Improving Early Childhood Teachers’ Skills in the Teaching of Narrative Discourse Skills

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Abstract

Speech pathology Australia (2013) reported that 20% of four-year-old children were having difficulties using or understanding oral language. The 2018 Australian Early Development Censuses (Department of Education & Training) showed little improvement with more than 15% of children found to be either at-risk or developmentally vulnerable in the Language and Cognitive Domain. Previous research has shown that children with lower levels of receptive and expressive language have difficulty with reading and writing (Bayetto, 2015; Hill 2006) or behaviourally (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2009). For this situation to improve, oral language skills need to be taught effectively in preschools. In order to do this Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) need specific knowledge, understanding and skills, which are developed through professional learning programs.

This research explored the effects of a site-based professional learning program on ECTs’ understanding and teaching of one area of oral language, narrative discourse. In 2018, five ECTs took part in a three-month program, which used video-stimulated recall to support collaborative reflection on their practices. Prior to the implementation of the professional learning, children from the preschools\(^1\) took part in narrative discourse assessments to establish their level of skills and inform the ECTs’ planning and practice. The ECTs also took part in interviews before and after the implementation of the program, providing evidence of their own learning.

A design-based research model was employed, and analysis was carried out using Practice Architectures. These frameworks have rarely been used in Early Childhood Education and therefore

\(^1\) Children are able to attend preschools in Victoria, Australia, usually for one school year between late January and December, providing that they have their fourth birthday during that year or before the following May e.g. to attend preschool in 2020 children must have their fourth birthday on or before 30\(^{th}\) April 2021. (There are also opportunities for children to attend three-year-old kindergarten in the year prior to attending preschool).
constitute a valuable contribution to existing knowledge of research practices. Similarly, this research supplements understandings of the ways in which ECTs can increase their knowledge and understanding in the teaching of narrative discourse through Video Stimulated Recall (VSR) and collaborative reflection.

The findings of the research, as analysed through the Practice Architectures of sayings, doings and relating, demonstrated the increase in ECTs’ understanding of narrative discourse teaching and its relationship to oral language development more generally. The ways in which the professional learning positively impacted on teachers’ practice were revealed, including: the ways in which they constructed knowledge, how they related to one another, and the importance of trust, supportive environments, intentionality and communication through common professional languages. ECTs were reflecting more deeply on their practice, making changes to their teaching and providing opportunities for children to practise their narrative discourse skills. Additionally, the challenges that ECTs faced in implementing narrative discourse activities were revealed, including issues of isolation, time, staffing, curriculum demands, finance and space.

This small-scale research project demonstrated how collaborative, site-based professional learning positively impacted on ECTs’ teaching practice. The findings could be further validated by continuing the project on a larger scale, extending the duration of the professional learning, and increasing the number of participants.

**Key words:** Early Childhood Teachers, professional learning, oral language, narrative discourse, practice architectures, design-based research.
Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I acknowledge that Rosemary Viete proofread the thesis in its final draft, providing grammatical and semantic feedback, but preserving my meaning, style, organisation and voice. Ben Hourigan formatted the thesis to improve its visual appearance and consistency.

Signature:

Print Name: Rachael Claire Richardson

Date: 17th March 2020
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I would like to recognise the teachers who took part in the professional learning program who openly reflected on the success and problems they encountered as they introduced new narrative discourse activities to their children. My thanks also go to the children who took part, their parents, the kinder management group that supported this project and the Department of Education and Training for their approval.

My family, friends and colleagues have shown great understanding of the time and energy required to complete a PhD and have cheered me as I completed each step. My husband, Jim, particularly has ‘gone above and beyond’ so that I could complete my thesis.

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEDC</td>
<td>Australian Early Development Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>Classroom Assessment and Scoring System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBR</td>
<td>Design Based Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Victorian)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEs</td>
<td>Early Childhood Educators (less than degree level qualified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTs</td>
<td>Early Childhood Teachers (qualified to degree level or above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENNI</td>
<td>Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument</td>
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<td>ENNI PS</td>
<td>ENNI Practice Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>EYLF</td>
<td>Early Years Learning Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMG</td>
<td>Kindergarten Management Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLTP</td>
<td>North Liverpool Teaching Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>School Entry Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Shared Practice Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>SST</td>
<td>Sustained Shared Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSR</td>
<td>Video Stimulated Recall</td>
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1. Orientation of the Research Project

Overview

This chapter introduces the problem that first motivated the present research project, namely the issue of high numbers of children entering school with lower than expected skill levels in oral language. It then suggests that the most effective method of addressing this problem would be to improve early childhood teachers’ (ECTs) knowledge and skills in the teaching of oral language. By targeting the ECTs through the implementation of a professional learning program, not only would the current cohort of children benefit but also those in subsequent years. This contextualising statement is followed by the research topic statement which provides a synopsis of the research process, highlights the overarching aims and introduces the research questions. An overview of the thesis as a whole is next, along with a broad picture of external, influencing factors (e.g. language development processes and perceptions about education and schooling). Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Contextualising Statement

Large numbers of preschool children with reduced oral language skills are a cause of concern, not just in Australia, but at an international level. Countries where the dominant language is English—the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia—have all reported high numbers of children entering school with oral language skills below the expected levels. In the UK, 20% of children start primary school without the language skills they need to succeed (Save the Children, 2015). In the USA, Reading is Fundamental (2019) reported that 34% of children entering school

---

2 The Republic of Ireland has a bilingual approach to teaching and learning, Irish and English. They reported 6% of children had difficulties with language (Rafferty, 2014), but with SES children being at much higher risk (Cregan, 2010; Shiel, Cregan, McGough & Archer, 2012).
lacked the necessary oral language skills to learn how to read. In Canada, 25% of children were
deemed not properly equipped to learn (Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network,
2009). In New Zealand 25% of children have significant language delays (Education Gazette
Editors, 2019). This situation is reflected here in Australia with more than 15% of children being
at risk or developmentally vulnerable in the Language and Cognitive Domain of the Australian
Early Development Census (AEDC) levels which have improved by less than one percent since
2012 (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2018). This evidence is corroborated by
Speech Pathology Australia (2013) who stated that 20% of four year-olds have difficulties
understanding or using language³.

Children from low socio-economic status (SES) or Indigenous backgrounds and homes where
English is spoken as an additional language have been found to be at the greatest risk of language
delay in all these English-speaking countries (Ball, 2007, 2009; Canadian Language and Literacy
Research Network, 2009; OFSTED, 2014; Reading is Fundamental, 2019; van Hees, 2011a,
2011b). In Australia, the differences in oral language skills between children from socially
advantaged backgrounds and those from low SES backgrounds is marked. Hay and Fielding-
Barnsley, (2009) reported that 31% of children in low SES schools (in Queensland) were below the
expressive language benchmark at five years and six months as compared with 18% of those in mid
SES schools and 0% in high SES schools. This situation has changed little in the past ten years with
the AEDC (2018) revealing that children from the most socially disadvantaged areas are more than
three times as likely to be developmentally vulnerable as those in the least disadvantaged areas, in
the Communication and General Knowledge Domain.

Low levels of oral language skills are cause for concern for a number of reasons. Children with less
well-developed oracy skills have been found to have problems with: early literacy skills⁴ (Bayetto,

³ Speech Pathology Australia based these figures on the findings of ELVS (Early Language Victoria Study)
that began in 2002 and looked at children’s language development at 8, 12, 24 and 48 months. Various factors
were found to adversely influence language development including low SES. English only protocols were
used, and it should be noted that children whose parents could not speak or understand the English language
were excluded from the project. It was found that children from non-English speaking backgrounds had
stronger receptive language than expressive language skills (Reilly, et al., 2009).
2015; Dickinson, McCabe & Essex 2006; Dockrell, Stuart & King, 2010; Hill & Launder, 2010; reading and reading comprehension (Bayetto, 2015; Dickinson, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Hill, 2006; Shanahan & Lonigan, 2012; Speech Pathology Australia, 2013); writing (Bayetto, 2015; Hill, 2006; Purankin & Lonigan, 2012); classroom behaviour (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2009). Moreover, they have a tendency to develop long-term anti-social behaviour (Snow & Powell, 2005, 2008), and may be poorly prepared for school entry (Hill, 2011; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005).

If these academic and social problems are to be mitigated, particularly for children from low SES, Indigenous or English as an Additional Language backgrounds, early childhood teachers need to be provided with ways to enhance their teaching of oral language skills, through participating in programs such as, Language Environment Enrichment Program (LEEP), Heads Up Reading, Every Toddler Talks, Fostering Effective Early Learning study (FEEL). However, general oral language teaching would be too wide an area for this small-scale study, which takes place over a limited period of time. Therefore, it was decided that one component – narrative discourse teaching would be focused upon. This focus was chosen because of the well-recognised relationship between narrative discourse skills and literacy development (Gillam & Gillam, 2016; McCabe, Bliss, Barra & Bennett, 2008; McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994; van Kleek, Lange & Schwarz, 2011; Wellman et al., 2011).

1.2 Research Topic Statement

This designed-based research (DBR) project explored the ways in which ECTs’ knowledge, understanding and teaching of narrative discourse skills could be enhanced through the implementation of a ten-week professional learning program. The program itself involved collaborative reflections between ECTs about their professional practices in their own preschool contexts. ECTs met on a fortnightly basis for shared practice sessions (SPSs) where they viewed and reflected upon video clips of their own and each other’s practice through a process of video-stimulated recall (VSR). Before each SPS the participating preschools were visited so that the ECTs’ narrative discourse teaching strategies could be filmed. The film clips were then e-mailed to the ECTs so that they could review them, choose which clips would be viewed, prepare contextual information and consider any questions they might like to discuss about their practices or the children’s learning development. ECTs were introduced to two specialised professional languages, or discourses, which provided them with a common vocabulary for discussing language teaching approaches—language modelling (Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2008, 2009)—and story
grammar, which pertained to elements of a story (e.g. characters, setting, problem). By instigating these approaches prior to the SPSs, ECTs’ collaborative reflections were enabled.

The participating ECTs were based in preschools that belonged to the same Kindergarten Management Group. However, they served contrasting socio-economic communities: one, Context S, was based in an area of social and economic advantage; another, Context B, was in a mid-range socio-economic area; and the final preschool, Context M, was based in a socially and economically disadvantaged area. This type of maximum variation sampling increased the value of the findings and improved the probability of effective generalisation to other areas (Patton, 2002).

To fulfil the overarching aim of the research project—to improve ECTs teaching in the area of narrative discourse skills—three guiding research questions needed to be addressed:

- What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?
- How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?
- What were the features of a professional learning program that impacted on teacher practice?

1.3 Thesis Overview

Before engaging with the overarching aim of the research it was necessary to create a broad picture of the knowledge and considerations that underpin the research project as a whole. These fell into two categories:

(i) Knowledge and understandings of how children’s oral language evolves from a highly contextualised form to a decontextualised form, which supports literacy development and school achievement at primary levels (Nicolopoulou, McDowell & Brockmeyer, 2006) and is a precursor to academic language at secondary and higher levels of education (Snow & Uccelli, 2009)

(ii) Consideration of the role of schooling, education and praxis and how transformations in these can be made through professional learning and research.
1.3.1 The broad picture.

Oral language evolution.

In the early stages of this research project an interrogation of the evolution of oral language from a contextualised form to a decontextualised form was undertaken from a sociocultural perspective. This perspective highlighted the importance of social interactions, language development as an ongoing, infinite learning process, and the child as an active learner with a desire to function in social settings mediated by a more knowing other (Davison, 2013; Medellin, 2012). The importance of learning in this way was recommended by Te Whāriki (Early Childhood Curriculum Online, n.d.) in New Zealand and also approved by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) in Australia. Viewing the developmental processes involved, from the early stages of joint activity and joint attention (Bruner, 1975) through to shared intentionality (e.g., Tomasello & Hamann, 2012) provided the foundations for understanding later oral language development. As shared intentionality developed, it was found that periods of talk were increased and there were greater opportunities for scaffolding language acquisition. Similarly, as children’s skills increased co-operative communication, collaboration and assisted learning would occur (Tomasello & Carpenter 2007; Tomasello & Hamann, 2012). Further, as children become skilled at communicating in contextualised situations and start to learn through language, they begin to develop decontextualised language skills.

To become competent users of decontextualised language children must be able to produce oral texts with less reliance on contextualised supports (e.g., Raban, 2014). These skills can and should begin to develop before children start formal school. Initially, it has been suggested that parents could model skills, gradually encouraging their children to take more active roles (e.g., Rowe, 2013). On entering preschool, decontextualised language use can be extended in a variety of ways. Narrative discourse activities have been found to be amongst the most effective means of extending children’s decontextualised language skills. This is because they require children to create pictures of their world purely through their words (Nicolopoulou et al., 2006) and to start to make links between old and new events through their own descriptions (Currenton, Jones Craig & Flanigan, 2008). As children develop their ability to recall events, make connections, provide explicit descriptions and convey meaning to others through their narratives, they are creating the foundations for later success in higher order reading skills, such as reading for meaning (Raban, 2014), and inferencing (Lennox, 2013). For this reason, narrative discourse became the focus for the professional learning program that the ECTs participated in during this research.
Before approaching research in an educational setting, it was also necessary to gain greater insight into the meaning of some widely used conceptual terms that had a bearing on the research project. By considering the commonly held beliefs about the roles of education and schooling, the roles of praxis and transformation of practice were illuminated. Schooling and education have often been used as interchangeable terms for what occurs when children attend school. However, when these are investigated more fully, differences become apparent.

When observed from an historical viewpoint schooling can be seen as the narrowest of the terms. The origins of schooling for the mass populace occurred almost simultaneously with the industrial revolutions of the 19th Century (Osborne, 2008). Schooling at that time served as a method of socialisation of the masses and bolstered acceptance of the realities of factory employment. In the modern day the purpose of schooling has often been thought of as the means by which children and young people can gain employment. Similarly, the pressures of accountability from government and the wider community, have led to the curricula being restricted so that learning and achievement may be assessed through standardised testing systems (Bieta, 2015; Osborne, 2008). Although there are some overlaps between the concepts of education and schooling, education can be seen to have a broader base.

Education aims to introduce children to new experiences and expose them to different viewpoints which allow them to reshape their knowledge and understanding of the world. These aims are supported by the development of infinite skills such as creativity and collaboration (Anderson, 2019) which can be developed through dialogic and inquiry-based pedagogies (Osborne, 2008). In other words, education enriches children’s lives, broadens their experiences and inspires their curiosity. Praxis occurs when teachers become empowered and are able to reclaim their profession. In these circumstances the teachers aim to transform their practices, to be responsive to situations

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5 It should be noted that there are different views of what constitutes praxis – these are considered in greater detail in Section 3.1.3 (p. 73).
and question the status quo. In this way they shape and reshape their practices in order to improve student learning and ultimately create a good life for all (Heikkinen, 2018).

