.
RA: So what did you actually do when you were reading it through then?
R: I like kept going over words like over and over and ??? (inaudible as Russell's voice tails off in volume).
RA: Could you put your hand up and ask a teacher ?
R: Yeah – I could but.
RA: Did you?
R: I didn't think - no – I didn't put my hand up.
RA: Right – when you say you didn't think – what was going through your mind?
R: well - I were like saying – it is out of a SATs test so I shouldn't be putting my hand up in SATs should I – so I've got to learn to ??? (inaudible)
RA: Right – so you were sort of thinking to yourself how you'd cope.
R: Yeah.
(Interview transcript, 16.3. 2005)

Russell's reason for avoiding seeking help may have been the impending SATs tests which he knew were to be taken under exam conditions, but it could also have been motivated by the wish to present himself publicly as a competent reader (Goffman, 1959). My suspicion was aroused when slightly later in the interview he said that he had managed to get to the end of the text in the time available, which seemed unlikely. He did however admit that he had found it hard to take in meaning, and despite soliciting support during the written part of the task, he still only managed to produce an acceptable answer for three of the seven questions. His pattern of working was much like Amy's for the similar Literacy activity described earlier in the chapter, in that overall he was on task for a high percentage of the time and working individually was interspersed with support. However there were differences, the most salient of which was that Amy's pupil/adult interactions were of short duration but Russell's were much more sustained. Unlike Amy who sat at the back of the room, Russell had been positioned right at the front, very close to where the teacher usually stood when she introduced a task, and so when the pupils were told to begin working he immediately asked for support with question reading, and she then discussed the task with him for about one and a half minutes. Russell also engaged in two interactions with the classroom assistant, the second of which continued for about three minutes. She sat near him, as is common practice with SEN pupils (Bowers, 1997; Blatchford et al., 2007), and this meant each time he was helped virtually straight away, unlike Amy who had to wait until an adult became aware of her signal for attention.

Russell's support dependence on adults for help with reading had another unfortunate consequence in that it appeared to have stopped him becoming aware that peer collaboration of the type to be discussed in the second half of this chapter could be an effective coping strategy during tasks that involved reading. This was especially noticeable during a KS2 SAT comprehension exercise at the start of the summer term of Y6 when the classroom assistant who usually supported him was not available. I was able to capture his behaviour on that occasion in the Systematic Observation given in Table 9.2 below.

TABLE 9.2

Russell - Systematic Observation of individual Literacy task, 21.4.2005

Task: to answer comprehension questions on 'Great walls of the world' from the 2000 KS2 SAT reading test.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
100 observations (about 16 minutes) coded at 10 second intervals along the rows left to right

Start

TE	TE	TE	TE	DO	DO	DO	TE	TE	TE
TT	TT	TT	TT	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	WH	WH	WH	WH	WH	WH	DO	DO	TT
TT	TT	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	DP	DP
DP	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	DP	DP
DP	DP	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	DP	DO	DP
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	MR
WH	WH	WH	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
TA	MR	DP	DP	DO	MR	DP	TE	TE	TE

Finish

CODES, BEHAVIOURS AND PERCENTAGES

Code	Pupil behaviour	% of codings
TE	On task – engaged (apparent) on own	54
TP	On task –interacting with pupil/s	0
TT	On task –interacting with teacher	8
TA	On task – interacting with adult	1
DO	Distracted – on own (looking around)	6
DP	Distracted – interacting with pupil/s	12
DT	Distracted – interacting with teacher	0
DA	Distracted – interacting with adult	0
MT	Management task	0
WH	Waiting for help	9
MR	Moving around room	3
OR	Out of room	7

The Systematic Observation shows that Russell was task engaged on his own for 54% of the codings and that he also received help from the teacher for 8%. As in the task described above he was immediately supported by her near the start, but later in the session he had to wait for about a minute and then became distracted before she gave him her attention. On the third occasion he waited for a short time but when no interaction was initiated, he went out of the room to the toilet. During the previous task when the classroom assistant was present, Russell had engaged in some distracted off-task behaviour, mainly looking around the room, and on this occasion he did do that, but also talked to other pupils for 12% of the time. What was particularly noticeable however, was that this was all off-task chatting rather than discussions about the work. The classroom assistant had entered the room as Russell came back from the toilet towards the end of the coding period and he had greeted her. She sat down near another pupil, and he became task engaged again on his own. The pupils were given a long time to complete this task, and after the coding period ended, the change in Russell's behaviour now that the classroom assistant was present was remarkable. He got up and went over to her, but unusually was made to wait for a while as she was talking to another pupil. He made no attempt to ask other pupils for support, but hovered near her and after a time put his answer sheet down in front of her in a desperate bid to gain her attention, which worked as she did begin to interact with him and in fact scribed for him.

Russell's behaviour during the task described above suggests that over-dependence on adult support not only potentially leads to a state of learned helplessness that prevents pupils with reading difficulties becoming independent learners, but that it can also mean there is no incentive for a pupil to regard their peers as a resource to help them cope with difficult tasks The other three participants were aware of this potential source of assistance, and so it is to pupil/pupil strategies that I now turn my attention.

9.3 Inter-person coping strategies for individual seat work tasks - pupil/pupil

Although I use the term 'individual seat work', the community of learners 'team' ethos of the school meant that the teachers did not insist that tasks involving literacy skills, other than tests, had to be completed in silence, and so the participants were able to solicit the support of other pupils to help them to cope with reading demands if they so wished. As with the pupil/adult situation described above, a number of different types of pupil-pupil coping interactional relationships developed, and the salient variable seemed to be the status balance, or lack of it, between the two parties in relation to the classroom community of learners. Essentially, like the pupil/adult strategies described in the last section, all the pupil/pupil strategies had the same ultimate intentional or unintentional aim of ensuring that someone other than the participant did the reading.

9.3.1 *Collaborating with another pupil as an equal on tasks involving reading*

Collaborating with a peer on a task involving reading can be a supportive coping strategy for a pupil with literacy difficulties (Humphrey, 2003), but the outcome may be less than successful in terms of making meaning from text if both pupils have reading problems, as was the case in the vignette of Amy and Janie at the start of Chapter One. The two girls not only collaborated on ICT tasks during Y5, but also used this as their main coping strategy during tasks which involved conventional reading, and it usually led to co-authored identical written work which just about met minimal standards of acceptability in terms of task response. This strategy of mutual support was no longer available to them in Y6 when they were allocated to different classes, but they remained in the same Literacy group, and although their friendship had become somewhat dysfunctional, as described in Chapter Six, they were told to sit together by the teacher. In the section on pupil/adult coping strategies above, I suggested that during Y6 Amy made good use of adult help when peer support was not available, and that this enabled her to produce satisfactory task outcomes. Systematic Observations when she was sitting next to Janie revealed that she still sought some adult help with hard reading, but that the Y5 style of collaborative interaction around texts also re-established itself. I captured the

behaviour of the two girls in the Systematic Observation given in Table 9.3 below as they worked together on a Literacy task during the autumn term of Y6.

TABLE 9.3

Amy (working with Janie) - Systematic Observation of individual Literacy task, 7.10.2004

Task: to scan a text to locate specific words from a given list, and then to copy the sentence.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
100 observations (about 16 minutes) coded at 10 second intervals along the rows left to right.

Start

TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	DP	TP	TE	TE	TP	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TE	TP	TE	TE
DP	DP	TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TA	TE	TE	TE	TE	TP
TE	TP	TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TP	TE	TP
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TP	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TP	TE	TP

Finish

CODES, BEHAVIOURS AND PERCENTAGES

Code	Pupil behaviour	% of codings
TE	On task – engaged (apparent) on own	74
TP	On task –interacting with pupil/s	22
TT	On task –interacting with teacher	0
TA	On task – interacting with adult	1
DO	Distracted – on own (looking around)	0
DP	Distracted – interacting with pupil/s	3
DT	Distracted – interacting with teacher	0
DA	Distracted – interacting with adult	0
MT	Management task	0
WH	Waiting for help	0
MR	Moving around room	0
OR	Out of room	0

The task was to scan a text to locate specific words, and although to start with the two girls worked on their own, they soon began to help each other. By the end of the coding period they had concentrated for virtually the whole time, although they had only worked individually in for 74% of the codings, the rest of the time being made up of eleven brief intermittent on-task interactions lasting between 10 and 30 seconds each which amounted to 22% of the codings. Unfortunately in terms of the task outcome, the result of the collaboration was not positive, as due to the difficulty of the text, the two girls had only managed to find 6 of the 15 words, but without the mutual support it is likely that this figure would have been even lower.

Systematic Observations during Y6 showed that Ernie also used peer collaboration as his main coping strategy for written tasks involving reading. However whereas the two girls did at times seek adult support as they worked, for Ernie this was a rare occurrence and the interactions were usually very brief, as in the task detailed below. Given that his reading standard was improving steadily at this time, I initially thought that this was because the texts were at a more comfortable independent level for him. Sometimes this may have been the reason, but there were other occasions when I noted that his task response suggested he had misunderstood either the original reading or written guidance and should have sought adult support, and therefore his behaviour could be interpreted as 'classroom help avoidance' (Ryan et al., 2001). Certainly, although Ernie always liked to gain adult feedback once he had completed work, he preferred to rely totally on the mutual support system he had developed with his friend Anthony when and if he encountered difficulty with reading during written tasks in literacy. Although Anthony's reading was much better than Ernie's and he was not considered to have any specific learning difficulties, his writing skills were quite weak overall, as evidenced by his allocation to the lower ability Y6 Literacy group. He was very small physically, and, like Ernie, although interested in sport, was not part of the elite group of fashion-conscious football-loving boys who dominated the playground space with their game at breaks (Swain, 2000, 2005). In terms of overall gender hierarchy of status within the cohort of boys (Reynold, 2001a, 2001b), Anthony seemed to be roughly on a par

with Ernie, and as such equality also existed with Amy and Janie in relation to the girls, I would conjecture that this is an essential condition for a collaborative coping relationship to develop.

As mentioned above, Amy and Janie usually stayed on task as they collaborated in Literacy, although once when talking about Numeracy, Janie showed that she was aware that discussions about work always had the potential to degenerate into off-task chatting when she remarked "When I'm stuck, I go 'what's that?' and then they tell me – then we start talking" (Interview Transcript, 27.4. 2005). Perhaps Ernie was less reflective about his classroom behaviour, as when collaborating with Anthony, on-task interactions often quickly transformed into wide ranging conversations on a variety of unrelated topics. This was clear to see in the Systematic Observation given in Table 9.4 below which was completed during Literacy just after the KS2 SATs in the summer term of Y6 when the pupils were required to read a text purporting to have been written by Galileo about the nature of the universe, and then write a letter to him to update the information.

TABLE 9.4

Ernie - Systematic Observation of individual Literacy task, 23.5.2005

Task: To write a letter to Galileo to update information about the universe – the task involved reading from a worksheet (taken from a NLS Y5 Booster unit) and editing the letter.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
100 observations (about 16 minutes) coded at 10 second intervals along the rows left to right

Start

TE	TP	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TT	TE	TE	TE	TP	DP	DP	DP	DP	TE
DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	TE	TE	TE	DP	DP
TE	TE	TP	TE	TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TP
TE	TE	TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TP	DP	DP
DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE
TE	TE	TP	TP	TP	TP	TE	DP	DP	DP
DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	TT	TP	TP

Finish

CODES, BEHAVIOURS AND PERCENTAGES

Code	Pupil behaviour	% of codings
TE	On task – engaged (apparent) on own	50
TP	On task –interacting with pupil/s	17
TT	On task –interacting with teacher	2
TA	On task – interacting with adult	0
DO	Distracted – on own (looking around)	0
DP	Distracted – interacting with pupil/s	31
DT	Distracted – interacting with teacher	0
DA	Distracted – interacting with adult	0
MT	Management task	0
WH	Waiting for help with hand up	0
MR	Moving around room	0
OR	Out of room	0

My codings show that Ernie worked on his own for 50% of the time in short bursts of concentration, and that he interacted intermittently with Anthony about the task for a further 17%. However, on almost every occasion, this led to extended off–task conversations, which at 31% made up virtually all the remaining codings. This was the most extreme example of pupil/pupil distracted behaviour that I recorded for Ernie, and was perhaps related to worries about school transition which always surface in the summer term of Y6, as the topic of conversation between him and Anthony centred on urban myths about detentions at the comprehensive school (Measor and Woods, 1984). Unfortunately it meant that on this occasion the collaboration could be viewed as less than successful, as near the end of the lesson the teacher announced that although some pupils might not have time to finish the entire task, they had to get to a certain point in the text before they were allowed to go to lunch. The boys realised that they were nowhere near the cut-off point and a burst of frenzied writing activity resulted which continued until after all the other pupils had left the room. This observational evidence shows that it is important to be aware that although peer collaboration for tasks involving reading is on the whole a very positive coping strategy, there are potential pitfalls which can interfere with effective learning.

9.3.2 *Using a more able friend as a peer tutor during tasks involving reading*

The benefits of teacher initiated peer tutoring are often advocated in dyslexia/LD related literature (Humphrey, 2003; Calhoon, 2005) but it is important to make it clear that although I choose to use the same term, I am referring to pupil-pupil relationships that develop out of normal socialization rather than formally negotiated relationships. In Chapter Four, I mentioned that Brozo (1990) found the cultivation of a friend as an informal peer tutor to be a positive strategy for pupils with literacy difficulties when they had to cope with difficult reading. However, organisational factors within the particular school context may affect how easily this can be accomplished, and at Granville the varying classroom seating practices of the three Upper Junior teachers resulted in the participants having variable access to this support. In Y6 Janie's class teacher arranged three double desks together to form

large tables in a "shoebox" layout (Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, and Wall, 1999, p.45), and as the groups were made up of pupils of similar ability, this resulted in Janie being the only girl on a table which included several boys with more generalized learning difficulties. She was therefore in the doubly unfortunate position of being made to sit with pupils of the opposite sex, which is unpopular with this age group (Hallam et al, 2004b; Swain, 2005) and can lead to lower levels of interaction (Galton et al., 1999), and also was not able to make use of collaboration or support from friends. Pratt and George (2005) have recently drawn attention to the importance of social bonds for the wellbeing of pupils during times of school transition, and this seating arrangement may therefore have been a contributing factor in Janie's increasing disaffection with school during Y6. It was certainly noticeable that on one day when she was at her most unhappy during the spring term, her demeanor completely changed when she was allowed to move and sit with her friend, the more able Hayley, who then supported her with a Geography mapwork task.

In Amy and Ernie's class, the teacher arranged the double desks in separate rows, a practice which was not often used in the 1990s according to Galton et al. (1999), but which may have become common recently due to the formality engendered by the current climate of performativity (Hall et al., 2004). This meant that the children sat in pairs and the teacher deliberately placed more and less able pupils next to each other. This resulted in a strong peer tutoring relationship developing between Amy and a girl called Emma during class lessons, as will be discussed in detail below, but not in Literacy as they were in different groups. Ernie's position was different in that he was not able to benefit from peer support during normal class lessons, as for much of the year he was placed next to a Y5 boy with behavioural problems, presumably in order to be a 'good' influence. However, in Literacy, which was in the same room, he sat next to his somewhat more able friend Anthony, but the relationship was essentially one of collaboration of equals, as discussed above.

I have already suggested that Amy's performance goal orientation to learning led her to be prepared to lose face and ask for frequent adult support, and her tutor/tutee partnership with Emma in a sense was an extension of this. These differences in the interactional styles adopted by the participants have made me aware that certain conditions relating to power and status between the two parties must be fulfilled for a successful peer tutoring relationship to develop The tutee had to be the type of personality who was happy to perform as a subordinate 'pupil', and the tutor had to be comfortable with the role of dominant 'teacher'. I have suggested above that classroom organizational factors played their part in preventing Janie from using a peer tutor in order to cope with reading, but actually on occasions when this should have been possible, her personality seemed to prevent her from interacting effectively in a tutor/tutee relationship, except in the special circumstances of ICT lessons where partnership working was formalised, and this will be discussed further in Chapter Eleven.

Amy's friend Emma was physically larger, and had a 'motherly' air of dependability which meant that she fell naturally into a protector role, and Amy's overall lack of confidence seemed to mean that this was appealing to her, and in fact during Y5 she had cultivated the friendship of a similar Y6 girl. Emma was considerably more academically able than Amy, and seemed to be a natural teacher, as although I documented many occasions when Amy asked her to read something out, it was more common for Emma to sense that a passage was going to be hard, and read spontaneously in a quiet voice which enabled Amy not to lose face with her peers. However as Y6 progressed the status imbalance in the relationship seemed to widen as Emma began to assume an ever more teacherly role, and the fieldnote extract below, which describes a History lesson during the second half of the summer term, illustrates how entrenched the tutor/tutee relationship had become by then. The pupils had watched a video about ancient Greece in which the story of Theseus and the Minotaur had been put into its historical perspective and setting. After it had ended they were asked to make notes about the main parts of the story using a list of

key vocabulary on the board, which at lunchtime I discovered Amy had found very hard to read:

> Amy began to work straightaway on the task – she did look at the board as the teacher drew the pupils' attention to it, but I did not notice her looking much afterwards – she and Emma worked without talking to each other. Emma finished her notes before the end of the time allotted and went to show them to the teacher. She then went and sat down again and began to look at Amy's work and talk to her about it until the end of the lesson.
> 10.42 am the teacher told the pupils to go out to play – they all went outside except for Emma and Amy. I went over and realised that Amy was copying exactly what Emma had put - her notes were identical. Emma was obviously acting as a tutor as she said that they had better stop and told Amy that she would have to copy the rest later – her tone was very authoritative and teacherly.
> (Fieldnotes, 16.6.2005)

The above excerpt shows that by this stage of the year the imbalance with regard to power and status between the two girls was large, but Emma's somewhat domineering attitude appeared to be a of a benign kind as they were obviously fond of each other and usually spent their free time at school together.

My impression that Amy regarded Emma as a teacher when working with her was reinforced by the fact that she rarely asked for adult support in the way that she did when collaborating with Janie as an equal on tasks involving reading. It is true that the outcome of Amy's interactional relationship with Janie and that with Emma was often the same in that the written work presented for marking from both partners was very similar, but the way the acceptable task response was achieved was very different, as due to the ability imbalance with Emma, co-authoring never occurred. However it is interesting to note that although Emma was obviously a capable pupil, she was not regarded by staff as a member of the group of 'high-flying' girls. In other words she was in the next layer of the hierarchy of ability when compared with Amy and this has led me to conjecture that it is always likely to be so for pupils who are prepared to act as tutors for those with literacy difficulties. Certainly at Granville the academic elite group of Upper Junior boys and girls seemed to operate in a

separate social sphere within the classroom community and rarely seemed to interact with those of lower ability. This phenomenon has recently been discussed by Bibby et al. (2007) as findings from their longitudinal study of a KS2 class suggested that an unfortunate consequence of the current assessment dominated classroom climate was that the pupils' identities were inextricably bound up with their National Curriculum 'levels'. The pupils at Granville did not overtly position themselves according to those criteria, but social stratification based on ability was apparent, and the way this affected working relationships between pupils during joint tasks is explored in more detail in relation to ICT in Chapter Eleven.

9.3.3 *Prevailing on peer to do written task involving reading*

Russell's class teacher used a very different approach to seating arrangements in that she grouped desks into 'shoeboxes' (Galton et al, 1999) as Janie's teacher did, but placed friends together rather than pupils of similar ability. Russell therefore was socially well supported, and potentially had a source of peer support for class lessons involving reading, but as mentioned above, because of his habituated dependence on adults, he never learned to make use of this in positive ways. Russell's attitude of learned helplessness has already been discussed in the section on pupil/adult strategies, and during his first Y6 session, I observed an incident that showed that pupils may extend this damaging stance onto their relationship with peers. The following incident is the only example of this coping strategy for difficult reading that I observed during the fieldwork , and so I do not claim it is a patterned response. Nevertheless, as dependence on peers of this kind does not seem to be discussed in the literature on learned helplessness, I feel it is important to include it. Russell's class were learning about reversible and irreversible changes in Science, and the pupils were required to carry out a practical experiment to demonstrate the chemical principle. The teacher had provided a proforma and the pupils were expected to record the results of the three parts of the experiment by copying from a list of key vocabulary on the board and then writing observations of what happened as they went along. Russell and two friends carried out the tasks, which involved adding three different liquids to bicarbonate of soda, amidst scenes of great excitement as

the chemical reactions occurred. Russell filled in the results sheet for the first two compounds in a minimalist way only after being reminded by the teacher, and my fieldnotes record what happened with the third:

> The children were told to get the lemon juice. Brett did the experiment and there was a lot of froth again. Russell then added more bicarbonate of soda which made it fizz to the top of the pot – he then looked at me and laughed. The teacher then praised pupils who were writing – Brett and Russell were not. Russell said " It smells quite nice" (as opposed to the vinegar which they had grimaced at).
> Russell then said to Matthew opposite " Will you write it for me?". There was no response.
> (Fieldnotes, 28.9.2004)

I noted that Russell gave in his sheet still incomplete at the end of the lesson, and it could be argued that his reason for asking his friend for support was because the task was genuinely difficult as it involved some scientific vocabulary that he could not read, a common problem that will be discussed in Chapter Ten. However, he made his appeal before he had even attempted to begin writing, and so it would seem that he was motivated by the expectation that a peer would be prepared to do work involving reading for him, regardless of challenge, and perhaps this is not surprising given the amount of unsolicited support from adults he had received up to that point in his pupil career, as described above.