Praxis can be enhanced through teacher professional learning and research. Professional learning has undergone its own transformation over the last decade supported by research that has investigated the most effective ways of improving teacher practice and ensuring sustainable change (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Labone & Long, 2016; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, Lavelle, & Trends, 2010). Over the past two decades there has been a shift in attitudes towards professional learning. Traditionally, this has involved one-off generic professional development programs that are not directly related to teachers’ own practices and run by outside specialists for short periods of time (e.g., 2–3 hours). This approach, when used in isolation, has been disparaged as being ineffective (Diamond, Justice, Siegler & Snyder, 2013). It is now recognised that for professional learning to be effective it should take place over an extended period of time, at least one semester (Labone & Long, 2016), and be site-based and personalised to the participants (Zaslow et al., 2010). Teachers should engage in active learning including coaching, observation, feedback, reflection and collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It has been suggested that the final aspect, collaboration, could take place on a variety of levels, between year group levels, subject areas, whole schools, several schools across a region, and with the wider community, including university researchers (Webster-Wright, 2009). By using a combination of these aspects of professional learning, it is argued that teacher practice will be improved, and as a result, student learning will be increased (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

1.3.2 The overarching aims of the research.

The previous section discussed general knowledge and considerations that underpin the present research. These are considered in greater depth in the Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework chapters. The section that follows establishes the ways in which the three research questions and the overarching aims of the project are addressed throughout the remaining chapters of the thesis.

The Methodology (Chapter 4) provides a structure for understanding the overall project design and methods of analysis. It begins by delineating the relationship between Practice Architectures, the conceptual framework for the research and the analytical tool used to understand the transformations that occurred, and Design Based Research (DBR), the methodological design that organised the research process. These two approaches are complementary and intertwined, both
recognising the importance of: collaboration, context, iterative analysis, and transformation of practice. A more in-depth discussion follows about the roles of Practice Architectures and DBR within the project and further comparisons are made. The way in which Practice Architectures is used to view the practices of the participating ECTs through the actions of sayings, doings and relatings and the ways these actions can be enabled through their respective arrangements, cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political, are introduced. The DBR process (Easterday, Rees Lewis & Gerber, 2014) is clarified as the processes involved in each phase are explained. Specific details about site selection, participant profiles and recruitment are considered next. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods are explained.

The findings of the research are divided into three chapters. These chapters are organised according to different phases of the DBR process and how they relate to the specific research questions. The first findings chapter (Chapter 5) relates to the DBR phases of Understand, Define and Conceive. Data from these phases largely relate to the first research question (What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?). Additionally, data analysis from each of these phases has a procedural role as findings from each phase informs the next and also the Build phase. The Build phase is discussed in the second findings chapter (Chapter 6). It involves the implementation of the professional learning program and addresses the second research question (How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?). Chapter 7, the third findings chapter, pertains to the final DBR phase, Test. The Test phase includes ECTs’ interviews, in which their views about the project were ascertained, the final analysis, feedback through the research thesis and other publications, and the suitability for generalisation of the professional learning program. This chapter, therefore, relates to the third research question (What were the features of a professional learning program that impacted on teacher practice?). Data analysis using Practice Architectures was ongoing across all the DBR phases to enable informed decision making.

The Discussion (Chapter 8) addresses the overall aims of the project, to improve ECTs’ teaching in the area of narrative discourse. It discusses how Practice Architectures was used to illuminate the key aspects of the professional learning program that impacted on ECTs’ practices. The actions of sayings, doings and relatings, and whether they were enabled or constrained by their respective arrangements (cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political) are considered. The action of relatings was considered the most prominent for the overall project aims and so is discussed first. The roles of personal histories, collaborative practices, relational trust and relationships are illuminated. The action of sayings is considered next and the roles of
intentionality, complexity, positive, trusting relationships, and the construction of knowledge are explained. Finally, the action of doings is explored and the transformation of practices and the importance of participatory appropriation in the construction of knowledge are discussed.

The concluding chapter of this thesis begins by providing a brief overview of the research structure and processes. The study aims are revisited, and specific responses are made to the three questions that framed the research. The strengths and limitations of the research are the discussed before the key contributions to knowledge are considered. Finally, possible future directions are suggested and concluding comments are made.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was one of familiarisation. It began by providing an overall context for the research. The problem that first motivated the project was outlined and a solution, which formed the main focus of the study, was proposed. The three guiding questions that framed the research were introduced. A summary of wider considerations underpinning the project was provided before the chapter concluded with an overview of the thesis structure.

The following two chapters examine in greater detail the literature and the theoretical perspective that informed the study.
2. Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins by creating a background for the research through an investigation of early language acquisition theories, how language evolves within contextualised settings, and how decontextualised language develops through narrative discourse. By reviewing a number of these theories, included in the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), teachers’ perceptions about children’s language learning can be better understood. This is because theories provide teachers with conceptual understandings about highly complex processes and enable them to shape their practices (Nolan & Raban, 2015). Knowledge of learning theories provides contextual information about teachers’ understandings and actions, thereby elucidating their responses to the first research question, “What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?”.

Best teaching practices are then examined with particular reference to reports based on the Effective Provision of Preschool Education—EPPE (1997–2003) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years—REPEY (2001–2002) projects, in the UK, and the re-emergence of Epstein’s intentional teaching approach which was a major feature of the HighScope Project (1970 – the present) in the USA. The analysis of literature informing best practice had a different purpose to the review of language development theories. Rather than supporting the development of the research questions, it directly informed the implementation of the professional learning project which was central to this research. ECTs were required to use their knowledge of best practice to select teaching strategies through which they could intentionally teach narrative discourse skills to their own cohorts of children. They were familiar with the concepts of best practice as endorsed by EPPE, REPEY and Epstein, as these formed the basis of the EYLF’s (2009) principles of pedagogy: holistic approaches, responsiveness to children, planning and implementing learning through play (Epstein’s active learning), intentional teaching, creation of learning environments that have a positive impact on learning, valuing children’s families and their cultural/social backgrounds, assessment and monitoring of learning (adapted from DEEWR, 2009, p. 14).
Literature pertaining to oral language development assessment is then considered. This relates directly to the second part of the second research question, “How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?” Evidence of children’s learning could only be acquired through assessment, which was therefore of vital importance to this question. By investigating the literature relating to assessment the importance of ongoing formative assessment, particularly short-cycle assessments (Wiliam, 2006), was considered. Additionally, informal discussions of the literature surrounding personal and fictional narratives and the effects of culture informed ECTs’ decision-making during the implementation of the professional learning program.

The final section of the literature review considers the features of teacher professional learning approaches that are most effective in promoting sustained changes in teacher practice. The critique of literature covering these concepts not only informed research question three, “What were the features of a professional development program that impacted on teacher practice?” but also the design of the professional learning intervention that was at the core of the research project as a whole. Design-Based Research (DBR), according to Easterday’s six phase model, emphasises the importance of reviewing and synthesising literature at all stages of research and requires that theoretical knowledge should be added to at the culmination of a project (Easterday et al., 2014). Thus, this part of the literature review is of fundamental importance. The four areas of literature introduced here are considered sequentially and expanded upon. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

2.1 Early Language Acquisition

Early language acquisition is the subject of a wide variety of different explanatory theories. Some of these differ considerably, while some are similar. The nativist approach, for example, views language as a biological endowment which cannot be learnt or affected by social contexts (Cremin, Swan, Flewitt, Faulkner & Kucirkova, 2013). In contrast to this a number of different theories see language acquisition as part of a learning process (Assaiqeli, 2013). Theories from the latter category are most appropriate for educationally based research as they share the common aspect of learning. During the twentieth century three theoretical approaches were prominent: developmental, behaviourist and sociocultural. Flaws have been observed in developmental and behaviourist theories, which has led to a decrease in their prominence. Developmentalism has been challenged as holding a deficit view of the child, artificially compartmentalising the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities according to age, possibly promoting racist connotations and not
considering the effects of children’s experiences in modern societies/cultures (Nolan & Raban, 2015). Behaviouralism promoted the view of the child as a passive pupil who received knowledge from adults in teacher directed situations, and who was motivated to learn through rewards, sanctions and reinforcements (Nolan & Raban, 2015; Payne, 2015). This view of the child as an empty vessel waiting to be filled has similarly fallen out of favour within educational contexts except perhaps in areas of behaviour management.

The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) mentioned all three of these theories but the sociocultural approach appears to be most compatible with its view of the child as being a strong independent learner, and its fundamental concepts of the child belonging to a family and wider social groups, being in the present while building and maintaining relationships, and becoming while learning to participate in society in order to “experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life” (p. 7). Sociocultural theories have played an even more dominant role in Early Childhood Education in New Zealand. Te Whāriki (Early Childhood Curriculum Online, n.d.) explained how sociocultural theories inform teaching and learning. It identified six key concepts informed by these theories:

(i) participation leads to development—children learn through connecting with people and participating in things in a variety of places
(ii) all experiences matter—children bring knowledge and understandings from all areas of their lives that can be deepened and extended
(iii) relationships beyond the gate matter—children have a variety of relationships in different contexts; these need to be valued enabling the development of positive learning identities
(iv) kaiako (teachers) matter—teaching and learning is entwined, kaiako are co-constructors of knowledge, contributing to children’s learning but not directing it
(v) language learning and communication matters—learning is constructed through conversations (Sustained Shared Thinking or SST)
(vi) children learning from each other matters—opportunities for peer learning is maximised through curriculum design.

(TE Whāriki, n.d., p. 2)

The concepts developed by Te Whāriki provide examples of the ways in which socioculturalism may be used to understand and further language development and learning. When this theory is applied through an interactionist approach a broader and more thorough view of both language
development and wider learning can be achieved. The combination of socioculturalism and an interactionalist approach is highly pertinent to learning in contemporary contexts as these two theoretical lenses highlight the importance of:

- social interactions that provide opportunities for gaining both cognitive knowledge and language skills,
- language development being seen as a process,
- intentionality and active learning of the child—the teacher acting as a facilitator,
- the need and desire to function in sociocultural settings.

Adapted from Davison (2013) and Medellin (2012).

2.1.2 Two interactionalist approaches: Sociocultural theory and functionalism.

One of the basic principles of sociocultural theory is that language skills develop through interactions with others in a variety of social contexts (H.D. Brown, 1994). These interactions begin as early expressions of want or need, which develop over time through interactions with more highly skilled partners (e.g., Brown, 1968; Bruner, 1983; Tomasello & Farrar, 1986). Bruner, Brown and Tomasello are proponents of a sociocultural view of early language development but they also empathise with a functionalist perspective forwarded by Halliday (1970).

Functionalism.

Bruner (1983) describes the original theory of functionalism as the way in which a child uses his/her own knowledge and experiences of the world to create and organise verbal scripts. These scripts may then be used to create sentence like utterances and move the child’s language skills beyond the single word stage. He notes that these factors would also give rise to the importance of context to a child’s utterances – when utterances are heard in context, they generate greater meaning. Two theories developed by Halliday reflect this functional approach to language development—the seven functions of language (1973), which is outlined next, and the language-based theory of learning (1993) that follows and is considered in relation to the social interactions of joint activity and attention (Bruner, 1975) and shared intentionality (Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne & Moll, 2005; Tomasello & Hamann, 2012).

Halliday’s (1973) developmental continuum defines the seven functions of language listing them according to the order in which they appear in a child’s language repertoire (instrumental,
regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and informational or representational [see Appendix 1]). This continuum focuses on language development which occurs once a child has started to use language in the adult sense of the word rather than protolanguage\(^6\) (Halliday, 1993, p. 96). These functions highlight the social purpose of language, rather than it’s syntactic and morphological development, and can be used effectively to plan for and assess children’s language learning at a preschool and early primary school level (Chang & Cress, 2014; Fry, Phillips, Lobaugh & Madole, 1996; Thomas & Rhinehart, 1990). Halliday’s (1993) language-based learning theory has a much wider scope. It initially considers a baby’s earliest attempts at communication, such as reaching and grasping (Feature 1), and culminates with learning about and through language, including reading and writing (Feature 21). Early features of this theory are now linked to a selection of sociocultural theories focusing on early language acquisition.

**Joint attention and language acquisition: From joint activity to joint attention.**

Bruner’s (1975) sociocultural perspective on language acquisition was clearly visible when he introduced his theories of joint activity and joint attention. Joint activity referred to the actions of two individuals, an adult and an infant, and the ways these actions would form part of a larger activity and would be mutually reliant. Bruner argued that during this process infants developed an understanding of the individual segments involved in an action — *agent* — *action* — *object* — *recipient*. Through the repetition of these segments, joint referencing of an object occurred and eventually led to joint attention. Bruner continued by suggesting that this process would naturally take place during play interactions as the agent-action-object axis is accentuated as the child’s attention follows the adult’s gaze (forming joint attention). Labelling will occur firstly by the adult and later by the child, who thereby demonstrates early verbal communication skills. Despite the seeming simplicity of these play interactions joint attention can be seen to be a complex skill as:

\(^6\) The meaning of protolanguage, as it is used here, is a form of communication that may include vocalisations, gestures and miming. It can be seen as a simplified form of language (Gibson & Tallerman, 2011).
both participants are not only focused on the same object, they are monitoring one another’s attention on the same object as well, and also on one another’s attention to their attention to the object and so on.

(Tomasello & Hamann, 2012, p. 2)

The development of joint activity and joint attention mirrors Brown’s (1968) Original Word Game (see Appendix 2) and Feature 4, of the language-based theory of learning, which Halliday (1993) viewed as the starting point for “unlimited learning potential” (p.97) and meaning making through semiotics. This correspondence is also visible in the development of Tomasello’s theories of shared intentionality and labelling.

The development of shared intentionality.

Tomasello both consolidated and extended Bruner’s theories on joint activity and joint attention. Consolidation occurred through a series of papers in which Tomasello and various colleagues examined the concept of joint attention in greater detail, leading to theories on dyadic and triadic interactions and the importance of reference. They explained that dyadic interactions occur as individuals react with each other in mutually responsive ways, such as in the exchange of smiles, looks and vocalisations—these form the earliest interactions that an infant will participate in. They believed that at approximately nine months old, a mini-revolution takes place, resulting in interactions between the infant, an object and another person—triadic interactions, e.g. rolling a ball backwards and forwards with another individual (Tomasello et al., 2005; Tomasello & Hamann, 2012). During these often play-based episodes the two participants will look repeatedly at each other and the referential object forming joint attention.