9.3.4 *Using involuntary peer support during a task involving reading*

The term "involuntary peer support" as coined by Raveaud (2005, p.468) refers to the situation where a pupil looks covertly at another pupil's work as a way to get help, and although in the ordinary class situation this can be interpreted as a coping strategy, in a test situation it would be classed as cheating. This ploy, which at its most extreme consists of direct but covert copying of work, has long been used by pupils who are fearful of censure if they make mistakes, and although unhelpful for learning, is understandable if an impression management interpretation of behaviour is taken (Goffman, 1959). Amy had complained to me during Y5 that Janie sometimes looked at her work and copied it, and although I saw this happen in

Numeracy, I did not observe it in any other lessons. However towards the end of the spring term of Y6, I wrote the following fieldnote during a practice comprehension test using the text 'Leaving Home' which had formed part of the 1998 KS2 SAT (Kispal, 2005), the reading level of which Janie had correctly interpreted as too hard for her to tackle independently :

> At one point she looked intently at Amy's work for over half a minute without Amy being aware of this (*I suspect she was hoping to copy it),* and then returned to engaging with the task on her own.
> (Fieldnotes, 18.3.2005)

Like the previous strategy, I cannot claim that it is a patterned response across the cases as I only have evidence of it from Janie's data, but I have included it as a separate category in order to raise awareness that pupils with literacy difficulties may use this tactic in certain circumstances. It may in fact be the only coping strategy available to them if they are in the desperately difficult situation where required reading has been too hard for them to complete on their own, but a written task response must be produced and no other form of help is available. In other words, it is a good example of Johnson (1985) and Brozo's (1990) important point, highlighted in Chapter Four, that a means of coping that works as a short term survival strategy may be highly destructive in terms of long term learning.

9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the repertoire of inter-person strategies that the participants used to help them cope with the demands of reading during individual tasks so that they could at least give the appearance of functioning as members of the classroom community of learners. In essence all the strategies had the same aim, whether intentional or not, of reducing the textual load by ensuring that someone other than the participant did the actual reading. There was, though, one essential difference between the pupil/adult strategies and the pupil/pupil ones that was very salient in terms of the way it could affect learning. When the participants requested support from an adult, then the fact that they could not deal with reading demands

was made transparent. However, when peer support was used the problems encountered became much more opaque, and I was not convinced that staff were always aware of the amount of help that had been provided via collaboration or tutoring.

Therefore, although soliciting the support of a fellow pupil can be viewed as a very positive coping strategy during tasks involving reading as it enables a pupil to give an appearance of competence, it is important to be aware that the consequence may be that less adult help than is needed is provided because the true extent of the difficulty with the text is not recognised. My subjective impression, when observing during class lessons, was that this problem may be most pronounced for well behaved, conformist pupils who have significant, but not formally recognized, SENs, as was the case with three of the four participants. My reason for coming to this conclusion is because they seemed to be low priority for adult attention as the staff had no choice but to focus on pupils with behavioural difficulties in order to maintain discipline. Daniels et al. (1999) found that, in general, the special needs of female pupils tend to be given less recognition than those of their male counterparts, with the result that they receive less support, and if this was so at Granville, it may have disadvantaged the two girls disproportionately in terms of their learning. It is therefore important to note that all these factors may contribute to the marginalisation of pupils with reading difficulties from full participation in the classroom community of learners. However, the participants not only made use of inter-person strategies in order to cope with the reading they encountered at school each day, but also used a range of tactics that did not involve other adults or pupils directly, and so it is to the repertoire of within-person coping strategies that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

WITHIN-PERSON COPING STRATEGIES FOR CONVENTIONAL READING

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will continue to address the third research question which was set out at the start of Chapter Nine. If inter-person support either from adults or other pupils was not available, or was not appropriate for some reason, then the participants had no choice but to be reliant on their own "intra-individual" (Pollard, 1996, p.5) learning resources and use 'within-person' strategies to help them cope with reading encountered at school. Categorisations such as I have attempted in this thesis are never totally unproblematic, and it could be argued that the use of 'involuntary peer support' (Raveaud, 2005), as described at the end of the last chapter, could have been equally validly viewed as a within-person coping strategy, as there was no overt interaction with another individual.

Although, as described in Chapter Nine, the participants made much use of inter-person coping strategies during individual seat work which involved reading, they also employed a range of within-person strategies, and these will be discussed in the first part of the chapter. Within–person strategies could also be used during sessions when classes or large groups of pupils were being taught collectively, and so a description of the ways the participants coped with reading at these times will form the focus of the middle part of the chapter. I will then go on to consider the special demands of reading encountered in small groups, and the chapter will close with a discussion of how the participants used a passive avoidance strategy to enable them to cope with the large volume of environmental print found in schools.

10.2 Within-person coping strategies for individual seat work tasks

If the participants decided either by choice or necessity to use a within-person coping strategy during an individual task, then self-evidently they were prevented

from using the inter-person tactics described in Chapter Nine. Those had all ensured that another pupil or adult did the reading, and by that means the total textual load to be negotiated was reduced, but the same overarching need remained when support was unavailable, and so the only option open to the participants was to engage with reading considered essential and ignore the rest. However, although this was the objective of all the coping strategies described below, in fact in the first two to be described, the amount of text to be read was not only reduced, it was eliminated completely.

10.2.1 *Engaging in off-task behaviours in order to avoid reading*

As reported in Chapter Four, Brozo (1990) found that indulging in disruptive behaviour was a common coping strategy during classroom reading tasks. Although there can be no doubt that some pupils with reading difficulties spend considerable periods off-task during individual seat work as a result of serious behavioural and/or emotional difficulties that interfere with their learning (Edwards, 1994), this was not so for the four participants. Systematic Observations of them working on a variety of individual literacy tasks in normal classroom conditions revealed that the average total percentage of time they were on-task was over 80% for all four, a slightly higher figure than was reported in the 1996 ORACLE survey by Galton et al. (1999) as typical for junior aged pupils. This confirmed my subjective impression that they usually worked with an acceptable level of concentration given the multitude of incidental distractions in the busy primary classroom environment which cause all pupils to go off-task at times (Galton et al.,1999). In fact for some of the remaining proportion of the total time they were often engaged in task-related behaviours such as waiting for help from an adult, moving around the room in order to seek support or performing a management task such as sharpening a pencil. The amount of time then that they were truly distracted was usually small during individual tasks, and it was impossible to prove that, for example, frequent toilet trips, gazing around the room or chatting to friends were strategic ploys. However it is probable that at times the participants did indulge in such tactics in order to delay or avoid engaging with texts when overwhelmed with reading demands, and certainly Russell's unusually

high percentage of off-task behaviour during the comprehension task when adult support was less available than usual which was captured in the Systematic Observation presented in Chapter Nine was suggestive of this.

10.2.2 *Engaging in a legitimate alternative activity in order to postpone or avoid doing any reading*

Behaviours that could be more unambiguously interpreted as coping strategies designed to postpone reading occurred when the participants busily occupied themselves with a legitimate alternative or preliminary activity, and if this could be contrived to last for the whole time allotted, it sometimes meant that the textual part of a task was avoided completely. Riddick (1996) reported in the study which was discussed in Chapter Four, that her sample of dyslexic pupils admitted during interviews that they did this as a way to delay confronting written work, and as has already been discussed in Chapter Eight, all the participants coped in this way during silent reading at times. Russell, however, used this tactic more overtly than the others during individual seat work, and for him it was especially effective during topic work when he often managed to spend all the available time on artistic aspects of the task, as did one of Riddick's (1996) participants. An example of this contrivance occurred when he spent an entire Y6 RE lesson re-writing the title and re-drawing the cover picture on a booklet about Judaism when he should have quickly moved on to reading and selecting information to include from a textbook. At the end of the lesson I compared the two versions, and as there was very little difference in the pictures and title, I talked to him about it during his lunchtime interview:

RA: You had started yours and then you started it again.
R: Yes.
RA: Cos I heard Mrs F say to you – why did you start it again?
R: Because when my old one was slanting - I didn't really like the slant – it looked a bit like too much degrees.
(Interview transcript, 6.6.2005)

By suggesting that his perfectionist nature was to blame, Russell provided himself with the perfect cover for what I believe was the real reason, namely putting off confronting the challenging part of the task for as long as possible.

10.2.3 *Regarding a reading task as a symbol copying/matching exercise*

I also discovered during the interview with Russell referred to above that he could not read the title 'Judaism' on the cover of his RE booklet, and this strategy of regarding a task as having nothing to do with reading, but rather seeing it as a symbol copying or matching exercise, was a strategy used by all four participants under certain circumstances. I became aware of this during Amy's first Y6 session when an introductory Science lesson for a topic on 'reversible and irreversible changes' had taken place. At the start of the lesson the teacher held up a word processed sheet of key vocabulary which she read through and then gave out to the pupils. She then asked the pupils to make a 'cover' for the topic by copying the words carefully onto the first page of their Science exercise book so they were available as a spelling resource, but added that they were to make a colourful design. The following extract from my fieldnotes shows how Amy subverted the activity:

> 2.05 pm I asked Amy if I could look at her science book, and I praised her colour and design. I said that some of the words were hard – had she been able to read them ?– she said she had no idea what they said – she had just copied them down. I said some were easier than others – could she show me an easy one – she pointed to "gas" and read it. I said there might have been some she sort of knew. She pointed to "react" and said "reach". ... I then asked her to show me any she had found impossible to read, and she pointed rapidly to most of the words saying "that one, that one" etc eg "insoluble", "evaporate", and she included "reversible" and "irreversible" which the teacher had written on the whiteboard and explained the meaning of at the start of the lesson.
> (Fieldnotes, 13.9.2004)

It is obvious from the above extract that Amy had regarded the task as one of pure design and the fact that she was prepared to admit to me that she could not read the words proves that she had missed the whole point of the exercise. This strategy could potentially be chosen whenever the major element of a task involved copying,

and Janie also managed to maintain her public presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) as a competent literacy learner during a Geography lesson via its use. She had to copy a captioned diagram of the water cycle from the blackboard, and was one of the first to finish, receiving praise from the teacher for the quality of her work. However, when I asked her to read the captions afterwards, she admitted that she had no idea what they said, and added "I just copied the words" (Fieldnotes, 8.11.2004). The consequence then of this coping strategy was that unless the pupil told the teacher that the reading was difficult for them, then the apparent good task response totally masked the problem with the result that learning was ineffective, and marginalisation assured.

10.2.4 *Copying chunks of text rather than reading and selecting relevant material*

The ploy of copying chunks of text rather than selecting from relevant material and re-writing it in one's own words is a tactic deplored by teachers that has been used by generations of children to lessen task demands of content led curriculum subjects (Pritchard and Cartwright, 2005). However when used by dyslexic pupils, the motivation is somewhat different because if the material to be selected from is too difficult to read independently, then it may be the only option available if some sort of acceptable task response is to be produced. Russell decided to use this strategy for the RE booklet on Judaism which was mentioned above, as he told me that the only information he intended to include from the textbook was the ten commandments, which could be copied out verbatim. His decision could be seen as another example of the subversion of the task into a symbol copying exercise as described above, but it is more likely that his reason for employing this tactic was to make the reading demands more manageable. Although I did not see Russell's finished booklet, I imagine that this coping strategy enabled him to produce an acceptable though rather reductive task response, but given that in the oral class discussion at the start of the lesson I observed, he had shown he was very knowledgeable about a number of aspects of Judaism, it certainly would not have allowed him to demonstrate his expertise on the subject.

10.2.5 *Ignoring written instructions/guidance in texts*

Perhaps the most obvious way to lessen the textual load if reading matter could not be sidestepped was to disregard parts of it, and ignoring written instructions was a coping strategy often employed when the participants used worksheets or textbooks to complete skills exercises. They tended therefore to rely on the verbal guidance given by staff and/or guess if their memory let them down. A very clear example of this and the misunderstanding it could cause occurred during one of Russell's Y6 sessions. He was completing an extension comprehension exercise during Literacy which required him to match four pictures with sentences to give the correct sequence for making a melon seed necklace. This activity had not been verbally previewed by the teacher and instead of copying the sentences, Russell described the pictures using his own words. When I talked to him at lunchtime, I discovered that the inappropriate task response was the result of him not reading the instructions:

RA: Did you read the bit - the instructions there?
R: No.
RA: So how did you know what to do?
R: I put there (Russell reads his writing in the book) "wash the seeds" and I said " oi – this is like what we did last year – look at the picture".
RA: Ah – so you knew - you realised – but in general then, do you not bother to look at the instructions at the top?
R: No.
RA: You don't?
R: I just know what to do.
RA: You think you know what to do ?
R: It's magic!
(Interview transcript, 15.11.2004)

I think Russell meant that his prior experience with what he assumed was a similar task resulted in him just knowing as if 'by magic' what was required. The teacher's comments though when his work was marked showed that her interpretation of the poor response was that it had been caused by not understanding the task, and it is just this sort of incident that can lead to dyslexic pupils being thought to be of lower overall ability than they really are (Riddick,1996).

During one of Janie's Y6 sessions there was another example from Literacy of how this coping strategy could result in a poor task response. The pupils were planning a story with the title 'Down by the river', and before they began the teacher went through a list of scaffolding questions such as "What is the problem?" and wrote them on the board. The plans produced by Janie, Amy and Russell showed that they had not made use of the questions, and that they had struggled a good deal with the task. However when I asked Janie to read the list during her lunchtime interview, she was able to fluently, and this suggests that ignoring written guidance was habitual and not directly related to the reading level. Sometimes, though the pupils obviously could not cope with the reading demands of instructions, and so I am sure the roots of this coping strategy had been sown earlier in their school careers when most instructions would have been beyond their independent reading level.

It is important to be alert to negative cases during data analysis (Ely et al., 1997) and their presence made me aware that all the participants did not necessarily always use the same coping strategy for the same task. On the occasion described above Ernie had copied the questions out onto his planning sheet, and then used them to help him produce an effective story structure. In general it seemed that he had realised the importance of attending to written instructions, but how much this can be attributed to his higher reading level which meant he had less need to reduce the total volume of reading, to a greater metacognitive awareness of how to learn effectively (Myers and Paris, 1978) or to other unknown factors, is impossible to speculate. A variant of this reading reducing strategy of ignoring written guidance sometimes occurred when key vocabulary for a writing task was provided on whiteboards or worksheets. If the participants needed to use a word they could not spell independently, they would sometimes make use of the exemplar, but at other times it seemed that the effort required to work out which one of many possible given words they needed to write was too great. If that was so, they produced their own phonetic version, and this can perhaps be seen as part of their general passive avoidance of environmental print which is discussed below.

10.2.6 *Ignoring handwritten texts*

Smith and Gorard's (2005) recent research has shown that even as late as Y7 many pupils still find teachers' handwriting hard to decipher, and so it is not surprising that this caused problems for the participants, given their literacy difficulties (Hornsby, 1992). The only feasible way to cope was to ignore handwriting of other people, and as the most common text of this kind was teacher comment in exercise books which often consisted of constructive criticism, the participants were denying themselves a valuable way of moving their learning forward. Fortunately, in terms of self-esteem enhancement they could usually read simple evaluations such as 'excellent' or 'good try'. However, they often had no choice but to disregard more detailed comments because they could not read most words, and this was the case once when Amy found a 'post it' note struck in her Y6 Literacy book which had the target "to use paragraphs" written on it (Interview transcript, 7.10.2004).

Texts offering advice to primary teachers suggest that it is good practice to scribe for severely affected dyslexic pupils (Crombie, 2002), but during the preliminary fieldwork year, I discovered that Russell could read his own bizarrely spelt notes made on a Geography trip around the locality of the school, but could not read the handwriting of the classroom assistant who had taken over part way through. Russell summed up the problem with reading handwriting during a Y6 interview:

> R: I cannot read a word.
> RA: Can't you – no - is it because it's joined up do you think?
> R: Yeah – it's joined up – it's too complicated – like them " r" s they look like an "n" (Russell points to sheet).
> (Interview transcript, 15.11.2004)

In fact, ignoring teachers' writing because of the anticipation that it would be hard to decipher, again seemed to be a habituated response, as once when I asked Janie to read the section of a story where the teacher had modelled a response for her, she immediately said "I don't know what Miss put" (Interview transcript, 27.4.2005), but when encouraged, was able to read the passage fluently.

By comparison, the participants did not have any expectation of failure with their own written work, and could usually read it fluently even if mis-spelt and lacking punctuation. In fact it was on the principle that self-authored texts were most accessible to novice readers that the *Breakthrough to literacy* materials, which became popular in the 1970s, were based (Dean et al., 1976; Hall, 2003). However it must be acknowledged that there were times when the participants could not work out what they had written because of their phonically bizarre spelling (Hornsby, 1992). This happened once during a Y6 History lesson when Janie was trying to demonstrate her knowledge of the differences in the lives of rich and poor Victorian people via two comparative written lists. Because of the limited time provided for the task, her spelling deteriorated a great deal, such that during her lunchtime interview she had to admit that she could not read part of it:

RA: Can you read me out what you put – cos you seemed to get an awful lot written down in the time.
Janie looks at her first line "posh closh / rags".
J: People who were rich they had posh clothes. People who were poor they had rags.
RA: Yes.
Janie ignores the second line and moves onto the third line "rich don't work / wark for muney".
J: Rich people don't have to work for their money and poor people have to work for it.
RA: Yes. What does that bit say there? *(RA points to "had charedres" on the 'rich' side of the second line)* Can you remember?
J: No.
RA: No – and that bit *(RA points to "warcht" on the 'poor' side of the second line)* I couldn't quite read that bit – I could read all the rest.
J: (Pause)
There is silence as Janie looks at the second line.
(Interview transcript, 12.10.2004, with additional explication)

In order to avoid damaging Janie's self-esteem I moved the interview onto other matters, but once I had time to study the text in detail at home, I realised that the impenetrability had been caused by inaccuracies with common phonic spelling patterns (Hornsby, 1993). I worked out that the likely intended meaning of the

second line was that rich Victorians had carriages (*charedres)*, but that the poor walked (*warcht)*. It is unlikely that a busy teacher with a large amount of marking would have been motivated to spend as much time as I was prepared to as a researcher, and a more superficial reading may well resulted in Janie being evaluated as less knowledgeable about the topic than she really was (Riddick, 1996). Eddie, too, sometimes could not read his own writing, due to a combination of poor handwriting style caused by his dyspraxic problems and inaccurate spelling (Portwood, 1996). However, rather than cope simply by giving up, as Janie tended to do, he had developed two rather different coping strategies which enabled him to avoid losing face (Goffman, 1955). He would either paraphrase the text, by saying "what he thought he had written, from a script in his head" (Chanock, 2006, p.165), or read it out verbatim but simply miss out the illegible parts without commenting.

10.2.7 *Evaluating texts as hard to read and then giving up*

The participants usually seemed to make a very quick decision about the level of difficulty of a text based on the title and first sentences, and if they evaluated it as too hard to read independently, a possible coping strategy was to feel it was not worth persevering and give up. As the fieldwork progressed, I became aware that this initial judgement was often affected by the fact that proper nouns, particularly if foreign sounding names, were very hard to read, and that these tended to be found at the start of extended texts, for example in stories when characters and places are introduced. This problem could even affect the evaluation of a text as short as a maths question, as I discovered once when Janie grimaced and would not try to decipher the name "Cathy" at the beginning of a sentence. Once told the name and persuaded by me to continue reading, she was able to read the rest of the question fluently, and then showed she could do the computation necessary. However, in an unsupported class situation this could easily have given the impression that she had not understand the mathematical concept, when, in fact, problems at the word level were at the root of the difficulty (Reason, 2002). During all but one of Russell's Y6 sessions, I noted that he had problems reading names, and this is perhaps no surprise given that he had the most severe reading difficulties of the participants. However

they were problematic for all four pupils, and a coping strategy they often used was to give a visually similar name, an example being when Ernie repeatedly referred to 'Stephenson's Rocket' as 'Stephan's Rocket' (Fieldnotes, 1.12.2004).

Foreign names were the hardest to attempt, and I know that Russell was aware of the problem as I heard him say to the classroom assistant while tackling a SATs comprehension practice test on 'Great Walls of the World' which had formed part of the 2000 KS2 reading test (Kispal, 2005), " I hate them – some's in Italy, some's in Spanish" (Fieldnotes, 21.4.2005). Another example of this occurred during one of Janie's sessions near the end of the spring term of Y6 when the pupils were honing comprehension skills using part of the 1998 KS2 SAT reading test, 'Leaving home' (Kispal, 2005). As a preliminary activity, the pupils were meant to skim through the text underlining important words, and then go back and read it carefully, but in her lunchtime interview, Janie revealed that she had had problems:

RA: When you say you skimmed it through, did you go back to it and start reading it through – did you have a try?
J: No.
RA: Why was that then, Janie ?
J: Because it were too hard.
RA: Right well – yes – what makes it look hard? When you see a piece of work like that (RA indicates the text) – what makes you say it looks as though it's going to be hard?
J: Because – when you read the first bit and you look at the cover and you know there's going to be lots and lots of hard words.
(Interview transcript, 18.3. 2005)

The first part of the story extract contained a number of foreign names including 'Clara' and 'Lotte', and when I asked Janie to read them, she could not, so it is not surprising that she evaluated the text as overly difficult. However, rather than being an erroneous evaluation based only on this problem or a manipulative tactic designed to avoid reading, on this occasion Janie's judgement was accurate as when she read the first few sentences during the interview, her overall error rate was 24% proving that the text would have been impossible for her to read independently.

10.2.8 *Inventing content by guessing from incompletely decoded texts*

In the introductory vignette at the start of Chapter One, Amy and Janie coped with reading demands during a Y5 ICT lesson by inventing content because they could only partially decode the text. Throughout the fieldwork this strategy was often used by the participants when they were forced to read a text without support even though it was beyond their independent reading level because they were required to complete a task contingent on it. This never led to a good task response as understanding could at best only be partial, and it therefore gave the impression to staff that the dyslexic pupil had problems with comprehension when in fact they were rooted in poor decoding skills at the word level (Spooner, Baddeley and Gathercole, 2004). When discussing the SATs practice comprehension text referred to in the previous section which Janie had found very hard, she also made a comment that I have found thought provoking:

> RA: ... there's a lot to read. So how does that make you feel then? Does it make you feel happy or sad or what – when you get something like that you have to do?
> J: I get bored.
> (Interview transcript, 18.3.2005)

Up to that point I had always thought that it was unchallenging or uninteresting content that made reading tedious, as Fielding and Worthy's (1992) American participants mentioned, and indeed Janie had said earlier in the term, as discussed in Chapter Seven, that the reductive SEN materials she was forced to engage with during withdrawal tuition were boring. However, her use of the term in relation to a difficult passage made me realise that if a text is so hard to read that the only way to cope is to invent content by guessing words, then this is also a mind–numbingly boring exercise, especially if it occurs on a daily basis.