Tomasello and Farrar (1986) considered the role of reference in greater depth. They discovered that children focus on a referential object relatively easily and from there can form joint attention with an adult thus establishing an understandable context for the label provided by the adult. They termed this the micro-level of joint attention. Additionally, they found that if adults constantly tried to redirect a child’s focus of attention, they would be less likely to add the referential labelling word to their vocabularies. Tomasello and Hamann (2012) added that the micro-level formed only one part of joint attention, the other part being the macro-level, which referred to the extension of child-adult interactions; that is, more talk would occur during periods of joint attention. The combination of these two levels of joint attention can be seen as an effective scaffold for a child’s language acquisition.
Bruner’s theories were extended when the larger conceptual process of shared intentionality was formulated (Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007; Tomasello et al., 2005; Tomasello & Hamann, 2012). Developmental pathways, through which children acquire language from birth to three years of age, were explained and linked to the processes of joint action and attention. Bruner (1975) described joint action as a precursor to joint attention, whilst Tomasello and Carpenter (2007) viewed joint attention as the first phase of the process of shared intentionality. This skill would be further developed and lead firstly to co-operative communication, then collaboration and finally instructed learning. The two most advanced stages of shared intentionality resemble Halliday’s (1993) Feature 9 of the language-based theory of learning. This feature recognized the significance of the metafunctional principle which entailed the combining of a child’s experiences with interpersonal relationships to create meaning.

This discussion has shown that the two approaches, socioculturalist theory and functionalism, are both compatible and complementary as they are interactionalist in nature viewing language acquisition not only as the creation of syntactic structures but also of discourse (Sarem & Shirzadi, 2014). It has also demonstrated that for young children to develop early language skills, highly contextualised settings are required. However, as they become proficient in using language for meaning in deeply contextualised situations they may begin to experiment with more cognitively demanding scenarios where there is little or no supporting context. This is termed decontextualised language.

2.2 Decontextualised Language

Decontextualised language, or literate language (Shiel, Cregan & McGough, 2012), occurs when the subject of talk is outside the immediate context, and thus talk may be about past or future events or other information that is not part of the event’s context (Curenton et al., 2008). Participants in talking events need to be able to produce and understand meaning without having any contextual supports such as shared background knowledge (Curenton et al., 2008; Nicolopoulou et al., 2006; Raban, 2014). This type of language use forms an important part of children’s language continuum as it is a foundation-stone for both general school achievement and literacy development (Nicolopoulou et al., 2006; Reese, 1995). As part of the language continuum it supports learning at preschool and primary levels and acts as a precursor to skilful use of academic language at secondary and higher levels (Snow & Uccelli, 2009).
School readiness and literacy achievement are promoted through the use of decontextualised language as greater cognitive activity, which is central to school success, occurs when children have to create their own contexts and events through language (Raban, 2014). Shiel et al. (2012) stated that higher levels of cognitive interactions are necessary as children begin to create autonomous oral texts. As they recall events, children must link ideas, make connections and give extra details and description to ensure meaning is understood (Currentt et al. 2008). In order to do this, they must be able to plan their texts and be explicit and coherent while expanding their interests with others (Snow & Uccelli, 2009).

More specifically, as children learn to read and move from decoding texts to reading for meaning, the benefits of proficient decontextualised language skills will become apparent (Raban, 2014; Snow, Tabors, Nicholson & Kurland, 1995). Many of the skills linked to higher level cognitive skills are also relevant to the development of reading skills (e.g., recall of events, making connections and being explicit). These skills facilitate children’s ability to comprehend texts (Currentt et al., 2008) which is particularly important when texts provide lower levels of contextual clues through illustrations and rely on lexical and syntactic features to convey meaning (Buchorn-Stoll, 2002). Lennox (2013) concurs and further suggests that decontextualised language skills also aid inferencing and the ability to relay information to others during and after reading. Additionally, information can be relayed through oral and written texts, which can also be supported by decontextualised language skills (Dawkins & O’Neil, 2011).

Therefore, it is necessary to promote children’s decontextualised language skills from an early age—between 2 and 3 years old. Initially parents/care-givers should model decontextualised language with children gradually taking a more active role (Rowe, 2013; Uccelli, Demir-Lira, Rowe, Levine & Goldin-Meadows, 2018). There are numerous activities through which decontextualized language may be practiced by children and their care-givers. Purcell-Gates (2001, p.7) suggests that children’s decontextualized language can be developed by retelling picture storybooks, which she views as “(pretend) written language read aloud” (highlighting the links between written and oral language and their role in early literacy development). Rowe (2013) also supports the use of story-books but states that children should be asked to make links between their own lives or make predictions about what will happen next in the story, in other words engaging them in decontextualized conversations as the story progresses. Other activities that promote very young children’s decontextualized language include; pretend play, narrative discourses about past, present or future events and explanations. Some children, often from lower socio-economic groups or homes where English is not the first language, are not introduced to decontextualised language
in this way at home. Formal schooling requires and builds upon these language skills and this group of children will suffer from discontinuity of learning and can fall behind (Hoff, 2006). Therefore, development of these skills at preschool should be prioritised.

On entering preschool, children’s decontextualised language can be extended through a variety of classroom activities such as narrative discourse (storytelling), the creation of imaginary worlds through dramatic play, explanations/problem-solving and conversations (Curenton et al., 2008; Nicolopoulou et al., 2006; Raban, 2001, 2014). The first of these activities, narrative discourse, is not only an extremely powerful method for extending children’s use of decontextualised language but it also forms a key element of this research project. This section therefore continues by focusing on three themes related to narrative discourse. Firstly, how and why questions are answered:

- How does narrative discourse support the growth of decontextualized language?
- Why is their production important to young children?
- How are narratives developed?

The effects of children’s socio-economic and cultural background on their storytelling styles is then discussed through reference to the ethnographic work of Heath (1982) and that of Barra, Bliss, Bennett, McCabe and Rosenthal Rollins from the 1990s onwards.

Ways in which teachers can understand, value and support the range of narratives produced by children from varied backgrounds is then explained.

### 2.2.1 Narrative discourse and decontextualised language development.

Through narrative discourse or storytelling children can practise creating pictures of the world and completing scenarios purely through words (Nicolopoulou et al., 2006). They provide opportunities for children to use multiple sentences that are logically sequenced and centred around a theme, and details of the who, what, when, where of events must be included. Children need to recall details, make links between old and new events and convey meaning through their descriptions (Curenton et al., 2008) thus providing numerous opportunities for sustained shared thinking (SST) (see p. 48 for further information).

When they are in their own home environments, very young children tell stories spontaneously to communicate their personal experiences. Grugeon, Hubbard, Smith, and Dawes (1998) suggest that children tell very short stories regularly and without prompting to family, friends and other members of their community. Similarly, by retelling their experiences through stories or dramatic
play they make sense of the world around them and, as Paley (2007) observes, make an endless stream of connections to create their own understandings of events. Therefore, these skills should be valued and built upon by teachers, scaffolding the children’s learning so that they can transfer them from personal to imaginative contexts.

As young children begin to explore imaginative storytelling, they will often mix genres (e.g., fairytales and superheroes) or create imaginary worlds to develop their understandings and to entertain themselves and others (Paley, 2004). They may also start with a basic story line and extend this in numerous ways over long periods, sometimes working cooperatively in small groups and at other times making independent creations that they share and perform with their peers. Themes may include right and wrong, such as when a group of kindergarteners re-enact Tom and Jerry cartoons adapted for their own environment and with a message of fairness and friendship. Alternatively, children may have a stimulus for a story and then adapt it, always keeping the initial stimulus but creating their own unique version, thus, developing their imaginations which in turn enables innovative thinking in a wide variety of situations (Paley, 2004, 2009).

Riley (2006) also recognised the importance of both personal and imaginative storytelling in helping children make sense of the world around them. She emphasised how story telling could help them make links between their own culture and that of others whilst celebrating their own identities. For those with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds it could also provide an opportunity for value to be given to their language and heritage. Similarly, Grugeon et al. (1998) suggested that children whose first language was not English should be encouraged to celebrate their own culture and heritage through the telling of stories in their own language as well as in English. The wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds that children come from should therefore not only be accepted and understood but more importantly encouraged and celebrated.

*The formation of narrative discourses.*

Storytelling events can be extended and naturally scaffolded through the back and forth exchanges that form the basis of conversations. Riley (2006) suggested some strategies which could be used to maintain a conversational theme. These were based on those propounded by Snow (2001) who stated that adults should: (i) expand the child’s topic of interest (modelling), (ii) bring extra information (modelling), (iii) ask questions to clarify the child’s thoughts/meaning, and (iv) answer the child’s questions. Similarly, Raban (2001) discussed the role of more experienced language users in promoting young children’s speaking and listening skills. She suggested five strategies that
could be used by adults in this role and she termed them “contingent responses” (Raban, 2001, p. 28). Some of these were similar to those of Riley (2006) whilst others provided a slightly different perspective, namely that the responses should keep a conversation fluid and ensure an emotionally satisfying experience whilst achieving a purpose. When a narrative experience is shared in this way, by a single adult and child, the probability of SST occurring is raised (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004).

**The effects of early narrative experiences: sociocultural differences.**

It should be remembered that children’s early narrative experiences may differ widely, and this should be taken into account when creating learning experiences for them within a preschool environment. This situation was exemplified by Heath (1982) in her ethnographic study of three very distinctive neighbouring communities in the South Eastern United States. These communities valued different language and literacy skills and consequently their children became more proficient in the skills promoted in their homes. Two of the communities encouraged their children’s language development in areas that would prepare them explicitly for school life, Maintown and Roadville. In Maintown, children were active participants in book reading as parents encouraged them to: interact with books, make links between books and their own environment, and to ask and answer higher order questions to make meaning. Children from Roadville were expected to sit and listen to stories for extended periods of time, retell them with chronological accuracy, answer factual questions and understand the difference between fact and fiction. The children in Trackton did not benefit from these forms of preparation but developed their verbal skills through an immersion process which necessitated the creation of vivid, analogical and explanatory stories that were acknowledged by their home community. The unique skills in narrative and poetic language that the African-American English speakers, such as the Trackton children used, were again highlighted by Hoff (2006) more than 20 years later.

Heath (1982) theorised that each of these groups of children could benefit from developing skills that children in other two groups were already proficient in. She therefore suggested that learning experiences should be diverse, consolidating the children’s individual areas of strength and extending their learning in areas they were unfamiliar with. She concluded that just as there is not only one style of literacy orientation, nor is there one model of development that will be comprehensively applicable. The appreciation and appropriation of others’ skills, as suggested by Heath (1982) is commendable. However, she points out that when children first start formal schooling in Westernised systems it is more often the skills of the Roadville (a Caucasian American
mill-town community of largely Appalachian descent) and Maintown (‘middle-class, school oriented culture’, Heath, 1982, p. 49) children that are praised whilst the Trackton (an African-American mill-town community) children’s narrative skills are underrated until later years. Unfortunately, Hoff (2006) noted that, at the time of her study, there was considerable evidence to show that African-American English speakers’ skills were still largely unrecognised in standardised testing. These less recognised narrative skills should not be ignored but encouraged and broadened, for example, to enhance an understanding of chronology, as they have a well-recognised and significant role to play in later literacy development (Gillam & Gillam, 2016; McCabe et al., 2008; McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994; van Kleek et al., 2011; Wellman et al., 2011). Educators should therefore ensure that these creative, explanatory and analogical skills are not neglected but are nurtured.

The consequences of highly mobile, multi-cultural societies.

The differences between these three communities, more than 30 years ago, had their basis in both socio-economic and cultural differences within a very small geographical area. These differences may well have increased due to the greater mobility in present society. Therefore, with the ever-growing cultural diversity present in communities, these differences in narrative discourse styles have intensified and the differences between teachers’ and children’s understanding of what a good narrative includes may also have multiplied. McCabe (1997), in her USA based study, noted that many teachers coming from European/North American backgrounds bring with them certain cultural viewpoints which include ideas about what makes a good story or narrative. A good narrative from this viewpoint would include who (the characters), where (the location), when (e.g. long, long ago or last week), and what (the events in a logical order), the high-point and the solution. However, narratives created by children from alternative backgrounds may use different structures and dimensions in their narratives, which may not fit this model (Bliss & McCabe, 2011).

Bliss and McCabe (2011) highlighted these differences by describing three different cultures often represented in North American classrooms. Firstly, they considered the narrative discourse style of African-American children, which they found to be characterised as being lengthy, with events and descriptions being linked semantically rather than chronologically, that is, through topic-associating. Secondly, they focused on children from a Spanish or Latino cultural background whose narrative discourses generally emphasised family and relationships with lots of description and little action. Lastly the narrative style of children from Asian cultural backgrounds was considered; their narrative discourses were described as concise, including several similar
experiences and often lacking in referents (names and pronouns). These descriptions mirrored those propounded by McCabe and Rosenthal Rollins (1994), who also mentioned the characteristics of Hungarian and Hawaiian children’s narratives, and McCabe (1997) who also considered the differences between children of Sioux, Navajo, Hungarian and Canadian descent and classic North American narrative styles.

*How differences may be supported.*

In response to the possible diversity of narrative discourse styles, McCabe (1997) suggested that the definition of a good story should be extended beyond the classic narrative style. Some examples of wider definitions of a good story can be found in Table 1. These have then been linked to the culture that typically uses that storytelling style.

*Table 1: Alternative definitions of a good story derived from McCabe (1997).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Good Story</th>
<th>Cultures Typically Valuing These Narrative Styles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative Definitions of a Good Story</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultures Typically Valuing These Narrative Styles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long and detailed</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantically linked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme-Improvisation-Theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short and explicit</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images evoked by suggestion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several explicitly or implicitly linked experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise relationships</td>
<td>Spanish/Latino/Puerto Rican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchored in family vignettes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich, colourful descriptions of people and places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Centered</td>
<td>Classic – North American/European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a clear beginning, middle and end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast-paced and sequential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing narrative</td>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions from others overlap the speaker’s narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
McCabe (1997) stated that, despite these differences in narrative discourse styles, all “children tend to involve sense-making and self-presentation around events that have happened to them in the past” (p. 454). As part of this process children can also be seen to be making themselves understood by those around them, given that their culture needs to be understood. McCabe recommended that this could be achieved through a combination of oral and written stories, art, dance and music, thus, reflecting the views of Grugeon et al. (1998), (Paley 2007) and Riley (2006) discussed previously.

This section began by highlighting the importance of decontextualised language and the way it can be developed through participation in narrative discourse activities. The socio-economic and sociocultural influences affecting children’s narratives were discussed and ways in which teachers can support the resulting different narrative styles were suggested. The role of narrative discourse in the development of SST was touched upon. The presence of SST events in preschool settings was found to be one of the key elements of effective Early Childhood Education by the EPPE and REPEY projects (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Sylva et al., 2004). The next section discusses the pedagogical influences of these projects and Epstein’s intentional teaching approaches before considering how these have affected views on best practice in Early Childhood Education.

2.3 Pedagogical Influences and Best Practice in Oral Language Development

This section provides an overview of the recommendations of the EPPE and REPEY projects regarding best practice in the teaching of oral language skills. Connections are made between these projects and Epstein’s intentional teaching philosophies before the intentional teaching of language and literacy skills are considered more specifically.

2.3.1 EPPE and REPEY projects.

The EPPE project was a five-year UK Government initiative, which started in 1997, to investigate then current Early Years Practice and make recommendations for the future. This project gained additional funding and the REPEY project, 2001/2, continued its remit. These projects covered a wide range of issues that related to effective preschool education. However, only those parts that relate directly to best practice and effective pedagogy are considered here.

The EPPE and REPEY projects discussed a number of different strategies, many of which included the use and development of oral language skills, that would promote best practice both generally and more specifically in relation to thinking skills. When overall teaching approaches were
considered a balance of free play and teacher initiated group work was recommended, whilst the EPPE project concluded that the most effective pedagogy was a mixed approach of ‘teaching’ and the provision of instructive play environments from which children could choose freely (Sylva et al., 2004). They also suggested that if child-initiated play was extended by teachers and teacher-initiated group work occurred, opportunities for learning should increase. The REPEY project supported these findings and elaborated on them by stating that effective teaching strategies should include intervention techniques, such as scaffolding, monitoring and extending discussions (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004) in regard to child-initiated play.

The development of thinking skills was prioritised by both projects and the principle of SST, or sustained shared thinking, was introduced and promoted in a number of different articles relating to the EPPE and REPEY projects. A useful definition of SST was given by Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell (2002), they stated that this occurred when “two or more individuals ‘work together’ in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative. Both parties must contribute to the thinking, and it must develop and extend” (p. 8). It was noted that most cases of SST occurred when an adult and a child were taking part in an activity or conversation on a one-to-one basis (Sylva et al., 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Interestingly it was also observed that approximately two thirds of all episodes of SST were initiated by the children and about the same proportion of these episodes were then extended by the adults, clearly demonstrating how effectively staff members can engage and extend processes of cognitive thought (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). The benefits of this type of child initiation of SST was also said to have benefits for learning across the whole curriculum (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004).

The pedagogical tools of modelling, open-ended questioning and scaffolding were further recommended to enhance children’s learning during periods of SST and through other planned or unplanned learning events. Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) noted that staff members, in the most effective settings, consistently used modelling techniques in the areas of language, behaviour and skills which often resulted in SST events. These techniques together with the use of open-ended questioning were shown to produce higher levels of cognitive achievement (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 2004). However, they also caution that only approximately five percent of all questions were open ended even in the most effective preschool settings. Scaffolding was also seen to be an important pedagogical tool, in more general terms, by Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004). They stated that the use of assessment to find a child’s developmental level at that moment in time,
combined with additional support to move him/her to the next level, would lead to successful completion of learning goals.

This evaluation of early childhood practice, based on the EPPE and REPEY projects, has provided an excellent starting point for discussions regarding pedagogy and best practice. One of the key aspects they noted was the need for a balance of teacher and child led activities which was mirrored by Epstein (2014) when she explained her preference for a blended approach to early childhood education.

2.3.2 Intentional teaching.

The concept of intentional teaching re-emerged in the USA in the early 2000s largely due to the influence of Ann Epstein. Her beliefs about pedagogical practice became extremely influential when the North American Government highlighted the plight of early childhood education, emphasised the need for change and improvements, and introduced the Highscope Project (see Appendix 3). According to Epstein, intentional teaching should be regarded as a pedagogical approach that encompasses all areas of the curriculum from the role of the teacher to the learning environment. Her views on the general principles of intentional teaching and best classroom practice are discussed followed by a synopsis of how they can be applied to the teaching of language and literacy.

Intentional teaching and best classroom practice.

Epstein (2014) recommended a blended approach to early childhood education rather than the sometimes extreme interpretations of the child-centred approach, characterised by passive teaching, and the direct instruction approach with its strong emphasis on teacher directed learning. She advocated that learning experiences should be initiated by both children, child-guided, and adults, adult-guided. The child-guided approach was defined as one that involved the following of children’s interests with adults providing support, such as the provision of stimulating materials. The adult-guided approach involved teachers setting goals but with an awareness of effective child engagement.

Furthermore, the premise of the blended approach is linked to other principles of best practice, and Epstein advocated that intentional teachers should continually reflect upon their own classroom practices, consider how children’s learning and development would be affected by it and act accordingly to ensure optimum progress. She proposed that intentional teaching practices should
be applied to all areas of the curriculum and teacher responsibilities, including the learning environment, planning, assessment, and interactions with children and carers.

**Intentional teaching of language and literacy.**

Epstein (2014) believed the development of language and literacy skills to be interwoven from early childhood and that they will develop simultaneously rather than consecutively. She recognised that language and literacy events often occur naturally through daily events, interactions and conversations. Therefore, child-guided activities could be seen to play a major role in language and literacy learning. However, she also emphasised the importance of thoughtful adult support to enable learning events to be extended and enriched. Similarly, the role of adult-guided activities was seen to be beneficial, especially when those activities were meaningful to the children, enabling them to utilise and improve their skills in areas relating to their own interests. This learning could then be reinforced through additional child-guided practice. The role of the adult and the child during language and literacy activities can be seen to overlap, with each taking important roles in the learning process whether the child or the adult was the original instigator. Thus, it can be seen that a balance of child and adult guided activities is essential to effective language and literacy development.

**Intentional teaching of speaking and listening.**

When intentional teaching is considered with regard to the development of children’s oral language skills it is important to remember that there are two complementary activities involved, those of speaking and listening. Grugeon et al. (1998) warned that the skill of listening can sometimes be underrated by busy teachers who may often view effective listening as the ability to follow instructions rather than an essential skill that complements that of speaking in conversations (Riley, 2006).

Therefore, when considering classroom practices that are designed to promote oral language, both of these aspects should be considered equally. Intentional teaching strategies can be used to promote both speaking and listening – demonstrating (modelling), scaffolding (supporting and extending), questioning and active listening (Raban, 2001; Riley, 2006). These strategies can be seen to be closely interrelated; for example, a teacher can demonstrate, and scaffold skills related to questioning —that is, questioning should be sensitive, rather than an interrogation, and promote explanation and clarification (Raban, 2001). Raban further suggested that through careful teacher demonstration children could become the questioners, extending their own skills and knowledge.
Similarly, Riley (2006) described how teachers could demonstrate and scaffold skills related to listening, by waiting for everyone to listen, keeping instructions concise (avoiding long discussions with individuals that do not include others), and using a calm, quiet voice whilst maintaining eye contact.

Moreover, Riley (2006) acknowledged the fact that children’s learning and language development is most effective in one-to-one situations with partners having higher levels of skill. In classroom settings this is not always a practical possibility, therefore careful planning should take place to ensure that there are: opportunities for talk; rules about conversations which are understood, such as turn taking and attention; adults guiding but not dominating, and contexts that are authentic and based on children’s prior experiences. She also supported the view that conversations should result in both parties learning and gaining enjoyment.

However, for effective learning to occur through talk, children must feel comfortable talking in the classroom, and understand that they are allowed to talk without feeling worried about making mistakes. Their talk should also have a common purpose, involve answering and asking questions, build on ideas and place value on other’s contributions. Teachers should plan for talk so learning is focused. They should ensure sufficient wait time is given to children, work collectively with the children and encourage them to take risks in their learning, (Alexander, 2008; Edwards-Groves, Anstey & Bull, 2014).

These ideas for improving learning through language were expanded upon by Raban (2001) when she explained that teachers should also ensure that children can experiment with language in different contexts, with different audiences and for different purposes. She suggested that sensitive teacher modelling is an invaluable tool when extending children’s speaking and listening skills and gave examples of suitable teacher prompts or responses, including strategic silences to encourage children to speak, making (appropriate) provocative statements that will invite debate, and requesting clarification or further explanation. She acknowledged the necessity of planning for opportunities to use language and noted that teachers should consider their own intentions for an activity, what the students might intend and what the outcomes of the activity should be. Raban also recognised that listening to talk could be used as an ideal tool for assessment and future planning. Teachers who actively listen to their students can discover what the children know and how their thinking processes are formed. They can expand their students’ thinking by helping them link experiences and extend their thinking through scaffolding and working from the known to the unknown. Thus, she argued that classroom talk can effectively be used to perfect ideas, by means
such as clarifying thinking, making comparisons, predicting and summarising whilst also collaborating with others.

In preschool contexts learning through talk is most easily observed during adult–child and child–child conversations and has been endorsed by the prestigious EPPE and REPEY projects (2003 and 2004 respectively), which highlighted the importance of learning through conversations. Riley (2006) also supported the findings of these projects and briefly discussed their pedagogical approach of SST, noting that adults should know children’s areas of interest and levels of understanding in order to further develop their knowledge and understanding during conversational activities. Rich conversations and SST may occur in a variety of situations, including storytelling (narrative discourse), imaginative play, problem-solving as well as conventional sharing of experiences. These classroom experiences will also give children the opportunity to learn and develop their ability to use decontextualised language.

Thus, oral language, particularly decontextualised language, can be seen as a medium through which in-depth learning occurs and, as such, forms one of the building blocks of best practice as recommended by the EPPE (2003) and REPEY (2004) reports and Epstein (2014). Best practice strategies for the teaching of oral language have been discussed. However, both the EPPE and REPEY reports and Epstein assert that regular assessment, which guides teacher practice by providing information about children’s progress, is essential to the provision of appropriate learning experiences. The following section begins by briefly outlining the functions of assessment before reviewing formative assessment in greater detail and explaining its relevance to teaching and learning. The value of using narrative discourse during the assessment process is discussed, along with the reasons for both personal and imaginative narratives being included. The section concludes with an account of cultural influences on children’s narratives and how teachers can appreciate different styles and assess them fairly.

2.4 Assessment of Oral Language

Tough (1979) asked a very pertinent question, which is still highly relevant today, why are we assessing? In general terms assessments may be made to evaluate a child’s progress and the levels they have attained (summative assessment) or they may be used to inform teaching and learning (formative assessment). Summative assessments, then, may be used at the end of teaching periods for reporting progress (e.g., at the end of a semester or year). Conversely, formative assessments are ongoing, shaping teaching and learning. The information from these assessments will lead to
changes in the processes and activities that teachers employ (Wiliam, 2006) and thus to higher quality learning experiences and greater learning gains (Wiliam, Lee, Harrison & Black, 2004). Summative assessments where unconstrained skills \(^7\) (Anderson, Atkins, Swaggerty & O’Brien, 2019; Paris 2005), such as narrative discourse, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension (oral and reading) are involved have been found to be difficult to measure over short periods of time (Hoffman, 2010). For these reasons this investigation of literature pertaining to oral language assessments focuses on a variety of approaches to the formative assessment of children’s oral language skills.

### 2.4.1 Formative assessment—an ongoing process.

According to Tough (1979) initial assessments should be made in order to form a general impression of children’s language abilities. However, later assessments could be used to ascertain how they use language to learn in all the varied areas of the curriculum. She also emphasised that assessments, or as she termed them appraisals, should not be used to monitor children’s progress compared to others but form part of an ongoing process to show an individual’s language learning and inform planning.

When assessments are being conducted in order to gain a general impression of a child’s language abilities, Tough (1979) suggested that children’s ability to communicate with others should be regularly assessed, that is, their social interactions should be observed as these form the basis of their language development and their ability to learn through language. Sample observations could take place within the teacher’s hearing or at a greater distance and a diary or tick sheet method could be employed. Riley and Burrell (2007) agreed when they discussed the importance of regular formative assessment to effective teaching—using assessments to inform teaching and learning—but they also noted that the assessment of oral language was difficult due to its transitory nature.

In order to overcome these difficulties teachers should take time to develop their own skills in making oral language assessments and plan carefully for opportunities. Similarly, when teachers

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\(^7\) Unconstrained skills are those which are acquired over an individual’s life. They include (e.g., fine and gross motor skills or vocabulary growth and comprehension. Constrained skills are those that can be learnt over a relatively short period of time (e.g., letters of the alphabet). (Anderson, Atkins, Swaggerty & O’Brien, 2019; Paris 2005).
are first beginning to practice their oral language assessment skills, they should use pictures as a stimulus, as this allows for careful preparation of open-ended questions to promote discussion and also enables preparation for unusual (less likely) responses from the child. Later, with practice, teachers could make appraisals in almost any situation where a child is talking and therefore produce more in-depth analyses of their oral language capabilities (Tough, 1979).

This ability to assess children’s oral language skills in a variety of situations is critical to good early years practice. Riley and Burrell (2007) listed six factors that should be considered when undertaking assessments. They should: “be child centred; take place in a meaningful context; place importance on both process and product; be useful to teachers; be grounded in research; be unobtrusive” (p. 193). In many cases these assessments will be short-cycled in nature where teachers make assessments in minutes and use these assessments to inform their teaching over the present and immediately following sessions (Wiliam, 2006). These short-cycle assessments often produce the greatest impact on children’s learning as they form part of teachers’ regular day-to-day classroom practice and form a natural explicit teaching focus (Wiliam, 2006; Wiliam et al., 2004).

Although these researchers mainly explored assessment practices in primary schools, many of these points are relevant in preschool settings. An evaluation of how formative short-cycle assessments may be accomplished in preschool settings follows.

2.4.2 Preschool oral language assessments—the value of narrative discourse.

In preschool settings assessments can be made in all the areas suggested during the earlier discussion on best practice above, for example, narrative discourse, imaginative play, problem-solving and conversation. One of the most frequently assessed areas, at preschool level, can be seen to be that of narrative discourse, probably due to its perceived importance in the prediction of reading and comprehension levels (McCabe et al., 2008; Paris & Paris, 2003). Similarly, lower levels of narrative discourse skills at this time have been linked to later difficulties with reading and reading comprehension (McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994; Westby, 2005). This has since been corroborated by Riley and Burrell (2007) and Scull (2013) who noted the close correlation between narrating skills and reading fluency. Additionally, Riley and Burrell (2007) extended these arguments by highlighting the relationship between high levels of narrative discourse skills and later overall academic success.

It should be remembered that there are two distinct types of narrative discourse, personal and fictional; both are developed from a cultural context and usually consist of chronologically
sequenced events. Either of these can be used in the assessment of narrative discourse, although there has been much discussion regarding their relative merits (Bliss, McCabe & Miranda, 1998; McCabe et al., 2008; McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994). The most common view is that the most appropriate assessment method utilises personal discourse. Several reasons were given for this: all children, even the youngest, produce personal oral narratives; these are used regularly in social interactions; scaffolding can take place spontaneously thereby facilitating development of structuring skills; challenges to the memory are reduced; and personal oral narrative production is an essential skill both in childhood and throughout adult life.