During the comprehension SAT practice test 'Leaving Home', discussed above, Janie had no choice but to persevere with answering the questions as best she could, and of course got many wrong and left others blank. She told me that she had found

the closed forced-choice questions particularly difficult, which is to be expected given that they can only be answered successfully via a careful reading of the text in order to retrieve exact information (Hilton, 2001). I was surprised though that Janie said she preferred the more open questions, given that they tap into higher order reading skills (Hilton, 2001), but perhaps her judgement was based on the fact that they allowed a vaguer written response. Janie's comments showed that she was well aware of her predicament, and my fieldnotes describing the end of the task make depressing reading:

> The teacher then talked to her for about 2 minutes and Janie appeared to be upset as she put her head in her hands and looked sad. She then started to work again briefly before interacting with the teacher again whom I heard say "You only need half".
> *Earlier in the week I had heard the teacher tell the pupils that they only needed to get half the questions correct to do OK in the test.*
> (Fieldnotes, 18.3.2005)

From then on Janie became very anxious about the forthcoming KS2 SATs, and as Reay (1999) has graphically shown, such experiences are likely to have damaging effects on self-esteem and identity construction in the current school climate of assessment based performativity (Hall et al., 2004).

10.2.9 *Depending on illustrations for understanding difficult texts*

According to Adams (1990), all inexperienced readers rely on illustrations to aid both word recognition and comprehension, as Stephen did in Hall (2003), and as far back as the 1970s, the influence of the psycho-linguistic 'whole language' approach (Hall, 2003) meant that the publishers of beginning reading schemes ensured that the artwork in their books enabled this strategic use of contextual support to be maximized (Dean et al. 1976). Although the influence of the 'new media age' (Kress, 2003) has shifted the print/visual (Unsworth, 2001) and content/design balance of texts somewhat (Moss, 2001), on the whole, both in fiction and non-fiction texts intended for use by upper junior aged pupils, pictures are included to provide supplementary detail and enhancement of enjoyment rather than as an

essential aid to understanding (Adams, 1990). However, Adams (1990) noted that children "pay more attention to the pictures when the text is relatively difficult for them" (p.367), and I have often been aware of this when teaching dyslexic pupils of the age of the participants. This suggests that those with reading difficulties continue to use visual context clues in order to compensate for limited decoding skills (Stanovich, 1980) in a way that pupils functioning at an age appropriate level do not have to by the middle years of schooling. I was therefore not surprised that all the participants told me they liked books to have pictures, and Russell was particularly insightful about this preference, as in conversations about texts he often made remarks that showed he was highly dependent on using illustrations as a coping strategy for aiding understanding when adult support was not available. He was explicit about this during a Y6 interview when he was discussing a difficult passage in a book of short stories:

RA: Could you make much sense of that when you read it?
R: Well – I were like - er "What they were on about?" and stuff like that.
RA: Yes.
R: (Russell directs his attention to the illustration) Then I figured out it were quite scary and like veins and stuff like that.
RA: Yes - so you could see from the picture what it was sort of about?
R: Yes.
(Interview transcript, 28.2.2005)

Sometimes though, the participants' use of illustrations was more covertly strategic when they had found a text difficult to read, as during the Literacy Challenge initiative discussed in Chapter Eight, at times the only way they could cope with the demands of filling in the section of the book review where they were required to nominate the parts of the story they had liked and disliked, was to describe two different pictures.

10.2.10 *Avoiding reading multi-syllabic key vocabulary*

All the participants encountered problems reading key vocabulary, and although this occurred across the curriculum due to the specificity of language forms associated

with different subjects (Unsworth, 2001), the type of words that caused most difficulty were key scientific terms such as 'respiration' (Wray, 2001). Technical terms in Literacy, such as 'connectives' were also hard to read, and prior to the advent of the NLS with its emphasis on the teaching of grammar for writing (DfEE, 2000), such words would have been unlikely to have been encountered until secondary school (Wray, 2001). To begin with I presumed that the problems with key vocabulary were due to unfamiliarity because of the specialised nature of the words and relative low frequency in the language (Hornsby, 1993). However, over time I became aware that not all key vocabulary was difficult to read, but that it was mainly multi-syllabic words with complex spelling patterns due to Latin or Greek etymological roots (Crystal, 2004) that caused problems. I have found in my teaching experience that these are the type of words that many dyslexic pupils of the age of the participants find especially daunting to decode because of the advanced segmentation and sequencing skills needed (Hornsby, 1993). Part of Russell's motivation in asking another pupil to do some writing for him during the Science lesson on reversible and irreversible changes, which was discussed in Chapter Nine, may have been because he could not read many of the key words written on the board. Certainly it seemed that all the participants coped by avoiding reading such words whenever possible, but it must be remembered that motivational level and prior knowledge play a vital part in all learning. The importance of this effect was brought home to me some years ago when I discovered that a severely affected dyslexic pupil of mine was prepared to persevere more with decoding dinosaur names than with other complex words because of his fascination with the subject. Similarly both Janie and Russell exceeded my expectations by being able to read some multi-syllabic words if they were related to their respective special interests in history and science.

It is important to note that the participants usually had no problem understanding the usage and meaning of key vocabulary during oral discussions, but the fact they could not read them in text books or worksheets was potentially detrimental to learning as it meant that their written work could give the impression that they were having

conceptual difficulties (Riddick, 1996). I became aware of one interesting coping strategy that Ernie had devised to overcome this problem during a Y5 Geography lesson when he told me he could not read the words 'industrial/retail' on a land-use map key, but did know what they meant. He then proceeded to explain them correctly, and his response showed that he regarded the two words as a logographic symbol (Ellis, 1993). Ernie continued to do this, especially in Science, throughout Y6, and given that he did very well in his KS2 SAT, as mentioned in Chapter Six, his experience made me realise that, provided one is not required to read key vocabulary out loud, it is a positive strategy. In fact it may be that this was one of the ways Fink's (1996) successful dyslexic participants, who were discussed in Chapter Four, coped during their 'passionate interest reading'.

10.3 Within-person coping strategies for whole class/group teaching sessions

The situation with regard to coping with reading during whole class/group sessions was rather different to that during individual seat work, as on the whole, the pedagogic style adopted by staff meant that the participants were not able to use inter-person strategies, and therefore had no choice but to rely on within-person resources. However, by comparison with individual tasks where some sort of written response had to be produced if face was not to be lost (Goffman, 1955), reading encountered during class/group situations could be sidestepped if the pupil took refuge in the anonymity of large numbers of people, and so the coping strategies used were rather different to those described in the first part of this chapter.

During class and group sessions, both paper–based and black/whiteboard reading was encountered, and although for both textual mediums the basic problem for the participants was the same, namely not being able to read as proficiently and/or as fast as the rest of the pupils, reading from the board could produce particular difficulties due to poor visibility of text. Throughout the preliminary fieldwork year, I had noted times when from my position in the room it was hard to see writing, particularly in Janie's classroom which contained the only blackboard left in the school. She was aware that coloured chalks were harder to see than white, and

preferred the whiteboards in other rooms. However these, too, were not without problems as their shiny surfaces meant that reflections from lights affected visibility and pale coloured pens exacerbated the difficulty. Given that the pupils found teachers' handwriting hard to read in general, as discussed above, this also affected the ease with which reading from boards could be undertaken. Russell, who had problems with dazzle from high paper/text contrast, and had been prescribed blue tinted lens to help correct this (Miles and Miles, 1999), found conventional whiteboards particularly hard to read from. He was therefore pleased when an interactive whiteboard (IWB) was installed during Y6 in the classroom where all the participants were taught Literacy, and the impact of this is discussed fully in Chapter Eleven. As the strategies used by the participants to cope with the demands of reading encountered during class/group sessions were essentially the same regardless of whether the texts were paper or board based, I have not provided separate sections, but have included both as appropriate in the following discussions.

10.3.1 *Reading text in advance of the teacher*

It was common at the start of Literacy for the teacher to conduct a whole class session (DfEE, 1998) in which she firstly previewed lesson content and introduced a text either on the board or in paper form, and then read it through while the pupils followed, but as she tended to read very quickly, the participants found it hard to keep up. This was perhaps related to the fact that the lesson pace during the Literacy Hour (DfEE, 1998) often seemed to be over fast, considering that this was the lower ability Y6 group, but the reading speed of the teacher can perhaps be interpreted as a strategy she herself had devised in order to cope with the challenge of having to get through the proscribed content in the limited time available (Hall et al., 2004). During a Y6 interview Amy described how she coped with this situation, and although I have no other evidence of this strategy use either by her or the other participants, so that it is impossible to know if this was a 'one-off' or a habitual response, I include it here as the transcript extract below vividly demonstrates the plight of pupils with reading difficulties as they attempt to function in these circumstances. The teacher had written an exemplar factual report about chocolate

on the board so that she could use it to analyse the key features of the genre (DfEE, 1998), but before she began, she read it through very quickly while the pupils followed. During the interview I referred to a handwritten copy of this text when talking to Amy:

RA: ... can you keep up when Miss E reads something quickly through like that?
A: (shakes her head).
RA: No – what do you do then?
A: Erm – I read the first paragraph before her.
RA: Right – what, you read it before she started did you?
A: Yes, cos when she puts it up I listened to her while I were reading it and then I got on to there (Amy indicates the end of line 2 of the text) when she started reading it - but when I got there (Amy indicates the end of line 4) she were already there (Amy indicates line 6 – the end of the first paragraph).
(Interview transcript, 28.1.2005)

Amy's account of what happened shows that even by using the strategy of starting to read in advance of the teacher when she should have been listening to the introductory exposition, she still found she got left behind by the end of the first paragraph, even though it was less than fifty words in length. Her coping strategy could be interpreted as less successful in outcome than if she had abandoned any attempt to read and simply listened as the teacher read, and in fact this was what she admitted she sometimes did, as will be revealed below.

10.3.2 *Listening instead of following as the teacher reads a text*

Listening instead of following as the teacher read was a coping strategy used by all the participants, and was, in effect, another way that they reduced the total textual load that they faced each day. However, unlike the reading-disabled participant described by Ivey (1999a), whose behaviour was discussed in Chapter Four, this was not necessarily a strategic choice made at the outset of a reading activity. Certainly for Amy, it seemed instead to usually be a pragmatic decision taken during the rendition because she had become lost due to the teacher's pedagogic style of reading part of a text, digressing with elaboration and then returning to reading

without indicating clearly where she was. This was most likely to happen when the layout of the text was complex, and Amy explained the problem to me during a Y6 interview when discussing a spoof newspaper report that the teacher had used to explain the features of adverts:

A: She kept going - saying all of stuff quick and I'm like " What, what, what?"
RA: Right – are you saying it's a bit hard to keep up?
A: Yeah cos she can say em.
RA: Do you mean when she's reading it or when she was explaining?
A: Yeah she reads em and she says em right fast cos she knows how to read em.
RA: Yes.
A: But I – I don't - so I'm like " Where is that? – what's she reading ?"
RA: I was going to say - did you manage to realise where she was each time ?
A: No.
(Interview transcript, 10.1. 2005)

Even I had struggled in that lesson to work out where the teacher was each time she resumed reading, so it is not surprising that after experiencing the problems described above, Amy gave up and simply listened. However she was not at ease with doing this as she revealed when she returned to this theme in her final Y6 interview during a discussion of Jacqueline Wilson's *The suitcase kid*, which the teacher was reading as part of KS2/3 transition work in Literacy:

RA: ... would you rather just listen or would you rather have a book to follow?
A: Both.
RA: Yeah - how do you mean both?
A: Cos I like to listen instead of putting my head down and looking across – but then when she's like reading a word what's complicated I can just skip a bit further and understand what it means.
(Interview transcript, 27.6.2005)

My continued questioning revealed that she was very uncertain in her mind, and therefore could not decide which she preferred to do, perhaps because, as the above

extract shows, she had developed sufficient metacognitive awareness (Myers and Paris, 1978) to realise that following text was helpful for her reading development.

Also, as a dutiful conformist pupil, Amy may have been worried that if she was not obviously attending to the text, then the teacher would construe this as lack of engagement. Certainly there were times while observing when the teacher was reading when I was unsure if she, and sometimes Russell too, were listening or day-dreaming. However, as on each occasion they produced a reasonable written response during the ensuing individual seat work, I realised they must have been attending, and this shows, as with Ivey's (1999a) reading-disabled participant referred to in Chapter Four, that care must be taken when interpreting behaviour. However, even if the participants appeared to be following a text that the teacher was reading, I sometimes discovered during the lunchtime interview that they had in fact struggled to decode at a fast enough pace, and their learning was compromised. This happened once when I observed Ernie moving his fingers along the lines of an autobiography extract, which gave the impression that he was following well. However my suspicions that this had not been the case were aroused during the ensuing class discussion , when I noted that although he volunteered to be the first to provide an exemplar of the genre from the opening sentence, once the focus of attention moved further into the body of the text, his behaviour suggested that he disengaged completely from the lesson.

10.3.3 *Keeping a low profile during class discussions involving prior reading of a text*

The use of the two coping strategies described above had damaging consequences for learning due to the direct marginalisation created by not being able to access texts in the way that the rest of the pupils were able to. However, it also resulted in indirect marginalisation as the participants always tended to stay quiet during discussions that had involved prior reading either by themselves or by the teacher. Although this passivity can be interpreted as a sign of low-self-esteem brought about by their dyslexic difficulties, as was suggested in Chapter Seven, I would maintain

that it was also used as a deliberate coping strategy. For by fading into the background and not drawing attention to themselves, the participants minimised the potential embarrassment of a mismatch between expected and actual performance (Goffman, 1956) that would have occurred should they have given an incorrect answer or made an inappropriate comment that showed that meaning had not been taken from a text.

As described in Chapter Four, Brozo (1990) noted that the most common way his participants coped in the classroom was by ensuring that they did not make eye contact with the teacher during reading sessions, but as I always sat behind the participants, I have no direct evidence that they deliberately avoided the teacher's gaze in this way. However, I often observed that they kept their heads down during discussions, fiddled with objects on their desks, or doodled on paper or the individual whiteboards that were sometimes used, and these behaviours suggest that they were trying to keep a low profile to avoid being called on to take part. Certainly during a Y6 class discussion in Literacy, when Janie was pressed by a teacher to contribute to a discussion about a text I later discovered she had found very hard to read, my fieldnotes reveal her acute discomfort:

> Janie answered in a very tiny voice so that the teacher had to bend down to hear her. At the end I asked Janie what answer she had given as I said she had such a quiet voice I couldn't quite hear... Amy, sitting next to her, then said "She put her hands over her face" and demonstrated what she had done and then looked protectively at Janie.
> (Fieldnotes, 23.9.2004)

On the rare occasions that the participants did decide to involve themselves in discussions about prior reading, I noted that they only put their hands up in relatively safe situations such as to give answers to closed questions, or to those for which they had received prior validation that their response would be correct. Overall the behaviour of the participants during class discussions involving text was much less confident than that during activities where no reading was involved. However it must be said that in general the two boys were socially more at ease and central to

the action in large group situations, than were the two girls who habitually remained more peripheral, and this gendered difference in assertiveness in Y6 pupils was also noted by Reynold (2001b).

10.3.4. *Covering when given insufficient time to read a text on own*

During the initial whole class session during the Literacy Hour (DfEE, 1998) the teacher often requested the pupils to read a section of text through in a certain length of time prior to discussion by the group instead of reading out herself. This frequently caused problems for the participants as many texts were too difficult for them to read independently, but even if they were set at an appropriate level, their slow reading pace meant that they usually could not get through the volume of print in the time available. If they decided to cope by admitting this, they had to face the stigma of publicly presenting themselves as less than competent members of the classroom community of readers, and certainly Fielding and Roller (1992) reported that their American participants felt embarrassed if they owned up to having difficulty keeping up. This created a dilemma for the participants as the alternative was to cover (Goffman, 1963) by not letting on, thereby compromising their learning, but given the importance of maintaining self-esteem as readers in front of peers, as discussed in Chapter Eight, it is not surprising that this was the coping strategy they mostly employed. In his consideration of the predicament of American pupils with slow reading speeds, Rasinski (2001) stated that "neither solution is very palatable, yet the situation is all too common" (p.147). My fieldnotes from a Science lesson during one of Amy's Y6 sessions, when the teacher had asked the pupils to read a worksheet prior to discussing its content, are very revealing in relation to this issue:

> The teacher told the pupils to stop reading and I could see that Amy was still on the bullet points which contained the key words. The teacher asked if anyone had not got at least as far as to the picture, which was after the next body of text. Amy put her hand half up, but the teacher did not notice and she then put it straight down again after looking around and seeing that no other hands were up - no other pupils had risked such a public way to lose face. (Fieldnotes, 10.1.2005)

This problem became most acute for the participants during the later part of the spring term of Y6 when, due to the impending KS2 SATs, practice comprehension tests became a regular activity during Literacy (Hall et al., 2004), and these have already been discussed in relation to both inter-person and within-person coping strategies during individual tasks. All four participants found they struggled with the preliminary reading on these occasions, and Russell's experience with 'Great walls of the world', as revealed in his lunchtime interview was typical. This text has been mentioned in a previous section because of the large number of unfamiliar foreign names it contained, and in order to make sense of the following transcript extract, it is important to be aware that the reading booklet was divided into five separate sections, each containing information about one famous wall:

RA: Can you show me which one you read first then?

R: It were that (Russell indicates Vietnam War Memorial section).
Russell then reads the first 2 sentences of the extract – he has trouble with "Vietnam" "memorial" " popular" " attraction" and sounds very hesitant and uncertain.

RA: Right – that was a hard bit – so you managed to have a go at it anyway by yourself?

R: Yes.

RA: And then which other bits did you manage to read ? – did you get as far as?

R: Er - I read that one, and then I only read half of that one (Russell indicates "Great Zimbabwee" section).
Russell then reads the title but has to be told "Zimbabwee". He then tries the first fact but needs help with "length" and "circular".

RA: Right – so are you saying then that in that time that you were given to do the reading – you only had time to read that bit and half of that bit? (RA indicates two of the fact boxes) – or did you move on and do some more?

R: Er - I read - cos I'm like into Great Wall of China (Russell indicates fact box).

RA: Oh right - so you did read this one?
Russell then reads the first sentence of the Great Wall of China fact box. He reads very slowly and needs help with "tourists" "buses" and "wait".

RA: ... so – it looks to me as if you read that bit, that bit and that bit – what about that bit? (RA indicates Berlin Wall fact box).

R: No.

RA: So you didn't read about the Berlin Wall and you didn't read about Hadrian's wall at the beginning?
R: No – cos I thought that were just ??? (inaudible).
RA: You thought that was just the introduction to it?
R: Yes.
(Interview transcript, 21.4.2005)

Russell's failure to have time to complete the preliminary reading, which in any case was too hard for him to read independently, meant that he was in difficulties before he even started to try to answer the questions. However, as I observed him 'front stage' (Goffman, 1959) during the task, he did not seek support and publicly admit this, so unsurprisingly he was only able to answer a few of the questions correctly. However, the above extract from his interview shows that in the 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959) interview situation when he was on his own with me, he was willing to admit that he had only read some parts, but his need to convey an impression of competence was so strong that he still saved face (Goffman, 1955) by giving other plausible reasons to avoid having to say that the reading had been too difficult.

10.3.5 *Not volunteering to read out loud from an unfamiliar text*

Hornsby (1992) warns teachers that dyslexic pupils are very fearful about reading out loud from unfamiliar texts in class situations. At the independent school the participants in Anderson (2001) attended, this practice was common, so when reporting that study I discussed extensively the stress it caused (Gentile and McMillan, 1987) and the coping strategies the boys told me they used. At Granville, by comparison, reading out loud was a rare occurrence during class/group lessons, and if it was used as a pedagogic tool then the teachers handled it sensitively and contrived to avoid the participants being put in the position of being called on. Usually volunteer readers were asked for, and unsurprisingly the coping strategy employed by the participants was not to put up their hands. As only a small proportion of the whole group usually read, this was not unduly marginalising, but there were occasions when all the other pupils contributed, and then the combination of the teacher's well meaning sensitivity and the participants' passivity acted as a

highly exclusionary force (Benjamin et al., 2003). The situation of reading unfamiliar texts in front of others was very different to that of reading self-authored texts, and then the participants were usually as keen as the rest of the pupils to read out, provided that they had previously been given validation that their work was of an acceptable standard. I noted several times that they read with a confidence I never saw in any other situations, public or private, as on the occasion when I wrote in my fieldnotes that Amy "read out her work as someone who knew she had done a good job" (Fieldnotes, 3.3.2005) after she had received a good deal of support with a sentence level task in Literacy, and so knew that her responses were correct.

10.4 Within-person coping strategies during small group reading sessions

The only situation in which the participants could not avoid reading out loud in front of other pupils was when they were taught reading in small groups. The SEN withdrawal sessions posed few problems because the texts used were usually within their independent reading capacity, as is discussed in Chapter Seven. However, the guided reading groups (DfEE, 1998) that were a regular, though not daily, feature of the Y6 lower ability Literacy group were potentially rather more stressful, even though the participants were in subgroups based on their reading level. It was therefore frustrating, but unsurprising given the messy nature of real world research (Robson, 2002), that there were only a few occasions when the participant I was following that day was invited to participate in a group, and so it is important to note that the evidence discussed in this section is taken from a rather limited data set.

10.4.1 *Following text carefully prior to turn reading*

During the sessions I observed, the pupils sometimes read in turn, but as the texts used tended to be set at an appropriate level, and support was readily available from the teacher, the experience did not always appear to pose a threat to self-esteem. Ernie, for example, seemed to really enjoy reading from Francesca Simon's humorous *Horrid Henry* series of stories, but it is important to note that, rather like the boys in Anderson (2001), he used a coping strategy of following the text very closely prior to his turn so as to make the most of rehearsal of potentially repeated

words. This was a conscious ploy on his part which showed metacognitive awareness as he told me that he enjoyed guided reading sessions because he knew that hearing other people read would help him to improve his standard. Janie, by comparison did not seem to find these sessions a positive experience, and on one occasion when a student teacher led the guided reading group, she was put in the position of having no choice but to read a portion of a Joan Aitken story that was well beyond her independent reading level. Like Eddie, she appeared to attend very closely to the text prior to her turn, and was well supported by the teacher as she read a short section. However as she often told me she disliked reading to others, this must have been a stressful experience due to the embarrassment created by knowing that her actual performance did not match up to that expected by others present (Goffman, 1956).

10.4.2 *Not owning up when unable to read a passage on own*

During some guided reading groups text level skills (DfEE. 1998) were taught, and the books or decontextualised passages that were used for these tended to be more difficult than those for 'round robin' reading. As the participants were usually required to read portions silently and then engage in discussion with the teacher, the same problems were encountered that have already been discussed in relation to similar activities during large group sessions, and the same coping strategy of covering by not admitting difficulty to avoid losing face was employed (Goffman, 1963). This was clear to see during one of Ernie's Y6 sessions when a story entitled 'The Asrai' which had formed part of the 1997 KS2 SAT reading test (Kispal, 2005) was used as a basis for discussion. The pupils were told to read each section prior to a short discussion based around the content. As I observed it soon became obvious that Ernie was struggling with the reading as he spent most of the time looking out of the classroom window at pupils in the playground, and the consequence of this lack of engagement was that he made no attempt to take part in the first discussion. This pattern continued, but the teacher only seemed to become aware that all was not well towards the end of the session, as is revealed in the following fieldnote extract:

> The pupils were then told to turn over the page and continue to read – Ernie began to look at the text, but when another boy said "Finished" after what seemed a ridiculously short time, Ernie stopped reading, and looked out of the window again. The pupils were then told to read on again, but to go at their own pace, not too quickly so they missed bits – Ernie did seem to read this time. The teacher said " Pay particular attention to how the story ends. Then there is a bit extra for the narrator again". After a bit he looked up while others were still reading. The teacher said " Ernie have you got to the end?" He said he had.
> (Fieldnotes, 25.1.2005)

However, Ernie's reply to the teacher would seem to have been a covering response designed to enable him to maintain an impression of competence whilst 'front stage' (Goffman, 1959), as at lunchtime in his 'backstage' interview he divulged that he had not had time to read all of the last part because he had found some words hard to decipher.

Unfortunately I was never present when Amy took part in a guided reading group during Y6, but I had observed her once during Y5 when the pupils were also asked to read a portion of a text silently. She was slower to read than the rest of her group, but unlike Ernie she did not attempt to cover when asked if she had finished, and this had an unfortunate consequence that explains why most pupils dissemble if they find themselves in such a situation. The teacher told the other pupils they must wait patiently and that she would not begin the discussion until Amy had finished the section. However although the teacher's motive was well-intentioned, acute embarrassment was caused for Amy, as the irritated restlessness of the remainder of the group was clear to see via their body language. During a Y6 interview Amy divulged, when discussing the benefits or otherwise of guided reading groups, that on the whole she found them helpful, but that once during Y5 other pupils had "started making fun of me because I couldn't read it" (Interview transcript, 2.11.2004), and I wondered if this had happened after the session I had observed.

The incidents related in this section have made me realise that the situation of having to read out loud or discuss prior reading in small groups when text level is not well

matched to ability are perhaps the most threatening and stressful situations that pupils with reading difficulties experience at school (Gentile and McMillan, 1987). The reason for this is that most of the strategies used to cope at other times are not available to them, and so the 'discreditable' state they find themselves in, as discussed in Chapter Three, ensures they are in constant danger of exposing their stigmatising trait (Goffman, 1963).

10.5 Coping with environmental print by using a passive avoidance strategy

In order to familiarize myself with the school context, at the start of the preliminary fieldwork year I listed the different types of environmental print to be found in the classrooms in which the Upper Juniors were taught. I discovered that there were approximately twenty five types in each, which confirmed my subjective belief that modern classrooms are textually rich places (Barton, 1994). Most of this environmental print consisted of captions on wall displays and informational notices, and by comparison with most other reading encountered at school, can perhaps be regarded as 'non-essential' text. It is therefore not surprising that the only coping strategy used by the participants seemed to be to indulge in passive avoidance such that they ignored this print completely, the consequence being yet more marginalisation from full membership of the classroom community of literate practice.

It is important to note that written captions on display boards at Granville were often placed above artwork so that they were virtually impossible for any pupils to see, regardless of whether or not they had reading difficulties. However I discovered that the participants ignored print even when it was at an appropriate height, and my attention was first drawn to this problem one day in the autumn term of Y6 when I was following Amy and she showed me some of her art that was being displayed in her classroom. Immediately under the board a laminated A4 sheet had been pinned on the wall which read "If there's condensation on the window, open it – the room is too warm" (Fieldnotes, 2.11.2004). The teacher clearly meant this to be an instruction to the class and perhaps saw it as a link to scientific vocabulary that she

was trying to reinforce, but this was totally lost on Amy who, despite going near it every day and it being at a convenient height for her seated eye line, maintained she had never noticed it. However even if she had seen it she would have been unlikely to have acted on the instructions as she was only able to read it very hesitantly, and could not even attempt the key subject word 'condensation'. This led me to wonder if she had found over time that there was little point struggling to decode such messages if the effort involved was not rewarded by successful meaning making, and that perhaps this was the reason she ignored environmental print. The notice remained on the wall all year, and for part of the time Ernie and his friend Anthony sat next to it during Literacy, and in my fieldnotes I recorded the following observation and comments:

> Ernie suddenly noticed the notice on the wall right next to his desk at seated eye level... He started to read it but could not decode " condensation"...
> *I got the feeling that Ernie really had noticed it for the first time today – if so perhaps it is an indication of his improved reading level – I remember when my daughter (aged about 5) to our amusement suddenly said "look 'Free House' –you can stay there free!" as she noticed the large sign on the side of a Public House as we drove along a route she had travelled many times before... Presumably at a certain stage of reading development environmental print that has always been there jumps out at you and you feel compelled to read it.*
> (Fieldnotes, 26.4.2005)

Ernie's response may have been evidence of his improving reading standard as I conjectured in my notes, but an incident earlier in the year during one of his sessions showed that he habitually indulged in passive avoidance of print even if he could read it. The teacher decided to have a 'catch-up' session and wrote a numbered list of activities on the board which the pupils were expected to look at as they entered the classroom and then get straight on with the tasks they needed to complete. As Ernie came in he did not notice the list and so hovered near pupils who were getting organised. I went over to him and as I presumed he had made his choice by seeing what others were doing, I asked him what he was going to do. As I spoke I inadvertently turned towards the board, and then immediately realised I had created

a 'researcher effect' by directing his attention to it. In my fieldnotes I recorded that "he went 'Oh' in surprise" (Fieldnotes, 1.12.2004) and that he then read out the items almost fluently before he made his decision.

This anecdote and others like it suggest that ignoring environmental print may be a habituated response due to many past experiences of failure to make meaning, and this passive avoidance can perhaps be seen as part of the overall within-person coping strategy of reducing the daily reading load. However it is important to note negative cases of findings in real world research (Ely et al., 1997), and on the occasion described above, Amy did notice the 'catch-up' list as she came into the classroom and immediately acted on it. It is also vital to be aware that the reasons the participants ignored environmental print were not necessarily always related to reading. For instance in Janie's case, I felt that her undisguised disinterest when I asked her to read some display captions during the spring term of Y6 was largely the result of her general disaffection with school at that time, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

10.7 Conclusion

All the coping strategies described in this chapter had the same effect in that they reduced the amount of text read by the participants, but still allowed them to function with some semblance of normality in the classroom, and so publicly give the impression that they could cope with reading demands even though the true situation was rather different. It must be acknowledged that the tactics described are likely to be used by all pupils if presented with texts that are not well matched to reading ability, but the difference for dyslexic pupils is that they have to employ them continuously simply to survive each day. Having outlined the repertoire of inter-person and within-person coping strategies used by the participants for conventional reading, I move on in the next chapter to discuss the impact of multimodal electronic texts, which, over the time-span of their primary pupil careers became an increasingly common feature of lived experience, and made the reading demands encountered at school ever more complex.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE IMPACT OF MULTIMODAL ELECTRONIC TEXTS

11.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter One, during the early stages of the preliminary fieldwork, I realised that the increasing dominance of multimodal electronic texts (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2003; Jewitt and Kress, 2003) within classrooms meant that 'on-screen' reading (Bearne, 2006; UKLA, 2007) would be an important area on which to collect data. I therefore inserted the additional research question which I address in this chapter:

What has been the impact of multimodal electronic texts on the classroom reading experiences of dyslexic pupils of upper junior age?

ICT was taught as a discreet timetabled subject in the laptop suite at Granville and sometimes lessons concentrated on prescriptive skills training for word processing and spreadsheet use, a common occurrence according to Facer et al. (2003) and Burnett, Dickinson, Myers and Merchant (2006). On these occasions the amount of on screen reading required was usually minimal, although lengthy paper–based instructions were often provided which caused difficulty at times. However the most common format of the lessons observed both during the preliminary and main fieldwork years was for the pupils to conduct research on either a given or self–chosen topic using internet search engines or specified websites, as in the introductory vignette at the start of Chapter One.

I acknowledge that "the notion of multimodality has a much longer history than the computer" (Goodwyn, 2005, p.1), in that, for example, musical scores, maps and scientific diagrams are complex layered texts which incorporate visual content (Unsworth, 2001; Kress, 2003; Bearne et al, 2004a). Nevertheless, despite seeming counter intuitive, because visual and auditory information should support the process of making meaning from alphabetic print (Peter Hannon, personal communication,

July 2004), observations during the preliminary fieldwork led me to conclude that the most challenging of all the classroom reading demands faced by the participants were those associated with internet website use. This is because hypertext, sound and visual material must be integrated if learning is to take place, with the result that complexities proliferate when reading on-screen (Beame, 2006, UKLA, 2007). I will begin this chapter with a short review of research in this area in order to contextualise the discussion of reader identity and coping strategies used during Y6 which will be presented in the central part. The accelerating pace of technological change meant that at the planning stage of this study interactive whiteboards were rare in primary schools, but this situation had changed by the main fieldwork year, as during the autumn term one was installed in an Upper Junior classroom. In view of this, I include a postscript which consists of a discussion of their impact on pupils with dyslexic-type reading difficulties.

11.2 Previous research on children's reading of internet texts

During the timescale of this study a fast expanding body of research literature has appeared on children's home and school ICT use (Holloway and Valentine, 2001; Valentine, Holloway and Bingham, 2002; Facer et al., 2003; Kent and Facer, 2004), the impact of ICT on teaching, learning and attainment (Goodison, 2002; EPPI, 2002, 2003, 2004; BECTA, 2003a, 2003b; Harrison, 2003; Sutherland, 2004a, 2004b; Valentine, Marsh and Pattie, 2005), and on pupils' engagement with the Internet (O'Connell, Price and Barrow, 2004; Livingstone and Bober, 2005). It would be impossible to attempt a comprehensive survey, and so I propose to limit the discussion to issues around reading multimodal hypertext on internet websites. Although the technology has advanced since Moore (1999) drew attention to the complexity of hypertext, his explication remains useful:

> Potentially Web pages can contain any combination of word, sound and image, and pages around the Internet are using them in increasing layers of complexity. Because it is a hypertext medium, clicking on any object could lead to other pages or other objects, and so not only is there a loss of linearity explicit in the print medium, but there is also a distinct possibility of losing one's way. With a book it is clear where to start and where to finish ....

> Reading an Internet text on the other hand, is like a frog jumping around a three-dimensional lily pond: it can be difficult to stand back from the text and see where you are in relation to its whole. (Moore, 1999, p.55)

The above quotation with its vivid use of simile reminds us that it is important not to be so seduced by the presentational originality of hypertext that critical debate is neglected. This seems to have happened in Sparrowhawk (2004), where the use of websites as a motivational tool for less able pupils is advocated, but the complexity surrounding the reading demands involved (Unsworth, 2001; Brice Heath, 2000) is not mentioned.

Several academics writing during the early days of the Internet drew attention to other problems that can potentially occur during interactions with electronic texts. Synder (1998) suggested that users might feel overwhelmed if too many interconnections and choices are presented on a website. The particular site she described included 'busy' tinkling music which seemed to have no purpose, and Burbules (1998) suggests that such music, and animated icons, may be deliberately added for their attention grabbing qualities rather than for a real purpose. Laurillard (1995), Oliver and Oliver (1996) and Cockerton and Shimell (1997) also all suggested that novice students could find themselves in difficulties when engaged in learning tasks that involved complex multimodal hypertext due to inefficient strategy use.

A more recent study by Pritchard and Cartwright (2004) which looked at the engagement of eleven year olds with non-fiction internet texts showed how true the above cautions have proved to be. They state that "it is often hard for an inexperienced 'researcher' to select relevant and appropriate items of information from the wealth with which they are presented" (Pritchard and Cartwright, 2004, p.26), and because of this they believe it is likely that copying of inappropriate material will occur. They also feel that when searching on the internet, time is often wasted on 'distraction activities' such as "following links [and] writing elaborate titles" (p.28) and on mechanical aspects, for example cutting and pasting text into

different documents. Burnett and Wilkinson (2005) have recently reported on the out of school internet use of six Y6 pupils deemed "enthusiastic and frequent" (p.164) users, and state that children may come across material that is difficult to read and that "internet searches can be lengthy and frustratingly unproductive, and sites themselves may be hard to navigate" (p.158). Although not stated, it seems likely that Burnett and Wilkinson's (2005) participants were proficient readers, and certainly there is no discussion of specific reading demands, other than a general recognition of the complexity of multimodal electronic texts. However, interestingly the authors state that:

> It was evident from the way that the children engaged with sites that visual elements were particularly salient for them. When exploring new sites that we presented them with, they did not read instructions and dismissed some pages as "it's a load of words ... I can't be bothered to read the words". (Burnett and Wilkinson, 2005, p.162)

If, as the above quotation suggests, typically functioning Y6 pupils ignore text, how much truer must it be of those with literacy difficulties, and yet none of the research so far mentioned discusses the problems faced by pupils who are not proficient readers when engaging with the internet. This neglect in the literature also extends to government sponsored research, such as BECTA's (2003b) report on how ICT can support Special Educational Needs, which, despite mentioning dyslexia in the introduction, does not expand on this in the main body of the text and makes no attempt to discuss on-screen reading demands. Similarly Walker and Reynolds (2000), whose focus was specifically on screen design issues, such as navigational ease and text size and layout, in relation to upper junior aged pupils' reading when using CD-ROMs, seem to make an implicit assumption that users in their sample were competent readers. It is important to acknowledge though that they did discuss the same problems of becoming distracted or lost in the labyrinth of material that have been mentioned above. It is perhaps even more surprising that contributors to the recent wide-ranging UKLA on-screen reading project (Bearne, 2006) who saw much potential in the use of new technologies in the classroom, did not consider the

position of pupils with literacy difficulties, but the director of the project has acknowledged that research is needed in this area in the future (Eve Beame, personal communication, July 2006).

In 1998, Myra Barrs wrote, in relation to the future of literacy and ICT, that:

> Stories about the 'the death of the book' and of literacy are becoming less convincing; new technologies so far seem to be making *increased* demands on traditional literacy. (Barrs, 1998, p.6)

Almost a decade on, the truth of Barr's assertion can be seen now that e-mail and mobile phone text messaging are such universal forms of communication. In fact, as digital technologies associated with the 'new media age' (Kress, 2003) become ever more sophisticated, they increasingly seem to be driven by textual rather than oral commands, a recent example being the introduction of 'chip and pin' credit cards. During the late 1990s there was excited anticipation that many of the literacy difficulties experienced by dyslexic pupils would be solved with the introduction of voice recognition and text reading computer programmes (Sanderson, 1999), but the use of these does not seem to have become widespread (Crivelli, Thomson and Andersson, 2004) . Overall then, individuals with literacy difficulties are at a huge disadvantage by comparison with proficient readers when accessing ICT in all spheres of their lives, and it is possible that this effect is exacerbated by socio-economic circumstances, as will now be discussed.

11.3 The effect of family socio-economic circumstances on ICT use

Valentine, Holloway and Bingham (2002) and Facer et al. (2003) concluded from their surveys of school aged children that, contrary to the commonly stated myth that the current generation of children are all 'cyberkids', some of their samples were not confident computer users. Although they acknowledge that the reasons for this 'digital divide' are complex, they suggest that family socio-economic circumstances are a major factor because they affect access both to the technology itself and connection to the internet. In the final report of a large scale study conducted during

the timescale of my research, Livingstone and Bober (2005) also discuss the continuum of inclusion/exclusion which has opened up in relation to quality of access. Even though computer ownership has become almost universal in the home, their findings suggest that middle class children are privileged over working class.

This digital divide may now be diminishing as internet providers progressively reduce their charges, but socio-economic factors definitely affected the home ICT experiences of the four participants in this study during the years the project was conducted. Ernie told me that he had a laptop with a reasonably up-to-date specification at home because each time his uncle received a new one for work, the previous one was passed on to him. He also often used the computer in his aunt's classroom after school to look up his favourite websites and play games, and so during interviews he came across as an experienced user who liked to demonstrate his knowledge. This ICT 'cultural capital' meant that there was always skilled advice available if he encountered problems at home, but it is important not to assume that all children in professional families have this advantage (Jackie Marsh, personal communication, January, 2005). The reason for this caution is that recent research has suggested that some parents have such busy careers that time to provide support is very limited (Valentine, Marsh and Pattie, 2005). Russell also had a laptop that he shared with his brother as well as a family computer, and like Ernie, he positioned himself as an expert home user during interviews.

However, the socio-economic situation of the two girls, as discussed in Chapter Six, meant their position was less favoured, and their experience is perhaps evidence of the digital divide referred to above. A recent National Literacy Trust (2005) survey found that pupils on free school meals tended to have limited access to electronic resources at home, and it is perhaps significant that when asked, Amy said she had a computer, but she never spontaneously talked about it as the boys did. Certainly during her interactions with ICT at school, she seemed the least experienced user of the four pupils, but I was never able to ascertain if she really did have a computer or whether she had provided an "othodoxly correct answer" (Rich, 1968, p.122) in

order to present herself and her family in a culturally favourable light (Goffman, 1959). By comparison, Janie was keen at the start of Y6 to ensure that both myself and her peers and teachers regarded her as an experienced ICT user. She demonstrated that she had full access at home to the internet by researching a History topic on the Victorians, downloading information and bringing printouts to show the class. This enabled her to perform as an expert on the topic during class discussions, and she obviously relished the chance to raise her self-esteem in this way. It was therefore with great sadness that she told me during the spring term of Y6 that the internet had been cut off at home because her family could not afford to pay the monthly fee. After this she often spoke about how, although she still had the computer, she missed being able to access the web, and as this must have made her acutely aware of the digital divide, it may have added to her state of unhappiness that has been documented in previous chapters.

Despite her literacy difficulties, Janie obviously found internet use rewarding, and so its removal was especially unfortunate in view of Burnett and Wilkinson's (2005) finding that the home experiences of the children in their sample were much richer and more experimental than those at school, where access tended to be via "controlled encounters" (p.164) because of fears pupils would access unsuitable material. The only one of the four participants who explicitly mentioned this as a problem was Russell, who spoke during his first Y6 interview of the frustration with the school server when "it says you can't go on stuff" (Interview transcript, 28.9.2004). As explained above he had full internet access at home, and considered himself an experienced games player, so when he returned to this topic later in the year, he was able to expand on his earlier comments and express his disdain of school ICT:

R: ... I hate ICT.
RA: Do you ?
R: I do **not** like it.
RA: Why is that then?
R: Cos when you type in something it doesn't apply to it – cos they're not proper computers linked to internet properly.

RA: Right.
R: So when you want to put your website in it don't come up - but it's meant to be there.
RA: Doesn't it? – right – at school you're saying you don't like...
R: Yeah at school – like at my computer at home you can internet to any website at all you want.
(Interview transcript, 16.3.2005)

Burnett and Wilkinson (2005) believe that "that there is a danger that in taming the internet for children, we may provide them with experiences that are significantly different to those that they would experience in real life" (p.164), and they feel that this may serve to extenuate the socio-economic digital divide. Certainly, as I have shown above, the four participants' home ICT use varied according to their family circumstances, and this inevitably must have had a knock on effect at school in terms of how experienced they were, with consequences for their ability to cope generally and specifically with reading demands encountered. I now turn to a discussion of how the above factors, taken alongside their literacy difficulties, impacted on the participants' reader identity and presentation of self during encounters with electronic texts.

11.4 ICT reader identity at school

The above discussion reveals that three of the four participants were experienced home computer users, but in terms of school ICT, although in interviews they usually presented themselves as competent, my observations of lessons led me to feel that the reader identities they assumed when engaged with tasks were rather at variance to this. The school only had sufficient computers in the laptop suite for one between two children, and the Y5 vignette at the start of Chapter One graphically illustrated how effective learning could be compromised if two dyslexic pupils worked together. It would seem that the Upper Junior staff team were also aware that the system of self-chosen dyads did not always work well, as at the start of Y6 a new system was put in place in all three classes in which more and less able pupils were paired into permanent partnerships.