**Personal narrative discourse.**

The characteristics of personal narrative discourse have prompted the assertion that they are particularly appropriate for the assessment of the oral language skills of children with LI (language impairment) as they perform better in personal rather than fictional narrative discourse events (Bliss & McCabe, 2011; McCabe et al., 2008; McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994). These higher levels of performance can be seen to be due to the predominance of personal narratives in their daily speech and the fact that parents/other adults will often be available to scaffold their discourse. An additional benefit of assessing and developing personal oral narrative skill was noted by Bliss and McCabe (2011) and McCabe et al. (2008), who emphasised its functional importance in personal communications both in childhood and later life. The combination of the higher levels of performance in personal narrative and its relative significance in daily life would suggest that the assessment of and possible intervention in the area of personal narrative is to be highly recommended.

**Fictional oral narratives.**

Despite the stated advantages of assessing personal narratives, a number of other researchers have argued that fictional oral narratives are both important and suitable for the assessment of narrative discourse skills. Van Kleek et al. (2011) suggested that high levels of ability would be needed to effectively combine syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology within sentences and throughout these oral texts. Moreover, Schneider Hayward and Dubé (2006) extended this argument, noting that fictional narratives required the combining of sentences into longer oral texts for a genuine purpose, thus creating longer language samples for analysis. Riley and Burrell (2007) also reflected this view, stating that fictional storytelling not only provided opportunities for
children to produce longer narratives than conversation but also allowed them to use language more creatively, organise their ideas and develop appropriate structures.

**The role of culture.**

In addition to the above benefits it has been emphasised that social-cognitive skills involving an awareness of the surrounding culture and the ability to respond to the needs of the listener would be highlighted (Pankratz, Plante, Vance & Insalaco, 2007; van Kleek et al., 2011) through the retelling of fictional narratives. McCabe (1997) agreed with this view but added that children who did not come from European and European/North American backgrounds would often have differing discourse styles compared to those who did, for example, topic association as opposed to topic centred. She argued that different narrative styles would require an alternative form of assessment and in these she recommended the **stanza analysis.**

McCabe (1997) emphasised that through **stanza analysis** teachers and clinicians from European /European North American backgrounds would be helped to make sense of narratives that seemed strange to them. This method was described as one which did not presume that there was an ideal narrative form that all stories should conform to but looked for regularities within the discourse that could be attributed to a narrative. Through the adaptation of a discourse into poetry-like stanzas far greater meaning could be found. This form of assessment was found to be extremely effective with narratives that were topic associated, which could be as diverse as Asian narratives, which value conciseness, and African-American narratives, which tend to be long and detailed. The application of stanza analysis could avoid the incorrect assessment of LI in children from non-European or non-North American backgrounds, an issue which was highlighted by Bliss and McCabe (2011):

> …students who use different narrative styles should not be judged as having discourse impairment. Instead, their discourse may represent cultural patterns. Departures from classic narratives may be a cultural difference rather than deficit. (p. 214)

Riley and Burrell (2007) added an extra dimension to the discussion regarding possible cultural variations in oral storytelling. They suggested that differing oral traditions should be capitalised upon through the use of thoughtful teaching strategies and well-designed activities. They further emphasised that this could only occur when teachers have a detailed knowledge of children’s skills, which is only achievable through careful assessment.
This section has discussed one of the essential facets of best practice as asserted by the EPPE (2003) and REPEY (2004) reports and Epstein (2014), namely, assessment. Without appropriate, informative assessment other aspects of best practice cannot be realised:

Effective practitioners assess the children’s performance to ensure the provision of challenging yet achievable experiences, they model appropriate language, values and practices, they encourage socio-dramatic play, they also praise and encourage, ask questions and interact verbally with children to encourage sustained shared thinking.

(Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002, p. 13).

The work of EPPE, REPEY and Epstein have done much to improve early childhood education. They have provided models of best practice and pedagogical approaches that advance children’s learning in general and more specifically in and through oral language, as well as socially. In order for teachers to provide the most effective experiences they need to have had comprehensive training with a focus on the elements of best practice and pedagogy in all areas of the curriculum. The FEEL project (Siraj et al., 2017) recommended that an ongoing culture of teacher learning should be promoted in all early childhood settings, which included all levels of staff (managers and teachers). It suggested that this learning be collaborative, centre-based and that it cater to the learning styles of the participants. In this way ECTs would be able to continually enhance their practice according to their own needs and the needs of their children. This would support educators who may have had gaps in their initial teacher training (Lane, Prokop, Johnson, Podhajski & Nathan, 2014; Siraj et al. 2017; Zaslow et al., 2010) and update the training for those whose knowledge may have been outdated (Siraj et al. 2017)

The following section, therefore, focuses on teacher professional learning. Initially it considers the effectiveness of more traditional methods of in-service teacher education (e.g., generic, isolated, offsite courses). This is followed by a review of the methods that are now thought to be most effective in enhancing teacher professional learning and development.

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8 This is most likely in countries where there are no minimum training requirements for early childcare professionals.
2.5 Professional Learning

Over the last two decades there has been a shift in views as to the most effective form of in-service teacher training and professional learning. It is now thought that teachers should develop their knowledge and skills in a way which is “active, consistent, based in the teaching environment, and supported by peers in a professional learning community” (Stewart, 2014, p. 28). More specifically this learning should involve teacher inquiry into practice related tasks including pedagogical approaches, assessment, observation and reflection, whilst also ensuring that there is time for teachers to make links between their new learning and teaching (Borko, Jacobs & Koeliner, 2010). This new approach to professional learning is considered in more detail after issues surrounding more traditional in-service teacher education programs have been explored further.

Traditionally, teacher professional learning has consisted of one-off, offsite, generic courses, unrelated to teachers’ own practices, sometimes lasting only a few hours, and often based around content rather than process or pedagogy (Webster-Wright, 2009). Timperly and Alton-Lee (2008) noted that the providers of these professional learning programs appeared to have the expectation that they would be able to change teacher practice by delivering superior knowledge and expertise in short bursts. Teachers were placed in the position of technicians implementing a prescribed practice and the complexity of authentic teaching and learning events was not recognised. Labone and Lang (2016) concurred, suggesting that during traditional professional learning there was an implication that the trainer/developer was the active participant responsible for improving teacher practice while teachers themselves were passive objects of the training. Over the past two decades the value of this type of approach has been questioned by various researchers (e.g., Justice, Mashburn, Hamre & Pianta, 2008; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Zhang, Lai, Pang, Yi & Rozelle, 2013). Thus, a shift has occurred away from professional learning programs where knowledge was transmitted to passive teachers, towards a process of professional learning where teachers were able to actively construct their own knowledge and understandings. This mirrored earlier changes of approaches in classroom teaching and learning (Labone & Lang, 2016). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) recognised the similarities between teacher and student learning emphasising the benefits of doing, reading, reflecting and collaborating for both. Through observation, collaboration and reflection they believed that teachers could “make the leap from theory to accomplished practice” (p. 83). Labone and Lang (2016) extended this view, specifically noting that as a result of active participation teachers would become responsible for their own learning, internalise knowledge and understandings and be able to effect lasting changes to practice.
On a national level in the USA, questions surrounding the efficacy of traditional teacher learning programs were addressed by the US Department of Education via Zaslow et al.’s literature review (2010). This review began with the premise that the learning opportunities available at that time did not “adequately prepare all educators for the array of responsibilities, knowledge, and skills they are expected to demonstrate in their work with young children and their families” (p.xi). The review continued by highlighting the attributes of programs which had led to improved teacher practice, such as content specificity focused on knowledge and practice, joint participation and collaboration within contexts, active learning, and appropriate intensity and duration. These attributes clearly reflect those of effective professional learning discussed above and also mirror an earlier report by Desimone (2009). She recognised the importance of these four core attributes but added a fifth, coherence. This referred to the need for professional learning to be consistent with school and state policies or reforms and congruent with teachers’ own developing knowledge and beliefs. More recently the importance of these key features has been corroborated and elaborated on (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Diamond et al., 2013). A summary of these attributes follows.

2.5.1 Teacher knowledge and practice.

The first feature considered by Zaslow et al. (2010) concerned the content of professional learning programs and emphasised the need to have a clear focus on both teacher knowledge and practice. Stewart (2014) suggested that the early stages of knowledge building could take place through passive activities such as reading or training but that it was necessary for active reinforcement to take place in teachers’ own working environments. As teachers explored new knowledge concepts and strategies, and analysed and evaluated their implementation, a greater impact on practice would occur. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) agreed, recommending that professional learning should be “both externally provided and [have] job-embedded activities that increase teachers’ knowledge and help them change their practice in ways that support student learning” (p. 2).

Therefore, the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills are process based. For professional learning to be effectively targeted, a number of aspects need to be considered. At the onset of professional learning, teachers’ existing knowledge and skills should be evaluated, integrated and built upon (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Labone & Long, 2016). If this does not occur, changes in practices will not be sustained and teachers will return to previous practices (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008). Similarly, professional learning should be directly related to teachers’ needs and questions about their own practices. Patton, Parker and Tannehill (2015) suggest that professional learning is most relevant, and therefore effective, when it is focused upon
teachers’ work with their students in their own contexts. Additionally, as teachers seek to answer questions about their own practices, they can apply their existing knowledge of their students’ learning processes and achievements to these questions and construct new knowledge and understandings (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008). However, the application of existing knowledge to create new knowledge would, however, be ineffective without teacher self- and collaborative-reflection. Through reflection and self-evaluation teachers can increase their knowledge, develop their beliefs and integrate these into their existing practices (Labone & Long, 2016). Furthermore, teacher reflection, particularly critical reflection that challenges unqualified assumptions and habitual practice, can lead to transformative changes in teacher learning, teacher practice and student learning (Webster-Wright, 2009).

This was exemplified in the final report of the Fostering Effective Early Learning (FEEL) project (Siraj et al., 2018) where it was found that key factors in enhancing children’s learning included teachers’ knowledge of curriculum content and their ability to use a broad range of pedagogical strategies. Participating teachers were not only given the opportunity to apply their new knowledge of content and pedagogies but also, after reflection, to adapt these to the needs of their own contexts, thus supporting ownership and sustainability of changes to practice. Thus, as teachers are given agency over their professional learning they are empowered to “create and co-create their own practice development” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer & Bristol, 2014, p. 137).

### 2.5.2 Collaboration.

The contribution of collaboration in professional learning was considered by Zaslow et al. (2010). In their view, collaboration in professional learning can take place on two levels: (i) between teachers and (ii) between teachers and other members of staff. They saw both of these as being effective strategies. Collaboration between teachers within and across age groups was viewed as advantageous as this provided continuity of children’s learning experiences. This type of teacher collaboration has also been associated with the de-privatising of practice, which Edwards-Groves and Hardy (2013) viewed as an essential element of professional learning and sustained change in practice.

Additionally, when administrators and other non-teaching staff members were involved in professional learning it was suggested that there would be fewer contradictions and conflicts about approaches (Zaslow et al., 2010). Similarly, a more consistent approach to improving student
learning has been observed when teachers and leaders develop a common focus through a coherent professional learning culture (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). However, Lipowsky and Rzejack (2015) questioned whether collaborative professional learning across a whole school context was wholly effective. They suggested that it might be more appropriate to focus on specific teams within a school or bring together teachers from different sites that taught the same subjects or student age groups. Labone and Long (2016) supported both approaches, recommending collaborative planning, implementation of strategies and assessment. They added that collaboration could also take place between peers and also with expert mentors.

More recently, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted the benefits of professional sharing of ideas and collaboration in new learning, which could lead to widespread change in practices. They supported collaboration on a variety of levels, suggesting that collaboration could take place not only within a single school community but across several school communities, or even throughout school districts. The benefits of multi-site collaborations were previously noted by Webster-Wright (2009) who believed that collaborations could be extended even more widely to the broader community and universities. They further explained that greater critical enquiry would be enabled and transformative learning would be facilitated in this way. Timperly and Alton-Lee (2008) provided an example of this when they described the effectiveness of an approach used in New Zealand. This involved collaboration between policy makers, practitioners and researchers and led to positive outcomes for diverse learners. This type of multi-site collaboration was similarly validated by Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson and Hardy (2012) and Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014) when they examined the concept of professional learning communities, or ecologies of practices, which involved collaboration between district offices, schools, classrooms and communities covering the practices of leadership, professional learning, teaching, learning and research.

Thus, collaboration may be effective with small groups or large groups, in single settings or across many settings. Moreover, it could also be used to further extend and widen teacher skills. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) proposed that teachers should take on new collaborative roles in which they would work together to develop the curriculum, create assessments, set standards and evaluate their practices, as well as collectively solving problems associated with their practices. They added that teachers should have the opportunity to take part in collaborative practices over extended periods of time. The significance of time in collaborative professional learning was brought to the forefront when the FEEL project was evaluated. When participants were surveyed, collaborative practices were rated at a lower level than other aspects of the professional learning.
It was suggested that this was due to the complexities of developing collaborative teams and that greater lengths of time would be needed to embed this new approach into practice. Despite this, collaboration formed one of the key learning approaches used in the FEEL project, as a team based approach allowed for differences in existing knowledge and experience and also differences in participants’ learning styles (Siraj et al., 2018).

2.5.3 Active learning.

Active learning is often regarded as an essential part of effective professional learning. However, it is an umbrella term that can cover diverse approaches. Opinions about the exact content of active learning vary. For example, Zaslow et al. (2010) noted the importance of active learning plus observations and individual feedback. Diamond et al. (2013) did not label aspects as active learning but highlighted the value of collaboration, trying out strategies and receiving feedback. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) included collaboration, coaching, feedback, reflection, models and modelling as active learning.

Collaboration was discussed in the previous section. Therefore, the remaining aspects of active learning are now considered. Three of these, coaching, modelling and feedback, are closely linked and will be discussed collectively. An individual discussion of the fourth aspect, reflection, follows.

Observations, coaching and feedback.

In order for observations to take place, strategies must be trialled. Observations may be carried out by peers (collaboratively), or by coaches, who will then give feedback.

Zaslow et al. (2010) questioned which form of coaching would be most effective, suggesting that a collaborative approach might be more effective than an expert who imparts knowledge. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) also recommended peer evaluation and coaching as part of a professional learning program. Similarly, Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014) observed the benefits of peer or collegial coaching conversations on practice at a number of schools, which began processes of critical reflection. However, Labone and Long (2016) suggested that modelling by expert coaches would ensure that the introduction of new practices is scaffolded according to individual teachers’ current practices. This would help reduce the possibility of teachers’ rejection of change due to excessive disparity between their current practices and the new practice.

These contrary views showed that questions regarding the most effective coaching methods are ongoing. Diamond et al. (2013) recognised this and highlighted the need for a greater understanding.
of specific aspects of effective coaching (e.g., in-staff coaches or external coaches, optimum frequency of coaching, communities of practice models or individualisation). Despite these questions they concluded that individualised coaching, often involving feedback on children’s learning, was helping teachers to use more effective strategies in their classrooms. The value of feedback after coaching was also acknowledged by Labone and Long (2016), who advocated that a range of approaches should be used such as group or peer review, self-reflection and evaluation, and expert or mentor feedback.

More recently, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) recommended a combined approach and valued the differing contributions of both peer and expert coaching. It was suggested that peer coaching should involve reciprocal observations across classrooms and collaborative planning, promoting teacher collegiality and autonomy, whilst expert coaches (from inside or outside a school) could more effectively support the introduction of new curricula etc. These coaches should: model targeted strategies, observe teachers using them and provide them with individualised feedback.

**Reflection.**

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) viewed reflection, collaborative and individual, as an integral part of effective professional learning programs. They stated that teachers should have the opportunity to reflect upon a range of authentic practices (e.g., lesson planning, live or video recordings of teaching events). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011) provided further explanation regarding the necessity of authenticity, stating that it would help to clarify the complex processes involved in teaching and learning. Timperly and Alton-Lee (2008) were more specific, explaining that teachers should not only reflect on the results of student assessments to inform planning for future learning but also reflect on the effects of the teaching approaches used. Webster-Wright (2009) further suggested that in-depth, critical reflection on teaching approaches during professional learning can lead to a questioning of habitual thought and action in the practices used. Such questioning has been shown to play an important role in transformative change for teachers as learners and their students. (Such transformative change through the application of reflective processes have long been associated with action research cycles, suggested by Lewin [Coghlan & Brannick, 2003], and the self-reflective spirals or cycles of critical practitioner research [Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014] which are considered in greater depth in section 3.3).
2.5.4 Intensity and duration.

When considering the intensity and duration of traditional professional learning Zaslow et al. (2010) noted that there should be a correspondence between the complexity of topics covered and the time allocated for learning; professional learning covering a wide range of strategies or with a broad content focus requires much longer than learning involving single strategies or a narrow content focus. However, these authors also observed that one-time workshops did not appear to be as effective as more extensive on-site learning. This was confirmed by Diamond et al. (2013) who determined that there was considerable evidence to show that brief workshops were ineffective in producing lasting changes to teacher practice. These two studies therefore implicitly showed support for a move towards ongoing, extended professional learning.

Labone and Long (2016) recommended that professional learning should take place over a minimum duration of one semester (approximately six months). Stewart (2014) agreed as their proposed continuous professional development cycle required an extended period of time for its effective application. This cycle included: identification of student learning needs → identification of related teacher learning needs → time for teachers to learn or review concepts → application of concepts → critical reflection on lessons (p. 29)\(^9\). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also recognised the benefits of more sustained professional learning and noted specific features that should be present: teachers should fully engage in learning, practise strategies and apply knowledge. Through these methods they reported that there would be a greater possibility of transforming teachers’ practice and children’s learning. A general agreement regarding the benefits of ongoing professional learning appears to have been formed. However, Lipowsky and Rzejak (2015) cautioned that although extended professional learning provides opportunities for applying knowledge and skills, what actually occurs during the professional learning can be more important. Therefore, professional learning activities should be closely monitored to ensure that quality learning experiences (e.g., through collaboration, observation, coaching feedback, reflection) take place.

\(^9\) Stewart’s (2014) cycle shows a marked resemblance to Lewin’s action research cycle (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003) and the participatory action research cycle of Kemmis and his colleagues (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014) with additional phases associated with teacher Professional Learning.
2.5.5 Coherence.

As previously stated, for professional learning to be effective it must exhibit coherence. According to Desimone (2009) coherence has a dual focus in professional learning: (i) learning should be consistent with teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, and (ii) learning should be consistent with school, district and state polices and reforms. For the first of these it should be remembered that teachers’ knowledge and beliefs are distinct concepts. Labone and Long (2016) advise that professional learning should aim to not only increase knowledge but also ensure that these increases connect with teachers’ existing beliefs and develop them appropriately. However, an individual teacher’s beliefs can be inconsistent, and the teacher may be uncertain about some aspects of practice. It is important that these inconsistencies and uncertainties are addressed, and that teachers’ beliefs become more aligned with research-based best practice approaches (Lynch & Owston, 2015). Without such changes in teacher belief, changes in practice cannot be sustained.

For professional learning to result in increased changes in practice, it should be connected to and integrated with a comprehensive approach to whole school change (Labone & Long, 2016). Further improvements in teacher learning can occur when additional connections are made between professional learning, whole school change and wider state priorities (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim & Edwards Santoro, 2010). For example, in an earlier study, McNaughton and Lai (2009) found two distinct advantages to including researchers and policy makers as well as teachers in professional learning. Firstly, misunderstandings about concepts could be avoided, reducing the possibility of impractical programs or solutions to problems. Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014) echoed these views recommending that practice development, through professional learning, should incorporate both the implementation of national and state policies while responding to the particular needs of individual schools and their wider communities in order to be effective. Secondly, greater, more diverse sources of knowledge and expertise could be accessed throughout the planning, implementation and eventual replication of professional learning. Similarly, by expanding the collaborative processes in this way, teachers can also gain insight into their role in the bigger picture and professional learning becomes more relevant to them (Stewart, 2014).

Through this discussion, five clear themes have emerged in effective teacher learning over the last ten years. It should have a clear focus on knowledge and practice. It should be collaborative and site-based. It should involve active learning and teacher participation. It should be of the appropriate intensity and duration, often for extended periods. It should be connected to both teachers’ internal knowledge and belief systems, and wider external school, district and state
systems. Moreover, these methods regard teachers as experts who are knowledgeable about what they teach, how they teach and why they teach it, and who possess the requisite versatility and adaptability necessary for their complex roles (McNaughton & Lai, 2009). These approaches to professional learning therefore respect teacher agency and enable sustained changes in practice.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to synthesise the available literature informing four key concepts associated with this research:

- learning and development theories that might potentially influence the participants’ understandings and teaching of oral language/narrative discourse
- pedagogical influences on participants’ practice (the EPPE and REPEY projects and Epstein’s intentional teaching approach) and associated best practices
- different forms of assessment and how they may be applied most effectively to the development of narrative discourse
- professional learning methods that have the greatest positive impact on teachers’ practice and student learning.

These aspects become entwined in a professional learning and teaching cycle that is empirically complex.

Figure 1 illustrates the cyclical process and clarifies its iterative nature. The background circle represents the ways in which teachers’ beliefs, understandings and practices are influenced and formed by their knowledge of learning theories. These in turn influence each of the parts of the professional learning and teaching cycle. For research in this area to be effective, it therefore needs to be anchored in a thorough understanding of the literature that is relevant to each of the concepts.
The next chapter introduces the various theoretical aspects which contextualise the broader concepts of teaching and learning (schooling, education and praxis). It considers how these may be improved and transformed through systematic, theoretically sound research design (DBR – Easterdays’ six phase model, 2014) and how these changes can be understood through the use of a sophisticated method of analysis (Practice Architectures) that can be used descriptively, interpretively and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis, Wilkinson & Edwards-Groves, 2017).

Figure 1: The professional learning and teaching cycle.

Combining concepts from critical participatory action research (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014), Lewin’s action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003) and professional learning communities (Stewart, 2014).
3. The Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter provides a general understanding of the ontology and epistemology surrounding the present research. From an ontological perspective, a foundation on which knowledge and understanding about the research is built upon is provided through a substantive framework (or theoretical framework). This foundation frames the underlying transformative purpose of the research – to create opportunities for children to improve their narrative discourse abilities by implementing a professional learning program based around the development of ECTs’ skills in the teaching of this specific area of oral language. In particular, the substantive framework has supported the development of the research questions and connects the research to existing knowledge (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Hatch & Coleman King, 2015). An epistemological viewpoint is provided through a methodological framework (Hatch & Coleman King, 2015), or as it is sometimes referred to, a conceptual framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014), which scaffolds the data collection, analysis methods and the way the findings are presented.

Therefore, this research is scaffolded by two inter-related theoretical frameworks, both of which play essential roles. The first, the substantive framework, establishes the existing conditions in the education system, while the second, the methodological framework, provides a structure through which these may be challenged and transformed. More specifically, the first framework aids the understanding of the overall context in which the research takes place – the social phenomena of education. Through this framework common misconceptions about the conceptual categories of schooling and education are interrogated before the values of educational praxis are endorsed. This discussion connects the realities of the participating ECTs’ practices to the existing, organised body of substantive knowledge (Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015). It scaffolds understandings about the ways in which ECTs began to question, recognise and respond to problems, and worked to transform their practices, and reveals the relationship between these and the concept of educational praxis.
The second, the methodological framework, encompasses methods for researching, analysing and ultimately transforming educational practices. It provides a structure through which the present research problem is explored and demonstrates the relationships between the variables, that is, between the analytical (Practice Architectures) and methodological—in this case, design-based research (DBR)—approaches, that are peculiar to this research. The development of Practice Architectures is explained and evaluated as an analytical tool that can be used descriptively, interpretively and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017). The relationship between Practice Architectures and action research is considered and two forms of action research are compared, Lewin’s original process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003) and Kemmis’ critical participatory action research (Kemmis, McTaggart et al., 2014). DBR is then introduced as a scientifically and theoretically sound method of research. As the processes of DBR are explored, its similarities and differences to Lewin’s action research and critical participatory action research are identified.

This chapter begins, then, by discussing the concepts of schooling, education and praxis in greater detail. This is followed by an account of the synthesis of the research methodologies, which are scaffolded by the second framework: Practice Architectures, action research and DBR.

3.1 Schooling, Education and Educational Praxis

As Oliver (2016) remarked, there is widespread confusion about schooling and education, what these terms mean and the relationship between the two. Superficially it may appear that schooling and education are interchangeable terms, as school is a place one attends in order to gain an education. However, when these two conceptual categories are examined in greater depth, significant differences become apparent.

3.1.1 Schooling.

Schooling, as a public institution, is accountable not only to its students but also to their parents, the government bodies that fund them, and society as a whole. Ongoing tensions caused by the competing demands of these stakeholders can result in conflict between educational and socio-cultural values (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). These demands and conflicts are considered in this section and section 3.1.2.
Accountability to parents can entail providing childcare and basic healthcare as well as fulfilling educational goals. For many parents, the main goal of education is that their children be prepared to, ultimately, become productive and financially secure members of society. Some also add that their children should gain greater understanding of themselves and the world around them and develop wider interests for their own personal satisfaction, this second goal is more in tune with the concept of education than schooling and is considered later (D. Carr, 2003).

The first of these parental goals coincides, to some extent, with a political/governmental goal of socialisation, which first became necessary during the Industrial Revolution (Osborne, 2008). At this time there were major disruptions to the established social systems and governments believed that the newly emerging working-class needed to have their behaviours shaped to suit the realities of factory employment conditions. This was achieved through a new compulsory public school system which followed an approved curriculum, taught the applicable skills and values and introduced students to the routines of working life (Osborne, 2008). Socialisation and acceptance of routine of this kind can still be found in modern-day secondary school classrooms where students may be learning more than the intended subject-knowledge. For example, during episodes of chalk-and-talk-teaching, where students are expected to copy information competently and without complaint, they can also be seen to be developing these workplace skills (Osborne, 2008). Thus, students may be simultaneously socialised for working life and acquire curriculum-knowledge. Such acquisition of knowledge can be linked to a second level of government accountability, the achievement of high-level standardised test scores (Osborne, 2008; Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014).

Results of standardised testing have become the preferred method for schools to demonstrate their accountability to government. Unfortunately, the publication of these test results has added pressure to both teachers and students. Schools have been forced into competitive situations where the focus is on high student test scores in order to achieve a high ranking on league tables (Osborne, 2008; Polesel et al., 2014). This has led to an over-emphasis on extending students’ subject-knowledge of prescribed content in preparation for tests or examinations at the expense of a broader curriculum and a good education for all (Biesta, 2015, Osborne, 2008; Polesel et al., 2014). The negative effects of limiting student learning in this way was highlighted by Anderson (2019), who challenged this
situation in Australia, explaining that though HSC, NAPLAN and ATARs\textsuperscript{10} are important in the short term, their influence is finite. Too great a focus on these aspects of assessment can damage rather than strengthen long-term student learning. He continued by stating that our schools should be developing the students’ infinite skills of deep learning, creativity, collaboration and critical reflection so they are prepared for 21\textsuperscript{st} Century challenges. These broader skills can be more closely linked to some of the concepts of education.

3.1.2 Education.

The development of the four skills, recommended by Anderson (2019), are closely related to three defining characteristics of education: the expansion of intellectual horizons, the sharpening of minds and the development of thought and reflection (Osborne, 2008, p. 27). These may be achieved as individuals are introduced to new “forms of understanding, modes of action, and ways of relating to one another and the world” that will nurture individual and collective self-expression, self-development and self-determination (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Additionally, Biesta (2015), emphasised that education must incorporate content, purpose and relationships, that is, students must learn something, for a reason, from someone. The first and last of these concepts are self-explanatory while the second is more complex. Biesta continued by explaining the purpose of education as being multidimensional and having three functions: socialisation, subjectification and qualification. Superficially, these three functions correspond to the goals of schooling, previously discussed, however the balance and breadth of these concepts as part of the educational conceptual category is different.

As previously stated, socialisation through public schooling was of great importance during and after the Industrial Revolution with governments using the schooling system to shape student behaviour for future factory employment (Osborne, 2008). It was similarly used to promote nationalism in emerging nations such as the Soviet Union and Germany in the early to mid 20th Century, becoming a vehicle for indoctrination (Oliver, 2016, 2018). However, socialisation as a function of education is much more extensive, representing and initiating children and young

\textsuperscript{10} These are Australian standardised tests. The HSC is the High School Certificate, taken at the end of Year 12. The ATAR is the Australian National Admission Rank which is one of the criteria for university entry. NAPLAN is the National Assessment Program – Numeracy and Literacy which tests skills in these areas in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
people into the breadth of sociocultural norms, professional, political and religious traditions. It should be remembered that, as with the socialisation aspects of schooling, unequal social structures may be promoted rather than those of equality and freedom of thought and expression (Biesta, 2015).

Biesta’s second function or domain of education, subjectification, can also produce positive or negative effects on students. A positive aspect of subjectification is to develop students as subjects of initiatives and responsibilities, thus empowering them. In contrast to this subjectification can result in a student becoming an object of others’ actions within the educational or schooling process. This negative side of subjectification becomes apparent when there is an imbalance of emphasis between the three domains, such as an over-emphasis on academic achievement, a function of the qualification domain.