Over twenty years ago Bristow (1985) concluded that those he termed 'poor' readers tended to be passive readers, but as Colin Harrison (2006) has recently pointed out, when reading on the internet there is no choice but to be engaged if meaning-making is to occur because decisions regarding hypertext links must constantly be made. However, the staff decision of placing the novice reader participants with more expert reader partners, meant that this tendency to passivity, taken alongside low self-image and overall lack of confidence, resulted in a deference to the more able pupil when the literacy demands of the task were high, and so officially sanctioned a 'communities of practice' master/apprentice type relationship (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The consequence was that when working on the internet with partners who were more able readers, the behaviour of the participants could be regarded as falling on a continuum of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) ranging from, at best actively engaged apprentices to, at worst, passively non-engaged onlookers.

I have chosen to present the ICT reader identities taken on by the four participants during Y6 via a descriptive typology (Woods, 1986), and this is shown in the 2 x2 matrix, given in Figure 11.1 below. The dimensions are formed by the categories of behaviour that emerged in the data analysis as most salient in terms of the relationship outcome for each of the partners, namely:

- whether or not the expert/more able reader was willing and able to act as a peer tutor for the novice/less able reader.
- whether the novice/less able reader presented him/herself as an equally competent ICT user in relation to their partner or saw themselves as less proficient, with the result that they were deferent to the expert/more able reader.

I have chosen descriptive titles for the identity types generated by the four possible combinations of these categorical dimensions, and it is important to clarify the meaning of the terms used in Figure 11.1. The 'apprentice' descriptor means that the tutor/tutee relationship between the two pupils enabled the participant to engage

with the ICT learning task and therefore produced a reader identity that facilitated a successful outcome to a greater or lesser extent. Conversely 'onlooker' means that the lack of tutoring within the relationship effectively excluded the participant from being able to engage with the ICT task, and so produced a reader identity that was largely unsuccessful in terms of learning. The 'active/passive' descriptors refer to whether or not the participant was involved in decision making regarding the subject matter and in the manipulation of the ICT technology, and this was dependent on their perceived ICT competence in relation to the more able partner.

FIGURE 11.1

A TYPOLOGY OF DYSLEXIC ICT READER IDENTITY DURING MORE ABLE/LESS ABLE PARTNERSHIPS

	Expert/more able reader acts as tutor	Expert/more able reader does not act as tutor
Novice/less able reader acts as equal ICT user	**Active apprentice**	**Active onlooker**
Novice/less able reader acts as deferent ICT user	**Passive apprentice**	**Passive onlooker**

It is important to remember that the ICT reader identities taken on by the participants resulted from the complex and dynamic interaction of the personalities of both partners and the relationship between them, such that, as is always the case with real world research, the behaviours observed during the fieldwork did not always fit exactly with the four artificially contrived ICT reader types shown in the matrix. Nevertheless each participant's identity did seem to be described by one of the categories for most of the time, and these will now be discussed.

11.4.1. *Active apprentice (JANIE)*

The most positive partnership occurred when the expert reader had friendly rapport with their partner and was disposed to act as a peer tutor in relation to reading demands, and the novice reader felt themselves of equal competence in terms of manipulating the technology. Janie's behaviour fell into this category when she

worked with her friend Hayley. Hayley was prepared to act as a peer reading tutor, but perhaps because she came across as somewhat lacking in confidence as a personality, did not attempt to dominate the manipulation of the ICT technology, but rather allowed Janie to be fully involved. The result therefore was that the two girls formed a collaborative partnership in which each seemed to be aware of their particular area of expertise. This was demonstrated in the first ICT lesson I observed in Y6 when they were using the BBC KS2 Victorians website to find out information about the lives of poor children. There was an audio sound track for some areas of the website, but where this was not available, Hayley read out captions spontaneously, and then after discussion with Janie, wrote information felt to be relevant on a piece of paper. I discussed the literacy demands of the task with Janie during her lunchtime interview:

RA: Did you decide that Hayley would do the writing?
J: Yes.
RA: Or did it just happen?
J: No - Hayley wanted to do the writing because she don't really know a lot about computers.
(Interview transcript, 23.9.2004)

This seemed a sensible solution as Janie did appear to be the more experienced computer user, but an alternative interpretation of her above rationale for Hayley doing the writing is that it was a covering tactic (Goffman, 1963) which allowed her to avoid drawing attention to difficulty with on-screen reading. However, whatever the reason, the partnership was successful in that it enabled Janie to demonstrate during the interview that she had become knowledgeable about the topic. Certainly the learning outcome was much more positive than that during the lesson described in the introductory Y5 vignette in Chapter One, when Janie and Amy had collaborated well but had struggled with the reading demands of the website.

11.4.2. *Passive apprentice (AMY)*

A partnership that was less positive, but still successful in terms of learning outcome resulted when the expert reader was friendly with the novice, and was comfortable

with the reading tutor role, but due to a different interplay of personalities, the expert dominated the interaction, both in terms of the subject and the manipulation of the technology. This occurred when the novice was a less confident personality and so behaved in a deferent manner, and the pupil for which I have most evidence of this ICT reader identity type was Amy, who always worked with her friend Emma. As has been discussed in previous chapters, Amy and Emma formed a strong teacher/pupil type relationship during class lessons from the start of Y6, and this was formalised for ICT when they were made official partners. There were many advantages to this arrangement for on-screen reading, as Emma's spontaneous and requested peer tutoring enabled Amy to learn from textual material that otherwise she would have been unable to access, something she acknowledged in a lunchtime interview towards the end of the year:

> A: ... When there's sumat [something] hard on computer to read – I always ask her to read it - and she says "OK" – she doesn't just go "Ooh - but why can't you?"
> (Interview transcript, 6.5.2005)

It was interesting that when two ICT partners interacted on this basis, on several occasions I noted that in quiz situations, the expert would read out the question, but always allow the novice to provide the answer. This could have been because the expert reader was less intellectually able than the dyslexic novice, and when a rare interaction of this type took place between Ernie and Scott during their somewhat dysfunctional partnership, which will be described in detail below, this did seem to be the reason. However, with Amy and Emma this was not the case as, in my opinion, Emma was definitely the more able of the two. The only possible interpretation then was that Emma modelled her 'teacherly' interactions with Amy on those with which she was familiar during classroom discourse. In fact, Smith, Hardman, Wall and Mroz (2004) have drawn attention to the continued dominance of 'Initiation-Response-Feedback' exchanges in which "teachers ask questions to which they know the answer" (Burns and Myhill, 2004, p.39) during 'interactive' whole class sessions within Literacy and Numeracy lessons.

In terms of learning to use electronic technology, this ICT reader identity type was not advantageous because it resulted in the novice being so deferent that they only directly interacted with the mouse and keyboard if the expert allowed them to. An explicit example of this occurred when the two girls were working on a Powerpoint presentation with Emma firmly in charge of both content and technology, and I heard her say to Amy in an authoritative tone, "Right, let's see if you can copy that picture" (Fieldnotes, 19.4.2005). The reason for the dominance of the expert reader may have been simply the result of the novice being by nature less confident, or could have been 'allowed' to happen by the novice so they would not have to reveal their literacy shortcomings. However as the peer tutoring demonstrated that the expert was aware of the novice's difficulties, this cannot have been the case and so it is my contention that the passivity may have been symptomatic of a kind of 'pay-off' for the support. If this was so, then the passivity could be regarded as a unconscious coping strategy motivated by the need to keep the partner 'sweet' in order to ensure continued help with reading.

Certainly in this type of partnership it seemed that if the novice became aware of the asymmetry and tried to become more actively involved, the relationship was temporarily de-stabilised, as happened during the spring term of Y6 when Amy and Emma were as usual working together on an ICT task. Because there were insufficient laptops in the adjoining suite, the girls were told to use the one in the classroom which was connected to the new interactive whiteboard (IWB) in order to construct a cyberhunt on football. They surfed the internet for inspiration for the questions with limited success for about fifteen minutes during which time Emma, acting in her usual 'teacher' role, directed Amy to sit at the keyboard and type keywords she specified into the search bar. Emma also ensured domination of the decision making process by standing at the IWB and using the 'virtual' pen to touch toolbar icons in order to control the technology. After a while Amy became aware of the subordinate position that she had been maneuvered into and began to try to be more assertive by making commands via the laptop. The following two fieldnote extracts reveal the resulting breakdown of the partnership:

> There was some confusion over computer commands as Emma used the virtual pen and Amy the keyboard. Emma said "Gi-or" [give-over]at one point to Amy...
> The two girls then began to argue as to who was doing what and Amy said "I never get to do anything on the board" and they then swapped roles. However shortly after Emily got up and Amy sat down at the keyboard again...
> (Fieldnotes, 28.1.2005)

After a further unproductive and restless few minutes, the tension between the two girls culminated in both going off task:

> 10. 35 am Amy went to the toilet and while she was gone Emma collected her 'Video now' cartoon viewer which had been brought for Golden Time [a free choice treat at the end of the afternoon] and Amy asked if she could look at it...
> Amy then sat down on the teacher's chair by the laptop, crossed her legs and began to look at the cartoon on the video player– she became completely absorbed in it, totally disengaging from the lesson until playtime.
> Emily then tried unsuccessfully to do a hyperlink from Word to the webpage via the IWB commands – throughout the lesson the girls had complained that the virtual pens were not working properly. She then went through to the laptop area to tell the teacher about the problem. I decided to go through to the laptop area to see how the rest of the class were getting on...
> When I came back Amy was still absorbed in the video cartoon and Emma was back in the room and had cleared the screen and was rewriting the questions. She then tried to import some different clip art onto the word page – and said something to Amy about not doing the hyperlink yet.
> (Fieldnote extract, 28.1.2005)

Despite Emma's attempt to draw Amy back into the lesson, she continued to view the cartoon until break began some minutes later, so it would seem that she had resolved to have nothing more to do with her partner for the rest of the session. As there was no teacher present to direct her back to the task, the consequence of the destabilization of the relationship was its temporary, but complete breakdown, with the result that Amy uncharacteristically disengaged completely from the learning encounter.

11.4.3. *Active onlooker (RUSSELL – START OF Y6)*

A partnership that was wholly unsuccessful in terms of accessing reading occurred when the expert reader had friendly rapport with the novice reader, but did not fall naturally into the role of tutor. In this case, because of the exclusionary situation caused by the reading difficulties, the novice had no choice but to remain an onlooker while the partner controlled the subject matter. However, if there was rapport and they regarded themselves as equals in terms of technology use, then the novice was able to do some mouse and keyboard work. This was the situation Russell found himself in at the start of Y6 when he was partnered with an able Y5 boy called Brett. During a lesson when the boys were using the BBC search engine to find out information about Queen Victoria's children, their collaboration was equal in that Russell remained involved in the use of the technology, but the learning outcome in terms of accessing the subject via textual information was very poor. This was because the searches generated websites with a huge amount of reading, but Brett did not attempt to act as a peer tutor. Perhaps due to the appeal for all pupils of visual rather than textual material (Burnett and Wilkinson, 2005), and the fact that Russell could not access any subject information, there was much potential for distraction, and the boys spent most of the lesson side-tracked on what they obviously saw as 'fun' sites, such as repeatedly zooming round on a 360 degree webcam picture of a public house called 'The royal children'.

11.4.4. *Passive onlooker (RUSSELL –REST OF Y6; ERNIE)*

The teacher soon realised that the relationship described above between Russell and Brett was not productive in terms of learning outcomes and so Russell's partner was changed to Jason, a boy who was regarded by the cohort as a very high-status pupil. He had the rare ability to perform simultaneously as conformist, conscientious and academically able, but also to be a popular member of the body-conscious footballing masculine elite (Reynold, 2001a; Swain, 2000, 2005). Russell was well integrated socially with mid-ability boys, but was definitely not part of the high-status group. There was therefore little social rapport between the two boys, and although there was no overt antagonism, it is possible that Jason may have felt

exasperated by Russell's literacy problems, if he believed they were caused by lack of effort (O'Sullivan and Joy, 1994). I have no way of knowing if that was so, but certainly he was not sensitive to the need to act as a peer reading tutor.

During this partnership, Russell became deferent both in terms of the subject matter and technology and had little choice to be anything other than a passive onlooker as Jason obviously viewed their learning encounters as existing entirely for his own purposes. This was clearly demonstrated during a lesson when the boys were using the internet to find out information about sharks, and Jason, as usual, did all the keyboard and mouse work. He obviously also saw the subject matter as totally in his control as he ignored Russell's suggestion as to which shark from a list they should look at in more detail and at the end of the lesson pointedly only saved downloaded information into his own pupil file without negotiation. Russell continued to be partnered with Jason for much of the rest of Y6, and remained almost totally passive, but perhaps because he was an experienced home ICT user, as mentioned above, he did occasionally try to be more active if he had a chance to demonstrate his knowledge of specific skills. Unfortunately, this was to no avail, as the following fieldnote extract reveals:

> 10.35 am Russell sat with his partner Jason who was working on totals on the spreadsheet using data from a sheet the class had put together the previous week on items needed for a class party. Russell sat at the side of him passively and did not attempt to do any of the keyboard work.
> Jason finished totaling the prices for the list of items and then tried to input a formula for the grand total at the bottom – Russell tried to tell him what to put but he did not listen and the formula he inputted was not correct and so did not come up with the answer. The teacher who was with a child nearby heard Russell's advice and said " I think this young man has been saying a lot of things to help you but you haven't been listening" .
> (Fieldnotes, 10.1. 2005)

The most unproductive partnership of all resulted if the expert reader not only had no rapport with the novice, but also obviously resented being made to work with him/her. In this relationship there was no possibility that the expert would be prepared to act as a peer tutor, and the obvious antagonism meant that the novice

was bound to act in a deferent manner even if they were in fact competent ICT users. This was the situation in which Ernie found himself with regard to his partner Scott, as the two boys seemed to have nothing in common socially and never spoke to each other except during the ICT lessons. Scott was also part of the footballing elite group of boys, but was held in less regard than Jason by the cohort as he was less academically able and seemed somewhat anti-school in his attitude to work. Ernie's lack of sporting prowess due to his dyspraxic problems, professional-class pro-school attitudes and interest in the arts, as discussed in earlier chapters, meant that he had very different cultural values from the hegemonic masculine group (Reynold, 2001a) to which Scott belonged. Perhaps this was the reason that at the start of the year I observed Scott consult the written list of partners, and then mutter a disparaging comment when he discovered he was with Ernie.

It was then unsurprising that the relationship that developed between Ernie and Scott was unsatisfactory to the point of being destructive. This manifested itself as a somewhat menacing undercurrent of domination from Scott both with regard to the subject matter and technology control, and a high level of passivity from Ernie. As with Amy and Emma, the two boys were also told to work in the classroom rather than the laptop suite and the result of this was that they were unsupervised for much of the time. The teacher may have made this decision because she thought Ernie would be able to successfully keep Scott on task without her surveillance, but in the event, if Scott became distracted, which was quite a frequent occurrence, Ernie was much too deferent to try to bring him back into line. The most extreme example of this during Y6 occurred when Scott spent the first half of a lesson sitting across the room filling in a Literacy worksheet which should have been completed as a homework task the previous evening. During this time Ernie worked on his own to construct a cyberhunt using the BBC search engine, and when he asked Scott a question at one point, he was brushed off in a very offhand manner. Although Ernie sometimes used his 'insider' status to admonish pupils if he thought their behaviour was unacceptable, it is significant that he made no attempt to persuade Scott to join

him at the computer. However, when Scott finished the worksheet he did come over, and the following extract from my fieldnotes describes what happened:

> Scott said something about motor cross bikes. He then changed the screen back to the BBC homepage and told Ernie to type in "who is the highest motor cross jumper?"
> *It was obvious that Ernie completely deferred to him- he made no attempt to say that he was about to start the cyberlinking of previous questions.*
> Ernie began to type and asked Scott how to spell "highest" – as Ernie typed rather laboriously Scott suddenly looked exasperated and took over from him, and completed the question.
> *Again Ernie made no comment.*
> (Fieldnotes, 4.2.2005)

Although Ernie showed some interest in the subject matter that Scott imposed, he did not try to influence which websites were chosen from those generated by the search engine and he remained totally passive for the rest of the session in terms of manipulating the technology. Scott's irritated reaction to Ernie's slow typing revealed in the above extract, confirmed me in thinking that the latter's passivity had its roots in embarrassment about publicly revealing literacy difficulties (Goffman, 1956), and was therefore part of low self-esteem in the academic domain (Burns, 1982), as discussed in Chapter Four, rather than a general lack of confidence. Certainly during practical collaborative activities in Maths and Science lessons, provided that no reading was involved, both Ernie and Russell were always fully engaged with the task and often dominated interactions by spontaneously taking on a leadership role, although it perhaps significant that this was usually within their own friendship groups rather than with higher status pupils.

11.4. 5 *Contextual renegotiation of ICT reader identity*

It is important to make the point that the ICT reader identity types were context specific rather than fixed, so that, as was stated at the start of this discussion, I have evidence of times when the participants' behaviour fitted better with another type than the one given above. For example, even Ernie, perhaps due to his relatively high level of ICT competence, did manage to achieve some semblance of

collaboration with Scott on several occasions, but he never dared to say if he experienced problems with reading. This was shown clearly when the boys were completing a multiple choice quiz on the BBC KS2 website on Victorian schools:

> They decided to go to the menu at the side and change to 'play – games'. This took them to a hopscotch game. Scott read the first question out loud and Ernie had the mouse. After that they read silently but Scott was so quick at reading the choices that he said which he thought the answer was e.g. "middle one" while it was obvious Ernie was still going down the list. However Ernie did not say this but just dutifully clicked the mouse.
> (Fieldnotes, 1.10.2004)

Because of his need to present himself as a competent reader (Goffman, 1959), Ernie still compromised his learning on this occasion, but the participants could perform quite differently in some circumstances, as was evidenced by Russell's inclusion in two categories of the typology. In fact, an unspoken but well recognised hierarchy of ICT status seemed to exist amongst the Upper Junior pupil body which was based on an interplay of perceived ability and age advantage. This operated to enable the participants at times not only to change their novice/less able ICT reader type, but in certain contexts to renegotiate their identity completely and take on the expert/more able role if they were working with a different partner from their usual one. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this during Y6 occurred when I observed Ernie confidently acting as a peer tutor when working with an able but younger Y5 boy, and when Janie was partnered with an MLD boy whom she efficiently helped to access a website with which she was familiar.

11.5 Coping strategies for reading multimodal electronic texts

Although not explicitly stated, the discussions in the previous section reveal that the participants coped with the ICT reading when working with a partner by using the same inter-person pupil/pupil strategies that were described in Chapter Nine, namely peer collaboration or peer tutoring. However they did sometimes engage with ICT reading when by themselves, and then they were dependent on their own inner resources in order to cope. As in the literature review section of this chapter, I

concentrate here on on-screen reading associated with internet websites where the most complex demands were found. Again, essentially, the participants' repertoire of within-person coping strategies were the same as those they used to deal with the demands of conventional texts during individual tasks, as described in Chapter Ten. In view of this, rather than restating the exact tactics, I have picked out some specific points for discussion that relate to the stages that must be gone through when accessing textual information via websites.

11.5.1 *Inputting web addresses*

Website addresses were difficult to read as a level of exactitude was needed that was demanding for all pupils, but was particularly challenging for those with reading difficulties. This was because the use of upper/lower case letters and random punctuation marks seemed frequently be the opposite of the rules accorded such importance within sentence level work in the Literacy Framework (DfEE, 1998, 2000). I had watched Janie and Amy struggle to type in a web address correctly during the Y5 lesson described in the introductory vignette at the start of Chapter One, and Janie was certainly aware of the problem as once during Y6 when I observed her attempting to input a web address, she commented "It makes it hard when you have to type in – I make mistakes" (Fieldnotes, 8.3. 2005). Janie did not seem to have developed a coping strategy she could articulate, but Amy, who also knew she found it difficult, was able to explain hers. She told me that she crossed out each letter on a handwritten version of the web address as she typed it into a search bar, and although this was laborious, it did prove to be effective provided the handwritten copy was accurate. However, the problems the participants encountered were exacerbated by their limited typing skills, and during Y6 I made the following observation in my fieldnotes when Russell was copying a passage of text, which incidentally he could not read:

> Russell then typed the first sentence - he was painfully slow, and seemed to have to search for individual letters individually and only used the index fingers of each hand despite his touch-typing practice.
> (Fieldnotes, 16.3.2005).

The variability of junior aged pupils' ability and confidence level in keyboard skills has recently been highlighted by Burnett et al. (2006) as an area of concern, and this points to the need for all children, but particularly those with literacy difficulties, to be given systematic tuition in typing at school (Crivelli, 2006).