Over-emphasis on test results has already been considered, through the concept of schooling, as a simple method for schools to demonstrate their accountability to funding-bodies. However, when excessive pressures are put on students to perform in tests as part of their education they can suffer from extreme stress (Anderson, 2019; Biesta, 2015). Additionally, teachers are pressurised to teach-to-the-test, to satisfy the competitive nature of schooling (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), and students are precluded from gaining a good education with richness and depth (Biesta, 2015). Biesta’s good education could be likened to a modern version of a liberal education, as described by Osborne (2008), whose purpose

is not to confirm us in some existing version of identity or culture, but to enable us to step outside of it, to view it with fresh eyes, and thus to enrich our experience and enlarge our range of choice. Education introduces us to worlds we might otherwise never encounter, thereby reshaping our vision of the world we think we know. (p. 32)

Osborne acknowledged objections to traditional forms of liberal education but maintained that its principles were sound. He emphasised that they should be extended and taught in innovative ways using dialogic and inquiry-based pedagogies. Consequently, teachers must be empowered to make judgements about what and how to teach (Biesta, 2015; Osborne, 2008). By reclaiming their professionalism, teachers can begin to enact educational praxis and work towards creating a good life for all (Heikkinen, 2018).
3.1.3 Educational praxis.

Aristotle saw all kinds of political activity as praxis and, for him, educational activities were also political (W. Carr, 2018) and, hence, the emergence of educational praxis. There are two views of praxis, the Hegelian-Marxist one which sees praxis as a history making action and the Aristotelean one which sees praxis as actions that are moral, ethical and politically responsible. In both cases, praxis has been seen as transformative in nature, though the transformations might only be very small (Mahon, Kemmis, Francisco & Lloyd, 2017).

Aristotle’s definition of praxis is discussed here because it is the most compatible with wider educational values. Ax and Ponte (2018) described praxis as “the real and existing practice of education and as a natural condition of human beings” in which “the promise and process of education always exists” (p. 127). They believed that every action of educational praxis should have meaning, be dependent on concrete situations, be based on suppositions about the situations, and involve several actors. The actions of praxis must also enable a good and virtuous life for the teacher-actor and for others in the same community. They are social in nature, take place at specific sites and are made and remade, gradually unfolding over time (Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer & Smith, 2018). These actions are achieved through phronesis or the application of practical wisdom (Heikkinen, 2018).

Good teachers, who aim to enact praxis, must have the appropriate disposition (desire to do the right thing) and be responsive to the transitory conditions which surround their practices. Moreover, they must be knowledgeable about educational traditions, be skilled practitioners, apply practical wisdom to actions of praxis and be able to critically reflect on their actions. These skills are delineated but are empirically intertwined and they develop through the reciprocal actions of praxis and phronesis (Edwards-Groves et al., 2018). This complex relationship is clarified in Figure 2.
Educational praxis is an ongoing and constantly evolving practice that is continually shaping and reshaping teaching with the overarching aim of improving student learning. It is fostered through communication, collaboration and reflection with others who share the same goal of improving student learning (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). This research sought to facilitate ECTs’ development and application of these three attributes through shared practice sessions (SPSs), where they would be able to collectively address a need they perceived in their children’s learning. Through their critical reflections at SPSs, they could increase their knowledge and skills and begin to apply them to their own teaching in order to gradually transform their children’s learning (Labone & Long, 2016). In this way, praxis would be developed further through collaborative research and it can be enhanced with the application of Practice Architectures as an analytical tool, to aid the understanding of educational processes.

3.2 Practice Architectures: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Transformations in Educational Practices

Practice Architectures provide researchers and practitioners with a conceptual framework through which they can view educational practices. It takes an ontological stance which focuses on the situatedness of practices (the sites where they happen), the moments of sociality (as people take part in activities and interactions) and the happeningness in real time (what happens). However, even as these practices unfold at their individual sites, in the here and now, Practice Architectures also recognises that they historically prefigured by the contents and conditions that have existed at,
or have been brought to the site, and the life experiences of the participants (Edwards-Groves, Olin & Karlberg-Granlund, 2016; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

As an analytical tool Practice Architectures may be used in three ways: empirically or descriptively, interpretively, and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017). It takes specific note of participants' language, activities and relationships that occur during a practice. These aspects of practice are all closely inter-related and entwined. However, Practice Architectures separates them analytically to enable deeper, more critical analysis, whilst still acknowledging their inseparability empirically (Kemmis et al., 2017).

To develop a greater understanding of the nature and purpose of Practice Architectures, its history and foundations in practice theory are now discussed. Its aims and key concepts are outlined, namely its reciprocal nature, the importance of human agency and context specificity (situatedness).

### 3.2.1 Historical background and links to practice theory.

Practice Architectures form a relatively new method of educational analysis, first introduced by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008), and their proponents have been influenced by a number of previous theorists, most notably Schatzki. Practice theory had its origins in the 1970s and sought to provide new ways to understand a wide variety of social phenomena including, language, culture, sustainability, science and technological change, and learning, by representing them as practices (Nicolini, 2017). Practice theory is used by academics with various philosophical viewpoints and so there is not a single unified approach. However, there are clear points of agreement (Schatzki, 2001) and these will be focused upon. This section will begin by summarising the key concepts of practice theory, the role of sayings and doings and the importance of context, whilst the ways in which practice theory can be used to analyse activities will conclude the section. As each of these areas is discussed their application in educational research is considered.

The key concepts of practice theory include the notions that, firstly, a practice involves multiple people taking part in organised activities and, secondly, that significant parts of human life may be understood as being embedded in this type of organised, social activity (Schatzki, 2013). Furthermore, these activities depend on the participants having shared understandings and possession of the relevant skill bases. Through these embodied understandings and skills, practices
are maintained, extended and transformed. Thus, the skilled body acts as the central connection between the mind and activity, and individual activity and society (Schatzki, 2001).

According to these key concepts then practice theory provides a highly appropriate framework for educational research. Teachers and educators work together, taking part in organised activities that require shared understandings and skills in order to maintain, extend and transform their practice. Similarly, by using their embodied skills and understandings they can make links between their own activities and those of their social group or practice.

However, practice theory does more than offer a basic definition of what a practice entails; it also delineates a methodological orientation by which the activities of a practice may be represented and analysed. Nicolini (2017), for example, proposes that the activities of a practice consist of organised groups of *sayings* and *doings* and that the different ways these are brought together and carried out will give a practice its character. This echoes the views of Schatzki, (2012) who explains that a practice consists of “an open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (p. 14), thereby highlighting the fluid, ongoing nature of a practice as it exists in time and space. Nicolini (2017) extends this thinking by viewing practices as performances, which must be continually reproduced in order for a practice to survive, and, which consequently create their own histories. Such practice performances occur in a space that Schatzki (2001) defines as the *field of practice* – a centre for human activity, generation of knowledge, language, science etc. where historical transformation can occur. Practice theory therefore also supports educational research as it provides a language through which the teacher’s activities may be represented, interpreted and analysed. Similarly, it highlights the social situatedness of the project and its transformational nature.

Through the framework of practice theory, utilising the concepts of *sayings* and *doings*, as they exist within and form part of the *field of practice*, the social phenomena of a practice may be analysed in several ways:
(1) practices, as scenes of actions and their historical backgrounds, can be analysed according to the concepts of sayings and doings;

(2) the lifetime of practices can be studied, their instigation, development, successes and failures, and their eventual disappearance;

(3) the co-evolution of practices, conflict and congruity can be addressed

(Nicolini, 2017)

Investigations may be further extended by considering how the multiple facets of *sayings* and *doings* inter-relate and group together to form a practice as a whole. These processes, with slightly different interpretations, have been given alternative labels by theorists, such as, networks, bundles and assemblages (Nicolini, 2017) or arrangements, bundles and constellations (Schatzki, 2001). In order to understand practices from these perspectives further explanation is necessary and Schatzki’s classifications will be used. Arrangements involve people, organisms, artefacts and things, forming a social order, and meeting in a practice. Schatzki (2001) provides an example of this through the description of a classroom setup of a teaching practice which could include: a teacher, students (people), a seeing-eye dog, pot plants (organisms), books (artefacts), and tables and chairs (things). Through such arrangements the activities of practices take place and are interwoven forming bundles. Many bundles can be connected through the relationships and links between the practices and the arrangements forming larger bundles or constellations. More bundles are created as more practices take place (Schatzki, 2012). Schatzki further emphasises that the unfolding of these bundles is essential to social change and development. Therefore, an analysis of the unfolding of practice bundles can aid the understanding of change and development. Nicolini (2017) suggests that this may be achieved by *zooming-out*, to understand the broader aspects of practices and *zooming-in* to specific accomplishments of the practice. This zooming-*in* facilitates a focus on individual filaments of a bundle, (i.e., enabling analytical reduction). The ability to analyse a practice in these numerous ways can provide a richer, thicker and more convincing interpretation of teachers’ developing skills (Nicolini, 2017).

Schatzki’s practice theory, then, focused on the *sayings* and *doings* in a practice. Practice Architectures, however, acknowledge the role of human primacy within a practice and the key role of praxis:
The concept of *praxis* is one of the things that distinguishes the theory of practice architectures from some other practice theories. In insisting on the primacy of the ‘human and humanistic’ in the enactment and realisation of practices and that practice is a “human and social activity with indissoluble moral, political and historical dimensions” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer & Bristol, 2014, p. 25), the theory foregrounds the transformative potential of practices and of the practitioners who enact them.

(Kemmis et al., 2017, p. 250)

The humanistic element was added to the practice theory’s *sayings* and *doings* in the form of *relatings*. The roles of these three types of actions in a practice are considered through the next two sections which discuss the aims and concepts of Practice Architectures. Human agency and the importance of collaboration are also discussed later in this chapter.

### 3.2.2 Aims of Practice Architectures.

The developers of Practice Architectures aim to provide educational researchers with a method of analysis through which they will be able to discover:

(1) where discourse in practices come from,

(2) how a practice’s activities are affected by objects created at particular times in particular ways; and

(3) how practice participants relate to each other and to those outside the practice and how this is affected by a site’s existing relations of power or solidarity.

(Kemmis et al., 2017)

By using Practice Architectures in this way researchers and practitioners have a means through which they can change social practice by transforming not only the more traditional aspects of practice, ideas, resources and ways of relating, but also through concepts proposed by Practice Architectures (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).
3.2.3 Concepts of Practice Architectures.

Practice Architectures consist of three major concept areas which influence the actions and the development of practices: intersubjective spaces or dimensions, arrangements and media. As with other practice theories (see p.77) these are all interwoven and interdependent. Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014) provide an explanation of these entwined relationships which occur on multiple levels. In practices the activities of *sayings, doings* and *relatings* are bundled together in projects and are enmeshed in particular practice architectures—the arrangements (see Table 2) which exist at a site or have been brought to it. These arrangements are, similarly, bundled together in practices, places and intersubjective spaces/dimensions (see Table 2) and form the tangible, perceivable aspects of practices. Moreover, the intersubjective spaces/dimensions are also bundled together and overlapping (Kemmis, McTaggart et al., 2014). The relationships between these many layered bundles is dynamic, interdependent and reciprocal. The sustainability, ability to reproduce or transform practices is dependent on these relationships and the *conditions of possibility* that they create (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014, p. 272). Kemmis et al. (2017) noted that while these concept areas are empirically entwined Practice Architectures can be used to disentangle them and view each analytically and critically to aid our understanding of practices, to further this objective Nicolini’s (2017) zooming-in and zooming-out techniques could be applied (see p.77). The following table (Table 2) disentangles the relationships between each concept area, whilst its final column shows the physical or verbal actions of practitioners in each of the areas. The relationships between the concepts and their characteristics are then outlined.

**Table 2: The basic relationships between the concepts involved in Practice Architectures based upon Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Concepts Proposed by Practice Architectures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Physical/Verbal actions of Practitioners’</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intersubjective Spaces</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dimensions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Semantic Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-Time in the material world</td>
<td>Physical Space-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relationships</td>
<td>Social Space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first column lists the three intersubjective spaces through which all the activities or business of a Community of Practice (CoP) will take place, these spaces are always present in the social world and as such exist before a CoP is initiated, however they are not predetermined and may be altered or changed according to social conditions (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). In the theory of Practice Architectures these intersubjective spaces are termed dimensions; in Table 2 above this premise is signified by the grey shading.

Arrangements exist or hang together within the dimensions and these are facilitated by media, which are embodied by the practice acts of sayings, doings and relatings. Each of the arrangements has its own characteristics and purpose. Cultural-discursive arrangements are facilitated by the medium of language and symbols which enables or constrains how people express themselves, whether through the sharing of a common language such as German or Italian or through shared professional discourses such as those of medical doctors or educationalists. Material-economic arrangements are facilitated by the medium of work and activity which enables or constrains how people will do something or complete an activity in a variety of contexts—for example, home, school, work. Social-political arrangements are facilitated by the medium of power and solidarity which enables or constrains the ways in which people relate to one another, which may be harmonious, connecting, or discordant, contesting (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

The final column considers new practices which emerge from the Practice Architectures approach: sayings, doings and relatings. The most effective way of explaining the purpose and characteristics of these practices is by borrowing an illustrative situation from Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer (2017). They submit that during the teaching of reading in a primary school classroom all these practices will take place, simultaneously hanging out during the activity. Sayings will be evident in the specific, reading related, language used by practitioners (e.g., phonics and comprehension). Doings will take place during reading activities (e.g., guided reading or big book sharing). Relatings will be present as teachers and children or children and their peers relate to each other during the reading activities. These practices, therefore, respectively embody new understandings, new ways of acting and new ways of relating to others and the world (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

3.2.4 **Reciprocity of practices and Practice Architectures.**

This discussion has demonstrated the importance of the relationships and the interconnectedness of the three facets of Practice Architectures. However, it should also be remembered that Practice Architectures was designed as a method for educational analysis leading to the transformation of
practice. Therefore, an additional relationship exists – the relationship between Practice Architectures and practice itself. This relationship has a reciprocal nature (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014):

Practice Architectures shapes and is shaped by practices

Practice shapes and is shaped by Practice Architectures

This mirrors the reciprocity of the relationship between the *sayings, doings and relatings*, as they *hang together* within projects and practice traditions.

*Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014)*

Kemmis et al. (2017, p. 243) recommend that researchers and practitioners extend their thinking in this area by delving into these reciprocal relationships to gain greater insights into how practices and practice architectures “make worlds that are increasingly sustainable, or unsustainable, for the people who inhabit them, for others and for the other species and other things with whom and with which we share the planet”. This extension of Practice Architectures to include a critical component is a broad, long term task which may enable the unravelling of questions regarding how things happened during practices, why they happened, and their historical consequences for human relationships and their relationships with the world.

### 3.2.5 Human agency and collaboration.

Practice Architectures is, then, a theory about practices; how they are produced, reproduced in different contexts, transformed and eventually dissolved (Kemmis et al., 2017). These processes, however, cannot be completed without the active, purposeful participation of individuals or groups of practitioners (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). According to Practice Architectures all practices will be influenced by conditions found in pre-existing dimensions and arrangements, but practice activities can only be performed by human beings. Human beings ultimately control the ways in which practices are, or are not, carried out; they can act creatively and innovatively, except in
extreme or oppressive circumstances. During practice activities individuals will develop an understanding of practice restraints but also be able to consider different approaches which will lead to new and better practices. Kemmis et al. (2017) recognise this as the fulfillment of human agency.