11.5.2 *Using search engines to generate websites*

If instead of being directed to one particular website, the learning task was to use a search engine to access a range of possible websites, then problems again revealed themselves. It was of course vital to put the right key words into the search bar, but the limited literacy skills of the participants meant they were at a disadvantage when attempting to do this, as they often made spelling mistakes. If they did manage to successfully generate potential sites, then there was an immediate feeling of being overwhelmed by the length of the lists, and then once a choice of site was made, by the volume of print to be scanned in order to decide if it would yield useful information (Pritchard and Cartwright, 2004). Russell found himself in this situation during an ICT session at the start of Y6, and I asked him about it during his lunchtime interview:

> RA: If you get a page up and there's a lot of reading on it – which there often is...
> R: I forget about it.
> RA: What do you do?
> R: Click off it and go on somat [something] else.
> (Interview transcript, 28.9.2004)

I think Russell meant that if the reading demands looked daunting, the only way to cope was to leave such a site, and this is something that I am sure children, and indeed adults, with reading difficulties must do all the time when they attempt to use the internet. In fact, the dyslexic celebrity chef, Marco Pierre White, referred to this problem in a newspaper article (Ashcroft, 2005), when he admitted that his reading difficulties meant he could not access the internet. However it is important to note that the Y6 participants in Burnett and Wilkinson's (2005) study who were competent users also admitted to ignoring web pages if they had a lot of words, as

they preferred to spend time accessing sites with predominantly visual features. A good example of this, as the fieldnote extract below reveals, occurred when Ernie and his ICT partner, Scott, unusually, given the discussion in the section above, were collaborating on an internet search:

> 10.37 am Ernie went back to the BBC site and typed " worlds fastest car" into the search bar. A list of sites came up . They looked briefly at the second, Info FREAK but this was about DVDs. Ernie then looked further down the list and said " World's fastest car ferry – no - world's fastest sports car" they clicked on that link, and were confronted with a page of densely written text. Ernie said " M8A Monocoque" – oh it's a Maclaren" .
> *This showed he did read the information in bold at the top of the page.*
> They then clicked off this site and went back to the search list– they then clicked on 'world's fastest production car' and this brought up a photo of the TVR Speed 12. They were both very impressed and said they would love to own one. Ernie then wrote the question and answer on the sheet "world fastiest (*sic)* car? TVR Speed 12" .
> (Fieldnotes, 4.2. 2005)

11.5.3 *Reading on websites*

Once a website was selected for close scrutiny, the main problem was being overwhelmed by the amount of text and complexity of hypertext links, and I saw much evidence of the pupils behaving like Moore's (1999) 'frogs jumping around on lily ponds' as mentioned above. The only possible coping strategy when this happened was to reduce the textual demands somehow. One way that allowed some meaning making to occur was to only attempt to read large font and bold text, alongside a focus on visual material, much in the way that adults scan newspapers when time is limited, and this is what Ernie did when looking at websites in the fieldnote extract in the previous section. Another less productive coping strategy was to subvert the task so that there still appeared to be engagement, but actually no reading was taking place. I observed this occur when Ernie was completing a quiz on the BBC KS2 History website but was struggling with the textual demands. He found a way of cheating that allowed him to progress up the levels without actually doing any reading so he could achieve certificates to say he had completed each stage successfully. This type of subterfuge was successful from the pupils' point of

view in that it allowed them to present themselves as competent in the short term (Goffman, 1959), but, as has been suggested in relation to coping strategies described in previous chapters, in terms of the long term goal of moving learning forward (Johnson, 1985), it was not helpful because it obscured from the teacher the fact that the reading demands had been too great.

11.6 The impact of the introduction of an electronic interactive whiteboard (IWB)

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the electronic technology used at Granville became more sophisticated when an interactive whiteboard (IWB) was installed in the classroom used for the participants' Y6 Literacy lessons. There is an emerging literature on IWBs which until recently has mainly consisted of newspaper articles (Cross, 2005; Guardian Education, 2006) and information type reports for teachers which focus on the practicalities of their use (BECTA, 2003c; Review project, 2004). Academic studies have now appeared (Hall and Higgins, 2005; Wall, Higgins and Smith, 2005; Smith, Higgins, Wall and Miller, 2005; Smith, Hardman and Higgins, 2006), and anecdotal evidence suggests that IWBs are popular with primary school teachers and pupils. Certainly the recently revised Primary Framework (Primary National Strategy, 2006b) states many benefits that accrue from using IWBs to support the twelve Literacy strands, but in reality it is still too soon for their long-term impact on teaching and learning at KS2 to have been evaluated thoroughly. It is a major concern, however, that nowhere in this emerging body of literature, as with the more general research on ICT discussed above, are the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties specifically addressed, and so in this concluding part of the chapter I raise some issues related to my study.

Gunter Kress (2003) has drawn attention to the recent move "from the dominance of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen" (p.1) with regard to literacy in the 'new media age'. At Granville the installation of the IWB meant that the screen literally came to dominate the classroom during the whole class 'interactive' sessions that were a ubiquitous feature of the Literacy Hour (Smith et al., 2006). Prior to the introduction of the IWB, the teacher stood at the side of the conventional

whiteboard, and even when writing on it she remained the focus of the pupils' attention. This changed once the IWB had been installed, as although she sometimes did the same and handwrote with the 'virtual' pen, more often she sat at the side of the screen on a low chair next to a child sized desk on which she placed her laptop computer. Texts and/or images were projected from this computer and if she word-processed additional material as she went along, this appeared simultaneously on the IWB. From my position at the back of the room the teacher appeared to have become disembodied because of her low seated position, and this must have been the same for pupils who occupied desks towards the rear of the class. The result of this was that the pupils' centre of attention became the large screen as they were directed to the specifics of what was being discussed via cursor pointing or highlighted text. Viewed in symbolic interactionist terms, as discussed in Chapter Three, this served as a powerful semiotic sign that in order to access learning, reading was vital, a worrying and demotivating message for pupils with literacy difficulties.

The teacher involved was in the early stages of learning how to use the IWB during the timescale of the project (Cross, 2005), with the result that for most of the lessons I observed, it was used principally as an oversized computer projection screen. Because of this, although there were times when the interactive potential was realised, its role could be said to be not dissimilar to a conventional whiteboard. However, as was found in the UKLA on-screen reading project (Bearne, 2006), even in this 'projector mode', as time went on, the teacher began to be more creative in her use and started to display information and instructions that she had previously given verbally to the class, such as the membership of groups for a forthcoming school trip. One of the contributors to Bearne (2006) suggested that such use of a projector or IWB has a social inclusion function as it creates a classroom learning community of readers via the big screen. However, my fear is that this is another example of the increasing textual load generated by the 'new media age' (Kress, 2003), and that for pupils with literacy difficulties it could act instead as an exclusionary and marginalising force (Benjamin et al., 2003).

During the project there was a good deal of pupil excitement associated with the IWB because of its recent introduction, and BECTA (2003c) caution that it will be necessary to "re-assess their impact once they are embedded on classroom practice and no longer felt to be a novelty" (p.3). Certainly all four participants seemed to feel that the IWB enhanced their everyday classroom experience, as when I asked them for their views soon after it was installed, they were very enthusiastic. However, it is important to note that, as Hall and Higgins (2005), who researched the perceptions of Y6 pupils via group interviews, also found, they tended to focus on the "versatility in the classroom, multimedia capabilities and the fun and enjoyment" (p.102) it provided, rather than the impact it had on learning. The participants had to be prompted to reflect on what it was like to read from the IWB, but they did then show that they were aware that it improved legibility of written text. Janie's responses to my questions on the topic during a Y6 interview typify those of the rest:

RA: How do you like that interactive whiteboard ? do you think it's good or do you like the ordinary whiteboard better? – just tell me a bit if you can.
J: I like the interactive whiteboard.
RA: Yes.
J: It just looks better and that.
RA: When you say it looks better – do you mean – I know things look different on it - is it easier to read if there is writing on it?
J: Yes.
RA: Why do you think that is?
J: Cos um - you can like have lines on and it can space it out so it looks a bit better than the other one.
(Interview transcript, 26.11.2004)

The participants were aware that textual clarity on the IWB enhanced readability by comparison with a conventional whiteboard, particularly when word-processing was used (Crivelli, 2006). However, even if words were written with the 'virtual' pen, it was clear from my place at the back of the room that handwriting was easier to read because of the increased definition.

Hall and Higgins' (2005) participants also discussed disadvantages of IWBs, and they obviously found it particularly frustrating when the technology malfunctioned. There were occasions during my observations when this happened, and once when the 'virtual' pen would not work, the lesson then went into a state of boring hiatus as the teacher battled to rectify the fault. A further potential problem with IWBs discussed in the literature (BECTA, 2003c; Hall and Higgins, 2005) relates to lack of visibility in bright conditions, as siting is always dictated by classroom layout and availability of electrical sockets. This did not seem to be a problem at Granville because the board was installed on a wall which did not receive direct sunlight and the room was already equipped with vertical blinds. It did mean though, that the axis of the rectangular room had to be changed making it long and narrow so that many pupils were much further from the IWB than they had been from the conventional whiteboard. Perhaps because they were well behaved, three of the four participants were placed in desks on the back row during Literacy for much of the year, which, given their reading difficulties is likely to have disadvantaged them further in relation to visibility of the IWB.

11.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested that rather than making the life of dyslexic pupils easier in the classroom, as might have been expected, the increasing dominance of screen based multimodal electronic texts has added to the complexity of reading demands, and has acted as yet another exclusionary marginalising force in terms of membership of the classroom community of literacy learners. According to Kress (2003), the 'new media age' is having far reaching effects on many aspects of literacy learning as technology becomes more and more sophisticated. The affordances of hypertext demand that visual design issues are as important as textual content (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Burnett et al., 2006), and this change in emphasis is not only increasingly apparent in the appearance of electronic texts, but is also influencing conventional texts, as can be seen in the image/writing balance found in recent non-fiction books compared with those published years ago (Moss, 2001).

Kress (2003) believes that because the layout of electronic texts can be so easily manipulated, much more attention is now paid to design aspects of writing when working on-screen, and that this is feeding back into the composition of conventional texts. Certainly at Granville I observed the pupils writing a paper-based factual report during a Y6 Literacy lesson when the learning objective was focused on design aspects of the task rather than content. Kress (2003) believes that decisions such as whether to present information via bullet points or as narrative are fundamental to the structure of a text, both at superficial and deeper levels, and as these issues have only become salient with the appearance of electronic texts, they demonstrate the all-pervading transformation of literacy that the 'new media age' is bringing about. The participants in this study have experienced all the reading demands that dyslexic pupils have always encountered in relation to conventional classroom texts, but alongside this, within the timescale of their primary school pupil careers, they have also had to come to terms with ever more complex forms of electronic media. With this in mind, I move on to draw all the threads of this study together as I present the overall conclusions and implications of the research in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

12.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I will firstly present the overall findings of the research and their implications in summary form. This concluding discussion will then take a reflexive turn as I debate the limitations of this particular study and provide some pointers for future research. After this I will detail the feedback sessions I provided for the pupils and staff, and then provide a personal reflection on the research journey. The chapter, and indeed the thesis, will end with a vignette in which, as is fitting in a study conducted entirely from the pupil perspective, the experiences of the four participants are foregrounded for one final time.

12.2 The overall conclusions and implications of the research

In this section I will present the overall conclusions of the study by revisiting the research questions and addressing each in turn in relation to the experience of the participants. As stated in Chapter Five, it is my strong belief that if a study conducted with pupils who are experiencing difficulty at school is to be soundly based ethically, then the findings should provide a "positive contribution to the educational enterprise" (AERA, 2003, p.1) in that recommendations are generated that can lead to benefits for others in a similar position. In an effort to demonstrate my commitment to this principle, the implications of this research for teaching and learning will also be discussed in this section.

12.2.1 *Reader Identity*

In order to investigate reader identity from an individual perspective, I asked:

What is the effect of having dyslexic difficulties on upper junior aged pupils' identities as readers at school?

The findings related to this question, which were presented in Chapter Seven, showed that the dyslexic difficulties experienced by the participants resulted in them

having low self-esteem as readers because they were aware their standard was below that of their peers. They based their evaluation of their ability on their clear idea of what makes a good reader, and they did not seem to have developed the self-realisation that despite their decoding problems, they could function as critically discerning readers. These negative effects on reader identity were intensified by the fact that the participants often could not take their full part in activities or engage with individual tasks because the reading demands of the texts used in the classroom were too great, and the result of this was that they operated at the margins of the classroom community of literate practice. Their attendance at small group Literacy withdrawal sessions added to their marginalisation as the tuition was unchallenging and resulted in boredom, and if patronising, over-young or over-easy texts were used, then their reader identity was damaged further. In addition, although the withdrawal groups were potentially beneficial for self-esteem enhancement, they acted as an indirect marginalising force because of missed curriculum lessons.

A number of implications follow from these findings on reader identity, and perhaps the most important is that, as high self-esteem is such a vital element for effective learning (Burden, 2005), dyslexic pupils should be made explicitly aware that decoding is only one part of reading, and that provided they are supported with difficult material, they do have the critical ability to be able to function as full members of the community of literate practice. However, if reading material used during everyday classroom activities does not allow meaningful engagement, then these pupils will inevitably remain marginalised, and so ways to ensure that texts are set at an appropriate level should be found. In some cases simplification is an option, but this could be seen as an exclusionary practice, and so it may be more appropriate to ensure that sensitive adult support is provided for difficult material. My findings also draw attention to the need for literacy tuition provided during withdrawal groups to be well matched to the ability and interests of all members, but my professional experience leads me to suggest that shorter 'one to one' sessions may be a more effective means of raising attainment because work can be tailored to exact need. However, it is important to remember that whatever type of withdrawal

support is provided, the costs and benefits must be carefully weighed to ensure the difficulties created by being excluded from parts of the curriculum are minimised.

12.2.2 *Presentation of self*

In Chapter Eight, I used a sociological lens to investigate reader identity further, and posed the question:

In what ways do dyslexic pupils manage their presentation of selves as readers within upper junior classroom communities of literate practice?

The analysis of my data led me to the conclusion that because of the cultural need to enhance their self-image as readers with both peers and adults, the participants 'covered' and attempted to 'pass as normal' in order to present themselves as more competent than they really were. Such use of impression management strategies was particularly apparent during silent reading sessions, when the pupils gave the appearance of functioning as full members of the classroom community of literate practice as they read their books, but in reality were often dissembling because the text was too difficult for them to engage with independently. In view of this, it is likely that school staff will not be aware of the true reading standard of dyslexic pupils of upper junior age if they are rarely asked to read out loud, and so the implication is that assessment should be carried out periodically on an individual basis. The findings also show the importance of providing a generous selection of both fiction and non-fiction books set at an appropriate independent or instructional reading level for upper junior pupils with literacy difficulties to choose from. As motivation to engage is increased and decoding made easier when content is familiar, the books should reflect the interests and concerns of the pupils, and the best way to ensure this is to involve them in the selection of texts.

12.2.3. *Coping strategies for reading*

The concern in Chapters Nine and Ten was to set out the ways the participants dealt with the situation of having to face over-difficult texts each day at school, in order to answer the question:

What strategies for coping with the demands of classroom reading are used by dyslexic pupils of upper junior age?

I discovered that the participants had developed a varied repertoire of strategies to help them cope with reading demands encountered in the classroom, but that all had the same consequence, which was to minimize the amount of text they read themselves. The inter–person coping strategies were all designed to ensure that other persons, peers or adults, did the reading, whereas the within-person coping strategies had the aim of allowing the participant to focus on what they considered to be essential material, the inevitable result being that they could not engage fully with the texts. All these coping strategies were successful in the sense that in the short-term they enabled the pupils to function with some semblance of normality in the classroom. However, they were all marginalising in the long-term in that they directly hindered successful learning because they meant that the participants gave teachers the impression they could cope with reading demands, when in reality they could not. The obvious implication then, is that staff need to be aware that a range of strategies are being used, and in order to check that texts are at an appropriate level, should regularly monitor the responses of pupils. As inter-person support, both from peers and adults, is a very important means of enabling dyslexic pupils to access difficult reading material, explicit facilitating systems should be in place, thereby ensuring that times when only within-person coping strategies can be used are minimised.

12.2.4 *The impact of electronic multimodality*

In view of technological changes brought about by the 'new media age' (Kress, 2003), in Chapter Eleven I addressed a supplementary question:

What has been the impact of multimodal electronic texts on the classroom reading experiences of dyslexic pupils of upper junior age?

My findings suggested that electronic multimodality has increased the complexity of classroom reading for dyslexic pupils overall, thereby adding to their marginalisation, and that the greatest demands occurred during ICT lessons when the participants were overwhelmed with huge amounts of text as they tried to navigate

internet websites and hypertext links. Analysis of the data also showed that because the participants tended to work on laptops with more confident partners who were proficient readers, this had an exclusionary effect as they often took on the role of assistant or apprentice, and although they may have appeared to be engaging in 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), in effect at times they were little more than passive observers. In order to avoid this problem, staff should set up protocols that ensure that when pupils with literacy difficulties work with peer partners on ICT tasks, they are given equal status both in terms of decisions about content, and in the use of the technology. Other implications are that dyslexic pupils need to receive systematic tuition in typing skills and be explicitly taught efficient search engine and hypertext navigation strategies. However, even if the above recommendations are put in place, their engagement with ICT will still only be effective if they are supported with on-screen reading by adults, or if this is not possible, monitored intermittently in order to check that demands are appropriate. When doing this, staff should be aware that all the impression management tactics and coping strategies for conventional texts will also be used when interacting with electronic texts.

Some years ago when the 'dyslexia-friendly schools' initiative was instigated (Johnson, 2004), it was stated that the recommendations would not only assist those with specific learning difficulties, but would also enhance the classroom experiences of all pupils, and I believe that the implications set out in relation to this and the previous three research questions also have wide applicability. However, the concern of this thesis is with one particular study, and so I now move on to discuss its limitations.

12.3 Limitations of the study

This study has produced significant findings based on the analysis of the rich data on reading identity and coping strategies. However, as is the case with all qualitative studies conducted with a small number of participants (Cohen et al., 2000), it must be remembered that the conclusions are entirely based on those individuals'

experience of the education being provided in one particular school, as it operates in the nested contextual conditions imposed by local and national policies at one unique point in historical time (Graue and Walsh, 1998).

At each level, then, the conclusions might have been different if another choice at the outset of the project had been made. As is detailed in Chapter Five, the reason I approached the headteacher of Granville was because she was a former teaching colleague, and if I had chosen a different school even within the same LEA or geographical area, although many aspects of the Literacy education provided would have been similar due to the standardised approach imposed by the National Strategy (DfEE, 1998), there may well have been variations that impacted on pupil experience. For instance, during the main fieldwork year, I read OFSTED's (2004a) evaluation of the teaching of reading in primary schools, and discovered that, in my subjective opinion, the tuition at Granville had more in common with examples provided of schools deemed ineffective than those described as effective. It may have been then, that if these dyslexic pupils had been functioning in a school where best practice was followed, their experience of classroom reading would have been more positive. However, it is also important to note that the OFSTED inspection which took place just before the fieldwork began concluded that the English education provided at Granville was satisfactory, and that SEN pupils were well provided for and made good progress.

The above discussion suggests that the experience of the participants was not atypical at the historical educational moment in which they found themselves. However, had I researched the same topic ten years earlier, prior to the introduction of the Literacy Hour (DfEE, 1998), English lessons would have been very different and are likely to have more resembled the Y6 transition work mentioned in Chapter Seven, which seemed to provide the participants with more motivational interest. During that educational era too, they would have been likely to have received much less withdrawal tuition as many fewer classroom assistants were employed in schools (Blatchford et al., 2007), the consequence being that they would have been less marginalised in that way. It may also be that the particular four dyslexic pupils

chosen by the school from that particular cohort were atypical in some way, and because I could not be present to see their educational experience in its totally, both these factors may also have skewed the findings.

At the level of the researcher, another individual would have been bound to approach the subject differently, and all these issues were debated as methodological concerns in Chapter Five. However, to critics who believe the findings of research such as mine are rendered somehow inferior to larger more positivistic studies (Cohen et al., 2000), I would reiterate my belief, set out in Chapter Five, that because of the operation of Satre's "universal singular" (Denzin, 1989, p.19), in that each person is both similar and different to everyone else, case study is a powerful research method (Simons, 1996). The above principle is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that, although the dyslexic pupils I teach at the independent school are learning literacy in a very different educational context to that at Granville, nevertheless, the low self-esteem they exhibit and problems they encounter with reading, as researched in Anderson (2001), are similar to those observed in this study. It was also obvious to me on my return after my sabbatical year that my pupils, who could be said to epitomise economic privilege, had developed the same range of impression management techniques and coping strategies for reading as the participants in this study who were growing up in much less financially favoured family situations.

12.4 Future research needed

Given the limitations discussed in the previous section, the most obvious need for further research is for similar studies to be conducted with pupils of the same age in a range of other schools in which elements of the local context contrast with those at Granville. It would also be illuminating to see if the experience of dyslexic pupils is more positive in primary schools that would be considered effective in the teaching of reading according to the criteria used by OFSTED (2004a). As explained in Chapter One, I had originally intended studying the pupils' experiences both before

and after transition to secondary schooling, and I still feel that the impact of this major change on coping with reading is an important research area, and that it would also be interesting to discover whether the same or different strategies are used in the run up to external examinations. Another area that merits further research, because it affects all ages in all types of schools, is the impact of the 'new media age' (Kress, 2003) on the experiences of dyslexic pupils, and it becomes ever more urgent to redress this gap in the literature as the pace of technological change increases.

As the fieldwork progressed I began to realise that, although the foregrounding of the pupil perspective in my largely descriptive fact finding study was an important first step, that when designing my research, I had not built in the next stage, which would have been to elicit the views of the participants on how their educational experience could have been improved, as SooHoo (1993) did. McCray et al. (2001) state in their interview study of American pupils with reading disabilities, referred to in Chapter Four, that by the middle years of schooling pupils can make recommendations about changes to practice that would help them, but as Johnson (2004), writing about dyslexic pupils in the British context has recently said, few researchers have actually asked them to do this. Certainly, both Janie and Russell made comments during interviews, which have been included in the vignettes in Chapter Seven, that show they could articulate what type of texts would help make their reading more effective, and their voices "provide a compelling argument for bringing less able readers together with books in ways that ensure success" (Fielding and Roller, 1992, p.684). I often told the participants during interviews that the things they told me were very important for teachers to know, but I never invited them to give their opinions on their classroom reading experiences, or asked them to make recommendations as to what would have improved the situation. It could be argued though, that this was not the aim of the research and so would have been inappropriate, and also possibly unethical as it might have seemed I was inciting them to criticise their teachers. However, interestingly, they did begin to open up right at the end of the fieldwork during feedback sessions, when perhaps they felt they had nothing to lose as they were leaving the school.

12.5 The feedback process

Feedback of the emerging findings and implications to those who have had involvement is important at the end of the fieldwork phase of a study if this part of the research process is to be conducted on an ethical basis (Ely et al., 1997; Delamont, 2002). I provided feedback both for the participants and staff at Granville, and in this section I describe and reflect on these sessions.

12.5.1 *Pupil feedback*

As mentioned in Chapter Five, I decided that the most appropriate form of respondent validation at the end of the fieldwork would be to feed back conclusions in a simplified form to the participants and invite their comments. In doing this I grappled with the same problem I had confronted in my M.Ed. research (Anderson, 2001), in that I did not think it was appropriate to couch what I told them in the theoretical framework I had used (Woods, 1996). As in Anderson (2001), I decided instead to present a purely descriptive oral account using age-appropriate language, and so as not to damage self-esteem, that I would not state that most texts they encountered were too difficult, but would rather refer to specific examples of situations where reading was hard. I decided to also provide them with written 'pupil-level findings', as did Griffiths and Davies (1993), and these are provided in Appendix 11 and were included with the letters of thanks I wrote to the participants and their parents, which form Appendix 12.

I had originally decided to do go through the findings with the participants in a group session on what was intended to be my last full day in school, but due to illness and holiday absence, I in fact conducted two feedback sessions with mixed sex dyads. During the first of these, Amy and Ernie impressed me so much by their metacognitive sensitivity that I regretted not taping the session. I decided therefore to conduct one extra round of individual lunchtime interviews so that I could invite each participant to expand on their comments about the findings. This worked well as the pupils were even more insightful than they had been at their joint sessions, perhaps because they were reporting what they had said earlier rather than speaking

totally 'off the cuff'. I retained the same format for the feedback session with Russell and Janie, which took place two weeks later, and it was interesting that, as often happens in group interviews (Cohen et al., 2000), they debated issues between themselves as well as talking to me, and were more prepared to challenge my statements than Amy and Ernie had been.

Lack of space precludes a discussion of every statement on the list of pupil-level findings, and in fact for many, the participants simply nodded their agreement as I read down the numbered points, but it is important to highlight the main ones about which comments were generated. Perhaps most debate was over the suitability and availability of the books that were provided for silent reading. Janie and Russell had a heated argument as Janie insisted there were plenty to choose from, but Russell felt just as strongly that there were not, and as they did not seem to be able to resolve their different views, I intervened and told them that perhaps the problem was that most pre-teen fiction is aimed at girls (Millard, 1997). During the first session two weeks earlier, Ernie had not commented on this statement, but Amy had made the insightful point that she felt the teachers had chosen books they themselves thought were interesting, rather than those children would enjoy. All the participants agreed that easy books could be boring, but Ernie was the only one who expanded on this, as he made the point vividly about what he called 'baby books' by giving the spoof example of stilted reading scheme-ese which is included in his voice vignette in Chapter Seven.

All four participants felt they were often not given sufficient time to read through passages of text in Literacy and Amy and Ernie spontaneously gave examples of when this had happened, and they all knew they got lost when they were required to follow passages as the teacher read. They all strongly agreed that reading on websites was complicated and that they often were overwhelmed by the volume of text generated, but their comments showed that despite the difficulties, they liked using the internet. Overall then, the level of engagement with the feedback led me to feel that all four pupils had taken participation in the project very seriously, and that

they had appreciated having someone at school who had not been judgemental either of ability or conduct, but had had time to listen with genuine interest to their views on their educational experiences.

12 5.2 *Staff feedback*

I was asked by the headteacher to provide a twilight feedback session on the findings and implications of the research for the Upper Junior staff and any others who wished to attend. Here I faced the same problem encountered by Nind et al. (2003), as I knew the feedback would have to be very sensitive if I was going to put across the fact that these dyslexic pupils did not have positive experiences of reading at school without making the staff feel that I was being critical of their teaching. Shortly before the date of the session, I had presented a report of research in progress at a UKLA conference, (Anderson, 2005) but I did not think that the same talk I had given there would be appropriate for a practitioner audience as it had been an academically framed overview with no discussion of practical implications. I therefore decided to put together a 'tongue in cheek' spoof self-help booklet which I entitled *A KS2 dyslexic student's guide to (apparently) coping with the demands of classroom reading*, which forms Appendix 13. By this means I hoped that the serious points I was trying to make could be put across in a lighthearted humorous way. I decided that I would not distribute copies as I only had time to produce a first draft, but that I would read from the booklet as a way to generate discussion.

Unfortunately on the designated day, the staff and pupils had been on an outdoor activities trip in searing heat, so very few other than those who were obliged to come attended, and those who did looked exhausted. What I had planned as an interactive session therefore became a lecture, but from the atmosphere in the room and body language of the staff, it seemed that the booklet was successful in getting the findings across in a non-threatening way, as the staff were obviously amused by it, whilst at the same time accepting of the findings and aware of the serious implications for teaching and learning. At the end of the session, I presented a list of specific practical recommendations related to reading that I considered would aid the

inclusion of dyslexic pupils in the classroom. These 'teaching tips' had been written as part of the UKLA paper, and are provided in Appendix 14 as space precludes a detailed discussion here. Once there was direct relevance to their everyday teaching, the staff engaged in more of a dialogue with me, and seemed prepared to take on board the advice given.

Unfortunately the SENCO had been unavoidably called away after school on the staff feedback day, and I was disappointed she was not present as she had shown a great deal of interest in the project from its inception. I managed to have a short session with her nearer the end of term, but as there was insufficient time to use the spoof booklet, I simply summarised the findings and implications in relation to the four research questions, and a useful dialogue was generated. Although I was fearful that she would feel threatened as she was responsible of the setting up and organisation, though not the delivery of the literacy withdrawal sessions, I felt obliged to get the points across about the marginalisation they seemed to be causing. I made sure I emphasised how useful they had been for boosting self-esteem and confidence before I revealed my worries about the slow pace of lessons and progression in learning and difficulties created by missing curriculum content. In the event, I was relieved that, rather than seeming offended, she registered concern and used the opportunity to tap into my expertise as a specialist literacy support teacher by asking for advice on how to improve the situation. This gave me the chance to explain that withdrawal tuition should be "intensive, urgent, relentless and goal directed" (Zigmond and Baker, 1995, p.249).

12.6 Personal reflections on the research journey

Ely et al. (1997) suggest that there should be explicit reflection on how conducting a study has affected and changed one as an individual as the research process nears its completion, and so I do this by turning the reflexive circle back (Ely et a., 1991) and giving a personal account of the kind provided in Chapter One. Having spent a number of years as an researcher, it is hard to imagine myself without that aspect to my life, as my identity now seems so imbued with academia, and yet when my son

became a research student in the late 1990s, I found to hard to grasp his point that theory underpins everything in life (Ben Anderson, personal communication, December, 1999). At that time, I would have dismissed it as preposterous that seven years later I would be writing up my own doctoral research, and yet unexpectedly in middle-age, I discovered a whole new way of thinking and looking at the world, and it would be foolish to believe that this has not changed me fundamentally. Apart from the inevitable low points when I felt overwhelmed by the volume of data I had generated at the start of the analysis period, and 'bogged down' by the seemingly interminable process of writing up, I have felt intellectually re-born and re-invigorated by engaging with the research community, and I believe I will carry the academic way of thinking with me in whatever life holds for me in the future.

The above discussion is couched in general terms, but it is also important to reflect on how the process of conducting this specific study has affected me. Ethnography is perhaps different to many research methods in that, as the fieldwork period is prolonged and intensive, it is impossible not to find that one is so immersed in the experience that there is seepage into other areas of life (Delamont, 2002). I have never found it hard to stay on the edge of action looking in, as explained in Chapter Five, but while conducting the research I found that I would tend to take on the slightly distanced observer role in many familiar social situations, and so would see them in a different light, and that this could be an unsettling experience at times. Even the specific methods seemed to etch themselves into my wider consciousness, as for example, when transcribing the participants' interviews, I found during everyday conversations I was often aware of how fundamentally oral and written language forms differ (Silverman, 1993), something I had never previously noticed. Similarly, while writing up, I have become acutely conscious of structural cohesion in newspaper articles and television documentaries.

With regard to myself as a educationalist, having worked in the independent sector for almost ten years before arriving at Granville, I found the experience of being back in a state school both familiar and strange (Spindler and Spindler, 1982), as it

seemed that so much and yet so little had changed since I had taught in primary schools in the early 1990s. During the preliminary fieldwork year I led a somewhat schizophrenic existence, both in terms of role and school context, as each week I alternated between being a passive researcher and active teacher. The result of this was that the state and independent educational worlds were set in sharp relief against each other and I became acutely aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each system with regard to the school experiences of dyslexic pupils. As there tends to be little transference of staff between the two educational sectors, this was a highly unusual situation to find myself in, and it has allowed me to make a more measured evaluation than is common.

In terms of the exact research focus, although before I began this study I was already thinking about presentation of self and coping strategies for reading because of my M.Ed. research (Anderson, 2001), since my return to teaching I find I interpret pupil behaviour much more readily in these terms. I am now also much more conscious of the difficulties that can be caused by withdrawal tuition sessions. I had always prided myself prior to the research that I timetabled the twice weekly half-hour sessions that my pupils receive carefully so that problems were minimized. However, I am now aware that missing any subject is marginalising, and causes exclusion from membership of the classroom community of learners, but whereas at Granville, I felt the sessions were largely ineffective, I would hope that my individualised tuition does indeed help pupils to improve their literacy attainment. Provided this is so, I can justify the sessions as improved reading and writing skills lead to higher self-esteem and a greater likelihood that texts encountered in the classroom will be within the independent reading capacity of the pupils.

12.7 A final vignette and concluding comments

I conclude this thesis as I began it, with an extended "snapshot vignette" (Ely et al., 1997, p.74) of the participants as they attended an emergency services 'Safety Crew' event at the end of summer term of Y6. As with the history trip earlier in the year, as mentioned in Chapter Five, I was allowed to accompany them on the understanding

that I acted as leader of a group of six pupils which included all the participants. I include this description of what happened in order to give a more balanced picture of the participants as learners, as I believe it is important ethically to show how they were able to present themselves very differently in a situation where they were not marginalised. The reason they could engage in full participation was because, apart from a minimal amount of environmental print, no reading was required as everything was conducted through the oral medium. At the event, which happened to fall on the hottest day of the year, the pupils visited ten scenarios for ten minutes each, during which time they received information or carried out an activity and were assessed verbally on their knowledge, either as they went along or via a short quiz at the end. My group worked their way around the scenarios with obvious enjoyment, and all four participants were enthusiastically and confidently involved:

> *As we left the sixth scenario, which was on cycle safety, those in charge remarked to me that my group had been "very sharp". A similarly positive evaluation also occurred after the eighth, which was on the dangers of electricity, as I was told that by comparison with many preceding groups, the pupils with me had been very good orally. The penultimate scenario consisted of a video about building safety and it began to be obvious that the group were flagging in the extreme heat. In view of this I expected that concentration and levels of engagement would be compromised during the final scenario which was on first aid in an emergency, and was run by the St John's Ambulance Brigade. However, nothing could be further from the truth as all four participants were totally absorbed as they learnt what to do if they came upon an unconscious casualty, and Russell in particular seemed fascinated by the scientific information provided. The six pupils were then invited as a group to re-enact the procedure they had watched, and they quickly sorted out who would take the different roles and performed them correctly and efficiently. At the end they were given a score of 10/10 and were told they had been the best of all the groups that day.*
>
> (Vignette derived from fieldnotes, 23.6.2005)

This vignette paints a picture of the participants that shows them in a very different light from that which began this thesis. It graphically demonstrates how their difficulties with learning were specific to literacy, because when they did not need to use such skills, they not only were able to function as full members of the community of practice at the emergency event, they were viewed as of high ability

by comparison with others. However, back at school, all the pupils were required to fill in written questionnaires about the event, and my fieldnotes show that the participants encountered the same problems with the reading demands that have been extensively documented in the empirical chapters, and unsurprisingly wrote only very brief inaccurately spelt comments. Given the valorisation in our culture of proficient literacy skills (Burden, 2005), it is probable that the perception of the participants by those running the scenarios would have been very different had the assessments been in written rather than oral form (Riddick, 1996). It is also possible that if the staff at the event had been pre-warned that my group mainly consisted of pupils considered to have special needs of a dyslexic nature, this knowledge might have affected their evaluation of them (Benjamin, 2002). I can only speculate about the adverse effects of such labelling, but it is surely because of the potential stigmatisation that pupils with dyslexic-type literacy difficulties find ways to present themselves as more competent readers than they really are and develop strategies to cope with difficult text that compromise their learning.

I end with the final entry in my fieldnotes, made on the last day of the summer term after I had attended the Y6 Leavers' Assembly at Granville:

> *As I went out through the door I felt that an era was over, but I had the pleasant feeling of a job well done and a readiness to start the next stage of the research process. Driving away, I suddenly realised that every part of this leavers' service had in fact contained literacy events, which shows how vital reading is to our cultural and social practices.*
> (Fieldnotes, 22.7.2005)

I owe it therefore to Amy, Janie, Ernie, Russell, and all pupils with dyslexic-type literacy difficulties to disseminate the findings and implications of this study as widely as possible, in the hope that by raising awareness of their problems with reading at school, the situation is improved for others. In view of my commitment to foregrounding the pupil voice, the last word must go to a participant (Delamont, 2002), and I give that honour to Janie. As I began her feedback interview, she pointed to the written list of pupil-level findings, and said "I think that they'll help a lot of children" (Interview transcript, 18.7.2005).

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATED FORMS

Abbreviated form	Title
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
EBD	Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
FSM	Free school meals
ICT	Information and communications technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IWB	Interactive whiteboard
KS2	Key Stage 2 of National Curriculum (pupils aged 7-11)
LD	Learning Disabled
LEA	Local Education Authority
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NC	National Curriculum
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
RE	Religious Education
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SNSS	Special Needs Support Service
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
UKLA	United Kingdom Literacy Association
Y5	National Curriculum Year 5 (Pupils aged 9-10)
Y6	National Curriculum Year 6 (Pupils aged 10-11)

APPENDIX 1

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FOR GOVERNORS AND STAFF

ROSEMARY ANDERSON

PROPOSED Ph.D. RESEARCH STUDY AT ****

Biographical details

I originally taught at a first school in **** during the mid 1970s, and it was then that I first began to be particularly interested in the process of learning to read. My husband and I moved to **** in 1980, and we have lived in ***** ever since. I took a long career break in order to be at home with my three children, and returned to part-time teaching in 1991 at a local primary school where **** was in charge of Special Needs. After several years as a class teacher I decided that I wanted to work more intensively with pupils experiencing literacy difficulties and so I trained to be a dyslexia specialist tutor, and gained the Homsby Diploma in SpLD in 1997. This qualification enabled me to take up my present part time position at an independent school, where I teach pupils age 5 to 13 on a "one-to-one" basis.

Background to the study

In 1999 I began the M.Ed. in Literacy at Sheffield University, and successfully graduated in 2001. As part of that degree I wrote a dissertation entitled "Sometimes you can and sometimes you can't : coping with the demands of classroom reading as a dyslexic pupil in the middle years of schooling". This was a case study of three of my own pupils, aged 10,11 and 13, which mainly used interviews with them to discover how dyslexics cope with reading at school once they have reached the age when it is expected that most children will have achieved reasonable fluency. Despite the enormous amount of academic research into dyslexia within the field of psychology, very little work has been done on these lines where the experiences and feelings of the pupils themselves are the focus of attention. Therefore I felt that it was important to explore this area further by continuing my research, and in September 2002 I registered as a part-time M.Phil/PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Sheffield.

The proposed research

I was concerned that the next stage of my research should be within the State school sector where over 90% of pupils are educated, and so I approached **** as I knew she has always been interested in the area of literacy difficulties. I was very pleased when she agreed that the study could be carried out at ****, subject to the approval of the Governing Body, and I was delighted to discover on my preliminary visit that she and the staff I met were very positive about the idea of having an academic researcher in their school.

The proposed study will be a longitudinal case study of a small group of boys and girls who have been identified by the school as having difficulties specific to literacy. I intend to follow them for two years as they progress through the Upper Juniors and prepare for transition to secondary school. During the summer term 2003 parents will be contacted and advice will be sought from the school staff as to what information should be given to them. Voluntary informed consent will be then be sought from the pupils (who are in Year 4 at present), and this will include making them aware of their right to withdraw at any stage, and undertaking on my part to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. The issue of why they have been chosen will be handled sensitively, as although they will be given full information about the process of the research, it is important that in order to preserve their self-worth, that they are not aware they have been identified because they experience difficulties with literacy.

From the Autumn Term 2003, when the pupils enter Year 5, I propose to visit the school for one day each week. Although I hope to carry out informal interviews as I get to know the children, it is my intention to collect information on them as readers mainly via extended observations of them at work in the classroom. I will ensure that my observations are unobtrusive, and that they do not interfere with the daily workings of the class. The time-scale of a project such as this is long, but as analysis takes place I hope to be able to feed back results to the staff. In any publications that might appear once the study is complete, confidentiality of data and anonymity for participants will be guaranteed by deliberately not making the exact location of the school known, and by the use of self-chosen pseudonyms for staff and pupils.

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT LETTERS

PARENT LETTER

Dear ****

I am from Sheffield University and I am carrying out a two-year project to find out how pupils who have extra help with literacy cope with classroom reading when they are in the Upper Juniors. I am interested in this subject as I also work part-time as a literacy support teacher at another school.

I hope to follow a small number of **** pupils as they progress through Years 5 and 6 and prepare to transfer to Secondary School. Mrs **** has suggested that ***** might like to take part. The project will involve me watching a few days of the children's lessons each Half Term and talking to them about reading. Sometime after the pupils have left the school a book will be written, but neither the children, the school, or **** will be identified as different names will be used.

If you are happy for your child to take part in the project I would be grateful if you could sign the permission slip below and return it to the school office by Wednesday 22nd October. If you would like to speak to me so that I can answer any questions you might have, then please contact the school office.

Thanking you for your help,

Mrs R. Anderson

.....

I give my permission for _____(name of child) to take part in Mrs Anderson's project

Signed _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Date _____

PUPIL LETTER

***** Primary School

I am happy to help with Mrs Anderson's project about classroom reading in the Upper Juniors.

I understand that I can change my mind later if I want to.

I understand that Mrs Anderson will watch a few days of my lessons each Half Term.

I understand that Mrs Anderson will sometimes talk to me about reading.

Signed _____(pupil)

I have talked to _____about the project.

Signed _____(Mrs Anderson)

Date _____

APPENDIX 3

FIELDNOTE CONVENTIONS AND EXTRACT

CONVENTIONS

Regular font: Narrative notes
Bold regular font: Text on boards or screens
Italic font : Analytic comments
Italic underlined font: Methodological comments
Brackets with initials and numbers: Indexed photocopies of texts

EXTRACT FROM Y6 FIELDNOTES

Participant: Russell , Session 7, page 3-4
Date: 15.11.2004

LITERACY GROUP MISS U (STUDENT) CLASS TEACHER AND CA
Before the pupils came in I looked to see what books the other participants now had. E had got *The magic finger* by R Dahl and had passed *How the Grinch stole Christmas* onto his friend Anthony . J had *Old King Cole*, the Seriously Silly Story that she had wanted last week, but which Ashley had still been reading. A now had *Spook spotting*. All 3 were on their 5th books – E told me that the prize for each row is sweets.
The reviews all looked very hastily written – they are obviously being seen as necessary nuisance in the quest for the rewards! I noticed R had not filled his in – at lunch time he said he doesn't know what to do and will have to get someone to do it for him (evidence of learned helplessness again) ***(see tape transcript)***
11.10 am the pupils came in from break and R found his book. He now had *Jeremy Brown of the secret service* by S. Cheshire. (A Walker Book) (RH 7.7) .
At lunch time I asked him how he had chosen it – he said that Bob (who sits next to him) - had said it was good (***see tape transcript)*** *. Both A and J completed books today and came and chose together – discussing what they should read next. This initiative seems to be promoting a community of practice of readers who recommend titles to each other.*
11.12 am The children were told to settle down and read, but R continued to chat to Bob next to him, although he did briefly attend to his book. Despite only getting the book last Thursday, his bookmark was placed well into the book.
I checked the first paragraph of the book for its level (RH 7.7) and it came out at 5.7 – appropriate for a Y6 pupil functioning at the expected literacy level, but certainly at frustration level for R.- it is therefore not surprising that he pretends to read, and skips hard parts. ***(see tape transcript)***
After 2 minutes Mrs Walker (CA) collected R for the spelling group.
It is proving almost impossible to get a SO for R's silent reading as he always goes out. Sod's law operated last Thursday – he was there for the whole session as the CA was off – but it was E's day.

My impression (seeing him briefly in literacy and after lunch in class) is that he either chats, looks around or gives the impression he is reading when really he is just looking at the page.

SPELLING GROUP MRS WALKER (CA)
11.15 AM R , Ashley and a Y5 boy went through to the dining area. Their spelling books were given out and 10 HF words were dictated with a sentence to give context eg are - we <u>are</u> doing our spellings (RH 7.8). R got 9 out of 10 correct (see tape transcript) Then the pupils were told to close their eyes and listen to a sentence of 8 words which they then wrote as the CA dictated it repeatedly. The CA looked at their work and reminded R that he should start a sentence with a capital letter – he changed what he had put. The pupils were then told it was time to go back to their literacy groups.

LITERACY GROUP (CONT.)
11.25 am the rest of the pupils had been divided into 3 groups and were in the process of getting organized to do comprehension exercises. On the interactive whiteboard were word processed instructions as to which book and page each group should be using:
Group 1 Letts page6 page40
Group 2 Book 2 page 32
Group 3 book1 page 2
Most children were at their desks but R's group (the bottom one) which included A and J too were sitting on the carpet and the class teacher was talking to them (see tape transcript). E was in the next group and was already at his place.
R had therefore missed the start of these instructions – I felt a bit confused for the rest of the session as I had missed the vital rationale – so he must have done too – it is hardly surprising that SpLD pupils are often categorized as disorganized and vague – withdrawal sessions may be partly to blame – I am sure this has been a problem for my teaching pupils but I do not know what the solution is.
The class teacher explained that they were to work through the Comprehension book at their own pace – when they started a new passage they should start a new page in the orange exercise books that had just been given out. She explained that for that group there was a bit less reading than for the others, but that the thinking level was the same.
I don't think that is strictly true but I'm sure she said this to preserve their self-esteem.

(Lesson continues)

APPENDIX 4

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION SCHEDULES

INDIVIDUAL LITERACY TASK

Pupil name: Session: Date:
Lesson: Start time: Finish time:
Activity type:
Text type:
Reading type:
Writing type:
Task details:

100 CODINGS AT 10 SECOND INTERVALS

TE on task – engaged (apparent) on own
TP on task –interacting with pupil/s
TT on task –interacting with teacher
TA on task – interacting with adult

DO distracted – on own
DP distracted – interacting with pupil/s
DT distracted – interacting with teacher
DA distracted – interacting with adult

MT management task
WH waiting for help or to show work
MR moving around room
OR out of room

SILENT READING

Pupil name: Session: Date:

Lesson: Start time: Finish time:

Book:

50 CODINGS AT 10 SECOND INTERVALS

ADDITIONAL 50 CODINGS

RS reading silently (apparent)
RT reading to teacher
RA reading to adult
FP flicking through pages of book

DO distracted - on own
DP distracted – interacting with pupils/s
DA distracted – interacting with adult
IA interacting with adult about reading

MT management task
WH waiting for help
MR moving around room
OR out of room

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS AND EXTRACT

CONVENTIONS

These conventions have been adapted from those in Gruae and Walsh (1998)

Regular font: Normal speech
Bold font: Emphasised speech either by tone or volume
Italic font: Researcher commentary
Ellipses: Omitted material
Brackets: Contextual information
Repeated question marks: Indecipherable sounds

EXTRACT FROM Y6 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Participant: Russell, Session 7, p.13
(Refers to part of the lesson described in fieldnote extract provided in Appendix 3)
Date: 17.11.2004

LITERACY – SILENT READING (RH 7.7)

RA: ....Then we went into literacy and you just started reading your silent reading book.
R: Yesss.
RA: When you went out – and I think we've talked about that before about going out to Mrs Walker, haven't we ?
R: Ah –hah.
RA: You must have only just started that book have you? (RA indicates *Jeremy Brown of the Secret service*)
R: Yeah – only just started that one.
RA: Cos it was Thursday when you said you were bored with the *Bungee Hero* wasn't it?
R: Yes.
RA: What was boring about that? – was it the story or was it the way it was written?
R: It were just – how it were written.
RA: Was it?
R: Words.
RA: Cos I don't read it – I've seen it.
R: They don't use good words like "explosives" or somat like that – and all they were talking about was footie. (*the book does start with a discussion of football)*
RA: Right yes.
R: How you play it. (Russell giggles)
RA: Right so the story just didn't.

R: So it had like the wrong person.
RA: It didn't claim your attention?
R: No.
RA: So you thought you'd change? how did you choose your new one then?
R: Er Bob – he was sat next to me.
RA: Right yes.
R: He says " oh pick that old one what I were reading and its really really good" **- and it is!**
RA: Do you know I'm finding that – I was saying this to somebody last week – it's turned into a book club because you're all recommending books to each other aren't you?
R: Yeah.
RA: That's brilliant - is that good?
R: Yeah – it's good.
RA: Do you think having these books in the room and having the literacy challenge sheets is that a good idea do you think?
R: Er. (pause)
RA: Cos I know you're not there usually for.
R: I can't understand that book record thing.
RA: Can't you? No I noticed you hadn't actually.
R: So I just leave it and the teachers do it for me.
R: Right – I noticed you hadn't filled it in. (Russell giggles)
(Interview continues)

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

During in the lunchtime interviews as the main fieldwork year progressed, in addition to discussing reading encountered during the morning, I decided to investigate reader identity and other issues of concern to all the participants more systematically. The following list should not be regarded as a semi-structured interview schedule (Cohen et al., 2000) of the kind used as the principal data collection method in Anderson (2001), but is rather a compilation of guiding questions which were asked in no particular order, but inserted into conversations as and when it seemed appropriate.

AUTUMN TERM OF Y6

1. Do you like reading?
2. How do you choose a book during silent reading in literacy?
3. Do you prefer silent reading or guided reading in literacy?

SPRING TERM OF Y6

1. What makes someone a good reader?
2. If a supply teacher asked you what sort of a reader you are, how would you describe yourself?
3. What makes you say a book is a "good book?"
4. Do you like a story book to have pictures?
5. What makes someone a good pupil?
6. What makes someone a good teacher/helper?
7. Do you find the work you do in withdrawal groups helpful?
8. Is it difficult when you come back into class in the middle of a lesson?

SUMMER TERM OF Y6

1. (Before SATs) How do you feel about the SATs? Why?
2. (After SATs) How do you feel about the SATs now thy are over?
3. How did you feel about your SATs results?
4. How do you feel about going to your new school?
5. If the teachers at your new school ask you what sort of a reader you are, what will you tell them?
6. What do you think your reading will be like when you grow up?
7. Can you remember anything about learning to read?
8. What is the best way for someone to improve if they want to be a better reader?
9. How are you getting on with the Book Fayre book that I gave you?

APPENDIX 7

AMY – READER STATISTICS

NB – THE READING SPEED AND ERROR RATE HAVE BEEN COMPUTED FOR THE PASSAGES READ TO ME DURING LUNCHTIME INTERVIEWS

SESSION DATE	TITLE / AUTHOR OF CURRENT READING BOOK	FACT/ FICTION	SPEED wpm	ERROR RATE %
13.9.04	*Farm boy* M. Morpurgo	fiction	36	17.5
7.10.04	*Treasure trove* D. King Smith	fiction	39	16
2.11.04	*The Rex files- The life snatcher* S. Rayner	fiction	30	15
17.11.04	*The invisible dog* D. King Smith	fiction	39	20
10.01.05	*Space baby* H. Brandford	fiction	39	24
28.1.05	*It was a dark and stormy night* A. Alhberg	fiction	40	23
3.3.05	*Kitty and friends - Why not?* B. Mooney	fiction	60	9
19.4.05	*Bungee hero* J. Bertanga (Barrington Stoke)	fiction	49	13
6.5.05	*So little time – The love factor* Mary Kate and Ashley series	fiction	34	27
16.6.05	*The worst witch* J. Murphy	fiction	43	20
27.6.05	*The magic finger* R. Dahl	fiction	62	11
	Average for all passages read		42	17.5

APPENDIX 8

JANIE - READER STATISTICS

NB – THE READING SPEED AND ERROR RATE HAVE BEEN COMPUTED FOR THE PASSAGES READ TO ME DURING LUNCHTIME INTERVIEWS

In the table below, where "NO BOOK CHOICE GIVEN" is stated, this is because Janie told me during her lunchtime interview that she did not have a current reading book. Where "No data" is stated, this is because she provided a title, but declined to read a passage from the book

SESSION DATE	TITLE / AUTHOR OF CURRENT READING BOOK	FACT/ FICTION	SPEED wpm	ERROR RATE %
23.9.04	*Lizzie and Charlie go shopping* D.Sheldon	fiction	38	20
12.10.04	*The BFG* R. Dahl	fiction	No data	No data
8.11.04	*The fried piper of Hamstring* L Anholt and A Robins	fiction	49	15
26.11.04	*Magic dad* A. Prince	fiction	56	10
20.1.05	*Tod in Biker City* A. Masters (Barrington Stoke)	fiction	No data	No data
7.2.05	NO BOOK CHOICE GIVEN			
8.3.05	*Morris and the cat flap* V. French	fiction	41	18
18.3.05	*The invisible dog* D.King Smith	fiction	No data	No data
27.4.05	NO BOOK CHOICE GIVEN			
8.6.05	*Fame School – Reach for the stars* C. Jeffries	fiction	44	16
23.6.05	NO BOOK CHOICE GIVEN			
	Average for all passages read		46	16

APPENDIX 9

ERNIE - READER STATISTICS

NB – THE READING SPEED AND ERROR RATE HAVE BEEN COMPUTED FOR THE PASSAGES READ TO ME DURING LUNCHTIME INTERVIEWS

SESSION DATE	TITLE / AUTHOR OF CURRENT READING BOOK	FACT/ FICTION	SPEED wpm	ERROR RATE %
20.9.04	*Incredible Incas* Horrible histories	fact	50	16
1.10.04	*Incredible Incas* Horrible histories	fact	58	9
18.10.04	*Titus rules OK* D. King Smith	fiction	58	10
11.11.04	*How the Grinch stole Christmas* Dr Seuss	fiction (poem)	69	4
1.12.04	*Billy beast* L. Anholt and A. Robbins	fiction	84	6
25.1.05	*Eric and the striped horror* B. Mitchelhill	fiction	70	5
4.2.05	*Harry Potter and the goblet of fire* A. K. Rowling	fiction	62	5
10.3.05	*Harry Potter and the goblet of fire* A. K. Rowling	fiction	76	6
26.4.05	*Yummy scrummy - Treetops all stars* Oxford Reading Tree	fiction	96	0
23.5.05	*Dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals* Kingfisher	fact	70	4
20.6.05	*Kensuke's kingdom* M. Morpurgo	fiction	83	4
	Average for all passages read		71	6

APPENDIX 10

RUSSELL - READER STATISTICS

NB – THE READING SPEED AND ERROR RATE HAVE BEEN COMPUTED FOR THE PASSAGES READ TO ME DURING LUNCHTIME INTERVIEWS

SESSION DATE	TITLE / AUTHOR OF CURRENT READING BOOK	FACT/ FICTION	SPEED wpm	ERROR RATE %
28.9.04	*The know how book of action toys* Usbourne	fact	50	14
5.11.04	*Tod in Biker City* A. Masters (Barrington Stoke)	fiction	46	17
15.11.04	*The guard dog* D. King Smith	fiction	37	27
24.11.04	*Jeremy Brown of the Secret Service* S. Cheshire	fiction	35	32
14.1.05	*Horrid Henry's stinkbomb* F. Simon	fiction	36	23
1.2.05	*Dreammaster – Nightmare* T. Breslin	fiction	35	38
28.2.05	*The traveller* In *Just what I always Wanted* T. Breslin	fiction	47	30
16.3.05	*Rockets and spaceships- 20th century inventions* Wayland	fact	No data	No data
21.4.05	*Morris and the cat flap* V. French	fiction	75	0
26.5.05	*The science of searching for life in space* Ticktock Ltd	fact	59	17
6.6.05	*Fire and ice – Blood feud* J.Andrews	fiction	38	30
	Average for all passages read		46	23

APPENDIX 11

PUPIL LEVEL FINDINGS

1. Children have to do a lot of reading at school every day - they read books, worksheets, internet websites, and whiteboards.
2. Sometimes pupils think the reading they have to do is boring - this may be because it is too easy or too hard.
3. There is a lot of reading in the SATs tests and it is hard because it has to be done in a set time.
4. Pupils sometimes help each other with hard reading or ask an adult to tell them words.
5. Reading on the computer is sometimes complicated because:
    a. website addresses are very hard to type in exactly right.
    b. websites are confusing when there are hyperlinks to different pages.
    c. There is so much reading on websites that it is impossible to read it all.
6. Some special subject words are hard to read (especially in science), but even if they can't say them the pupils often know what the words mean.
7. Sometimes pupils cannot find a good interesting book to read during silent reading that is at the right reading level for them.
8. Pupils really like story books to have pictures as these help them to understand the words.
9. Sometimes pupils are not given enough time (especially in guided reading groups) to read through something before the teacher starts to ask questions about it.
10. Pupils really like the interactive whiteboard because the words are much clearer to see than on ordinary boards.
11. Sometimes pupils don't notice writing on displays, especially if it is very high up on the wall.
12. Sometimes when pupils have to copy writing from the board or a book they do not know what it says.
13. Sometimes pupils find it hard to read teachers' writing when they put comments in their exercise books or write something for them.
14. It is useful if teachers read out instructions on worksheets or go through passages of reading, but they need to say exactly where they are on the page so the pupils can follow.

APPENDIX 12

FEEDBACK LETTERS

PARENTAL FEEDBACK LETTER

Summer 2005

Dear

Thank you for allowing to take part in my project on classroom reading in the Upper Juniors.

The four participating pupils have helped me to collect a wealth of interesting information that would have been impossible to obtain without their input. This will now be used to write reports and give talks to teachers so that they can help pupils who need extra support with reading to learn more effectively at this stage in their schooling. Please be re-assured that the identities of the pupils, staff, school and its location will remain completely anonymous.

I have talked to the pupils about what I have found out, and written the results down for them in a simple format.**** has asked me to include this information with this letter, and you will find it overleaf. Please contact me via the school office if you would like any further information.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my visits to **** school during the two years of the project. The four pupils have all been a pleasure to work with as they have been so polite, friendly and co-operative. They have always been happy to oblige when it has been their turn for me to shadow them during the school day, and then more than willing to give up their free time after lunch to discuss the reading they have encountered during lessons.

Thank you again for your support.

Best Wishes to you and your family,

PUPIL FEEDBACK LETTER

July 2005

To

Thank you for helping with my project on classroom reading in the Upper Juniors. You have helped me to find out lots of interesting things. On the other side of this sheet I have written a list of some of them.

Next year I shall start to write about what I have found out so that teachers can help pupils to learn better at school.

I have really enjoyed being with you all at **** school. I hope you have a good time at your new school in September.
Good Luck for the future,

APPENDIX 13

SPOOF SELF-HELP BOOKLET

A KS2 DYSLEXIC STUDENT'S GUIDE TO (APPARENTLY) COPING WITH THE DEMANDS OF CLASSROOM READING

ROSEMARY ANDERSON

All the coping strategies described in this booklet have been observed in the classroom or divulged by pupils in discussions during ethnographic fieldwork.

READING DURING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE

TO ENSURE YOU DO AS LITTLE READING AS POSSIBLE YOURSELF

GENERAL HELPFUL HINTS

1. Ignore all writing on classroom noticeboards and displays - it will probably be too high up to see.
2. Ignore written instructions on whiteboards - the teacher will probably not be able to resist also giving these verbally sooner or later.
3. The teacher will usually read out worksheet instructions before you are asked to complete a task, but make sure you memorise them as you are unlikely to have been given copies at this point in the lesson.
4. Once you get the sheets, don't waste time reading the instructions - rely on your memory. If the teacher has not explained what to do - simply guess the nature of the task rather than read through any guidance, and with luck your prior experience with similar activities will stand you in good stead.
5. If the teacher reads out a passage that she expects the class to follow, and then explains part of it before returning to the text further on, expect to become totally lost, and just listen to the rest.
6. Always try to get other people in the room to do essential reading for you during individual tasks - but be discreet.
7. However the best strategy of all is to cultivate a friend who has better reading skills than your own and make sure you sit next to them. They will usually be

only too pleased to read things out to you as it will confirm in their minds that they are intellectually superior with a consequent boost to their self-esteem. With luck the teacher will think you are discussing the task in hand rather than being peer tutored, and you will never be found out.

8. If all else fails and it is impossible to avoid negotiating difficult reading make sure that everyone realizes that your poor task response has occurred because you found the work utterly boring.

SPECIFIC HINTS FOR PARTICULAR SITUATIONS

9. Do not bother to try to read teacher comments on your work other than "well done" or "excellent" as it is highly likely that the handwriting will be difficult to decipher, and therefore your effort will not be rewarded with success.
10. In tasks where copy writing is involved, make sure your handwriting and visual presentation are superb - the teacher will be so impressed that they will be unlikely to realize you cannot read any if it.
11. Try to avoid allowing a "helper" to scribe for you if you are likely to need to read the work out later - you will be able to read your own writing with its idiosyncratic spelling much more easily.
12. Avoid putting yourself in a situation where you have to read out key subject terms eg in science, as you are unlikely to be able to read them fluently - however try to show verbally that you understand their meanings so as not to appear stupid.

SPECIAL ADVICE FOR ICT LESSONS

OBJECTIVE

TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU ARE A COMPETENT ICT USER

HELPFUL HINTS

1. Always work with a partner - in most schools this will not be a problem as there are unlikely to be enough computers even for one between two. Negotiate tasks with the partner at the start to show that you are a competent ICT user, but make sure they do the tasks which contain the bulk of the reading. As the lesson progresses, if you are lucky you might be able to manipulate the situation so they in fact do virtually all the work while you sit at their side and have a rest.
2. To avoid frustration for all parties it is particularly important that you make sure you are never the one to input complex web addresses as you are unlikely to achieve the absolute accuracy that is vital for success.
3. If you have to do some reading, only attempt the first sentence on any web page - then make the inevitable multimodality work to your advantage and invent what you think it says on the rest of the page.
4. If you and your partner are asked to read a passage of text silently together, take control of the mouse and move to the next screen when he/she indicates they are ready even if you are nowhere near the end of the page.

SILENT READING SESSIONS

OBJECTIVE

TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU ARE A FULL MEMBER OF THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY OF READERS

HELPFUL HINTS

1. During the session try to avoid reading at all - the teacher will be busy and may not notice if you whisper or engage in other non-verbal interaction with friends.
2. Keep a selection of unofficial reading material in your tray - you might even get away with looking at a comic on some occasions.
3. If it is impossible to avoid engaging with a "proper" book - choose non-fiction (Dorling Kindersley books are particularly suitable) and spend the time looking at the pictures and diagrams rather than reading.
4. If the teacher insists on fiction try these strategies:

a. choose a poetry book - there are less words per page.
or
b. bring a book from home that you have read before.

5. If all the other strategies fail and you have to read an unfamiliar book, then always choose one that looks similar to those the rest of the class is reading. If you take the easy way out and choose a book aimed at younger readers but that is at the right level for you, be warned that you will arouse suspicion that you are a less than competent reader.
6. To give the impression that you are actually reading the book, the following technique has been found to be very successful - begin at the start of the book and look intently at the first page. Then after a suitable

interval turn to the next page and repeat the procedure until the session ends. Put your bookmark in the book at the appropriate place and begin there next time - repeat this until the end of the book is reached. Choosing a suitable interval of time before changing the book is tricky - if in doubt 5 days will usually fool the teacher and with any luck you will never have to talk about what you have "read".

7. A particularly difficult situation to deal with is if you are asked to write a book review about what you have read. In view of this ever present threat, it is probably safest to make sure you always choose a book with plenty of illustrations as these will help you to invent the storyline. They will be particularly useful if you have to nominate parts of the book you liked and disliked - simply describe the action shown in 2 different pictures.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT READING AT HOME

Your teachers are highly likely to advise you to practise your reading at home with someone on a regular basis, and some children are lucky enough to have supportive parents with time to spare for this. If you are less fortunate, but have a conformist dutiful nature that means you like to please adults at school, always say you do read at home if asked and if possible say how often and for how long as this will add credibility to your story. This strategy, however, is tricky if the school requires you to fill in a reading diary. Although you may find these are rarely checked, in case they are, it is probably a good idea to write in entries yourself. Make sure you put comments about the reading in a style that gives the impression they have been written by an adult.

GUIDED READING SESSIONS

OBJECTIVE

TO GIVE THE TEACHER AND THE REST OF THE GROUP THE IMPRESSION YOU ARE A MORE COMPETENT READER THAN YOU REALLY ARE

HELPFUL HINTS

1. If it is likely that pupils will be asked to read out in turn, choose where to sit with care so you are unlikely to be the first to be asked. Follow the text carefully as others read and try to memorise difficult words - real names for example are often repeated in a story passage.
2. It may sometimes be possible to work out which part of the text you will be asked to read and if this is so you may be able to rehearse the passage silently to yourself as others read.
3. If the group is asked to read a passage silently prior to discussing it - do your best, but accept that your pace will be slower than most. When the teacher asks if everyone has finished, do not let on if you haven't. However be warned that this strategy will mean that you have to be quiet during the ensuing group discussion to avoid appearing not to have understood the text.
4. If you are told to read a passage silently and the teacher tells the group to ask about any words they do not understand, never do this as it has the potential to be very embarrassing as it is likely you not be able to read the word fluently if you are unsure of its meaning.

APPENDIX 14

TEACHING TIPS TO AID INCLUSION OF DYSLEXIC PUPILS

- Assume that pupils will not read written text unless you specifically draw their attention to it - this is particularly so for instructions.
- Similarly be aware that environmental print on displays and whiteboards may well go unnoticed, particularly if it is placed high up on the wall.
- When reading from worksheets prior to asking pupils to complete a task - always give out individual copies beforehand, so that pupils can follow.
- If a passage of text is read out to pupils which they are expected to follow, and intermittent explanations or elaborations are given - signal very clearly the place in the text where the reading is resumed.
- If a pupil has a poor task outcome or cannot read key subject vocabulary, do not assume the difficulty has been caused by a lack of conceptual understanding - confusion may be due to poor decoding skills for the words involved.
- Conversely be aware that children may not have coped with the reading demands of a task even if they produce an acceptable outcome, particularly when copying is involved - they may have viewed the task simply as an alphabetic symbol reproduction exercise.
- Be aware that the pupils' pace of reading will be slower than most, and that this, rather than decoding difficulty, may marginalize them during class or group based tasks such as guided reading.
- Be aware that pupils may find it hard to read the teachers' handwritten comments in exercise books.
- Be aware that pupils may be able to read back their own mis-spelt poorly handwritten texts better than correct versions scribed by adults.
- Try to ensure that pupils take an active role in ICT activities with a partner, but be aware of the support they will need due to the complexity of electronic multimodal reading demands.
- Try to ensure that there are suitable age appropriate books with controlled reading levels ("high -low" type texts) for dyslexic pupils to choose for personal reading times.
- Try to use Interactive Whiteboards whenever possible as pupils find it easier to read from them, This is because the writing is clearer than on conventional boards where there may be a lot of light reflection.
- Remember that it is likely that the pupils have low self-esteem as readers, and that this may result in unhelpful motivational orientations in the classroom such as learned helplessness and self-worth protection.
- Most important of all, be aware that in order to bolster their self-image, by this age the pupils will have become experts in impression management techniques, and that the range of coping strategies they have devised may mask the real extent of their difficulties with classroom reading.