Moreover, processes of change and transformation cannot be effectively carried out by single individuals but should involve collaboration. Collaboration may take place on different levels; it may be hierarchical and include policy makers or leaders and practitioners, or it may take place on a single level including groups of practitioners.

The importance of this first type of collaboration was focused upon by Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. (2014) when they considered the ramifications of imposing practice changes upon practitioners. They asserted that for effective transformations to take place conversation must be embraced and leaders should share with teachers/practitioners the challenges of creating the new sayings, doings and relatings of a new, transformed practice. The second type of collaboration, collaboration between peers during practice, was considered by Kemmis and Mutton (2012) during their Education for Sustainability research which included 10 different sites (including schools, tertiary education contexts and community groups). They discovered that participants possessed many different levels and types of understandings, skills and relationships which were used in and developed through strong collaborative practices. This sociality of practice was visible through distributed sayings (no single individual held all the knowledge—it was distributed between participants), distributed doings (chains of doings were built enabling skills to be passed between practitioners), and distributed relatings (networks were developed within groups and beyond them). Through these collaborative efforts participants were able to begin to transform the sayings, doings and relatings of unsustainable ways of living into those of sustainable ways of living.

For greater, more proactive change and transformation to occur professional learning programs should be instigated. Collaboration has already been discussed as an essential factor in change processes and, in conjunction with the cultivation of a culture of care, it also plays a significant role in professional learning. This was recognised by Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014), who also proposed two more conditions that were necessary for effective professional learning to occur: agentic and collegial responsibility, and deprivatising of practice. Each of the three conditions identified by Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) demonstrated the building of team attributes. Once the attributes of collaboration, peer support and collective responsibility have been established in a practice, more effective professional learning can occur through various practices. Some examples
of practices that can support professional learning and change have been listed in Table 7 (p. 114); the effectiveness of these is dependent upon practitioners acting in a reflective and reflexive manner. Kemmis, McTaggart, et al. (2014) refined ideas originally developed in the 1980s (e.g. Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) through in depth discussions surrounding the importance of reflective practices and proposed that individual and collective reflection should be critical, dynamic and questioning. They believed that reflections should be based upon participants’ own practice and its consequences, how participants understand their practice, and the conditions under which practices take place. These bases for reflection demonstrate the importance of context specificity (situatedness). They further suggested that these types of reflection could be extended to include the reflexive nature of practice, considering that, as practice shapes participants’ personal cognisance it also shapes the social environment, and these will ultimately affect the practice itself. This has been illustrated in Figure 3.

![Figure 3: The reflexive nature of practice development (based on the concepts expressed in Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014, p. 52)](image)

Kemmis, McTaggart, et al. (2014) also specified that reflexivity could be objective and/or subjective, individual and/or social. Changes over time could, therefore, be viewed in an objective way by an external observer, specifically considering either an individual’s behaviour (individual objective) or the interactions between participants (social objective). Conversely, subjective reflection of change over time would include a participant’s consideration of his/her own actions
(individual subjective) and participants’ consideration of their group practices and how they represent these to others (social subjective). Traditionally, objective reflection has been undertaken by researchers and subjective reflections have been undertaken by practitioners. Through the combination of subjective and objective reflections, individual and social reflections, and the understanding of the reflexive cycle, reflectiveness will be deepened, and professional learning extended. As professional learning, reflective and reflexive practices are applied to teachers’ classroom practices, children’s learning opportunities should also be transformed (Borko et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Knapp, 2003).

Practice Architectures, then, provide a means through which researchers and practitioners can gain a greater understanding of: existing practices; the sites in which they occur; the ways in which they can be transformed; the role of effective professional learning in these transformations; and how they can become productive and sustainable. It may also be used to describe, interpret or critically analyse these practices (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017). In essence, Practice Architectures seek to enable transformations in practices, but for optimum transformations to occur a research process must also take place. Kemmis, one of the original proponents of Practice Architectures, also played a key role in the evolution of Lewin’s action research theories.

3.3 Action Research and its Transformation into Critical Participatory Action Research

Lewin was a social scientist, during the early to mid-20th Century, who developed a revolutionary approach to researching social systems. He believed that social sciences should be based around problem-solving. These problems could be big or small, but each would be critical to their own society/community (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003). He was also an interventionist who, like Aristotle and modern-day proponents of educational praxis, unequivocally believed in cultivating a better world. In order to achieve this, he created an action research model which involved iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning (which he likened to the processes used by bomber squadrons that he had observed during World War II). Other key features of Lewin’s model were:

- the role of the non-participatory researcher;
- the importance of the individual practice or site but also the ability to generalise newfound knowledge (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014);
- the role of communication and collaboration within groups (Rönnerman & Salo, 2018).
These basic principles behind Lewin’s model provided a basis from which Kemmis’ group could develop their own model, critical participatory action research. The final principle of communication and collaboration continued to be an essential part of the newer model with an added emphasis on collaboration between researchers and participants. However, the other principles were shaped and reshaped according to circumstances and experiences that altered the perspectives of the researchers. Alterations to Lewin’s model are now outlined.

When Kemmis and his colleagues began using action research, they closely followed Lewin’s reflective practice cycles which they viewed as spirals. However, over time they came to believe that the spiral was too rigid and did not allow for researchers to be actively and proactively critical … on the side of ourselves as participants, the causes of our felt concerns are to be found in the way we think, in the way we do things, and in our responses to the conditions in which we live and work; and, second, on the side of the conditions under which we work, those causes are to be found in the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that hold our practice in place.

(Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 6)

This demonstrates the ways in which Kemmis and his group of researchers combined critical participatory action research with Practice Architectures to provide an holistic approach to the research and analysis of practices. Critical participatory action researchers aimed to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of participants and the contexts they worked in (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). However, by being less systematic than Lewin they risked the censure of traditional researchers for being less scientific, an issue that was addressed by another form of participatory research, design-based research, which is discussed later.

They also developed a differing view to that of Lewin regarding the role of the researcher. Whilst accepting that there was value in having a non-participatory researcher, critical participatory action researchers favoured an active role in research. For example, they participated in critical self- and collective-reflections, with participants, about their practices and the conditions under which they were practising. In this way the researchers could reveal unjust, unsustainable or irrational practices (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014) mirroring Lewin’s benevolent views and goals for a more just world.
The final adjustment that Kemmis’ group made to Lewin’s original action research model involved the scope of a research project. They prioritised individual cases, looking at particular systems, actions, events and circumstances, and not concerning themselves with the generalisability of their findings (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). This was contrary to Lewin’s approach where he produced constructs for individual situations and also aimed to use them in a more general way (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003). Thus, Lewin’s original objectives in using action research were maintained by Kemmis’ group but some slight alterations in perspective and process were enacted.

3.4 DBR: An organisational base for educational inquiries

The principles of Lewin’s original action research model are also evident in another research approach, that of design-based research (DBR) which began its own development at a similar time to Kemmis’ exploration of action research. DBR, therefore, is a relatively new approach to research having its foundation in the 1990s when Brown first synthesised her theories about transforming the factory learning styles of many schools into learning environments which encouraged reflective practice in students, teachers and researchers. Collins termed these processes design experiments (Collins, 1992, as cited in A. Brown, 1992, p. 141), which took place in classroom contexts rather than laboratory conditions, and through which she, A. Brown, aimed “to engineer innovative educational environments and simultaneously conduct experimental studies of those innovations” (A. Brown, 1992, p. 141). Integral to these studies were the aims of improving educational practices whilst also adding to theoretical knowledge. These early attempts at creating a new style of research, which combined educational research and practice, gradually evolved into DBR (Štemberger & Cencič, 2014).

Thus, from its beginnings DBR was context-based, used reflective practices and aimed to transform situations mirroring action research characteristics. More similarities between the approaches emerge when definitions of DBR are considered. Wang and Hannafin (2005, p. 6) defined DBR as a systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories.

From this definition key features can be identified. These include the research process (design), iterative analysis, flexibility, collaboration, context, and theories. Many of these features are also
essential components of action research, although in DBR systematic design and contribution to theory are brought to the forefront.

The emphasis on design became increasingly dominant as DBR evolved. Easterday et al. (2014) noted that some researchers from outside the discipline of educational research were suggesting that DBR lacked rigour and was not scientifically based. Easterday et al. (2014) determined to refute this thinking by honouring a variety of scientific principles in their new six phase model. They developed a clear definition of DBR, described the nested-processes (sub-phases of the design) and demonstrated how DBR could quickly identify plausible solutions in an early phase that could be more rigorously tested in later phases. In this way the resulting version of DBR closely resembles Lewin’s original action research model and actively works to address the concerns of more traditional research proponents as to its accountability.

Furthermore, DBR studies aim to add to theoretical knowledge. Štemberger and Cencič (2014) explain that researchers using DBR methods refer to previous examples of innovations to aid them in the planning and design of their studies. On the completion of their research projects, researchers contribute their own experiences of the research methods, including modifications or new processes, to the existing body of theoretical knowledge, which may then be used by other researchers. For this to be effective The Design Based Research Collective (2003) note that during the research process not only should successes or failures in settings be recorded but the way in which the design functioned within the setting should also be explained. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) agree, stating that a wide variety of factors related to a research intervention should be clearly documented so that future researchers can make informed decisions as to whether designs would be suitable for their purposes.

This emphasis on the importance of adding to theory exemplified Lewin’s belief that theory should be advanced through the application of research to practice (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003). Heikkinen (2018), a proponent of critical participatory action research and Practice Architectures, also reminded his colleagues that “research itself is a set of practices that has to be studied and critically reflected on,” if “a better understanding of how social practices, such as education and work, evolve, exist and transform” is to be gained (p. 87). This highlights the need for an effective method of understanding practices (i.e., practice theories). Heikkinen did not, however, specifically advocate the need for advancing theories in the same way as the design-based researchers. Nevertheless, this emphasis on theory once again links DBR to Lewin’s original action research in a way that is not apparent in critical participatory action research.
By using a theoretical framework to examine three alternative participatory research methodologies it was possible to determine which would complement the analytical tool, Practice Architectures, most effectively. All the research methodologies used reflective practice as part of their research processes and required that research should take place in real world settings (Coghlan & Barret, 2003; Dewey, 1932, as cited in Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). The critical participatory action research model had modified the original action research model and certain important factors were removed. The original action research model required that there be a systematic approach based on scientific principles, adding to the rigour of the research (Coghlan & Barret, 2003). Further it prioritised the generalisability of approaches (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014) increasing its significance in the wider research community. However, critical participatory research did significantly change the role of the researcher to that of active participant which enabled the recognition and application of expertise from all sources (teacher participants, community participants and university researcher participants) to contribute and make decisions (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) elevating the collaborative aspects of the research. As the exploratory process continued it became apparent that only DBR combined all these beneficial characteristics and would thus support and complement the analytical processes of Practice Architectures most effectively. By combining these two approaches in the present research, educational practices could be engaged with in a richer way.

**Conclusion**

The theoretical frameworks introduced in this chapter encompassed two separate yet related aspects pertinent to the present research. The first provided a substantive frame through which a deeper understanding of the complex interrelated concepts of schooling, education and praxis was achieved. This understanding informs the current climate in educational practices, thus providing a background for the research as a whole. The second methodological framework scaffolded the investigation of how educational practices can be transformed through targeted research and in-depth analysis. This was more specific in nature and directly influenced the choice of the methodological approaches, Practice Architectures and DBR, used in this research. These are discussed further in the following chapter.
4. Methods and Methodology

Introduction

The broad aims of this research were to strengthen ECTs’ reflective and responsive practice, and to develop their skills and understanding in the teaching of narrative discourse through their participation in a collaborative, professional development program. More specifically, the teaching of narrative discourse was targeted in order to better support children’s learning in this area. In this way, it was hoped that the disadvantages in later learning experienced by children with less advanced narrative discourse skills would be ameliorated. Thus, the research was situated within the transformative paradigm as it highlighted a situation of disadvantage, developed understandings and created a basis for change (Ling & Ling, 2017). The complementary approaches of Practice Architectures and Design Based Research (DBR) were chosen as the methodological approach due to their compatibility with transformative research. Practice Architectures provided both a conceptual framework for the research and the analytical tool that enabled the understanding of changes that occurred. DBR was used as the methodological design, given that its design processes provided the method for making changes or transformations. The combination of the two approaches formed a comprehensive research approach. Practice Architectures alone lacked a clearly defined research structure, which was provided by Easterday’s (2014) six phase DBR model, while DBR alone lacked a method for understanding, interpreting and analysing practices. Thus, Practice Architectures was used phenomenologically to ensure that practices were captured holistically and analytically (van Manen, 1997) while DBR provided a logical core design delineating the phases and processes involved. The relationship between these two approaches and their relevance to this study is discussed next. This is followed by a more detailed explanation of the roles of Practice Architectures and DBR in this context-based collaborative research project. Participant selection, researcher positioning, data collection and analysis, and issues concerning legitimacy and rigour in research are also discussed.
4.1 The Relationship between Practice Architectures and DBR

In this research Practice Architectures as an approach was used descriptively, interpretively and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017). It provided a framework for an analysis that enabled the understanding of practices and the ways in which changes or transformations can occur within them. It was supported by the complementary research approach—DBR—which was first developed with the aim of transforming practice in educational settings whilst simultaneously adding to theoretical knowledge (A. Brown, 1992). These two approaches were intertwined within the research process in a cyclical manner: through DBR, information or data were gained, Practice Architectures was then used as the lens to analyse the data, and this analysis then informed a new iteration of DBR that addressed the problems revealed through Practice Architectures. Through repetitions of the process a research cycle or spiral was formed. This research spiral promoted ongoing discussion leading to an evidenced understanding, a key outcome of transformative research (Ling, 2017; Ling & Ling, 2017).

![Diagram of the relationship between DBR iterations and Practice Architectures on a research spiral](image)

**Figure 4:** The relationship between DBR iterations and Practice Architectures on a research spiral (based on the action research spiral by Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014)

Additionally, DBR and Practice Architectures share further common features. Iterative cycles, collaboration, context, systematic yet flexible design and the development of design principles and theories (Wang & Hannafin, 2005) form the central features of DBR. The cyclical relationship
between DBR and Practice Architectures has already been noted but cyclical processes are also essential to both individually. Practice Architectures requires reflective cycles during professional learning and DBR incorporates iterations of practice during the *Conceive* and *Build* phases, and also between phases if necessary. Similarly, the importance of collaboration and context in Practice Architectures is mirrored in DBR studies. Flexibility in design is highlighted specifically in DBR but it also forms a less explicit component of Practice Architectures—the acceptance that practices may be enabled or constrained, that they may collide or connect and they may be messy (Kemmis et al., 2017) necessitates a flexibility of approach. Moreover, DBR can be seen to be participatory in that both the researcher and the participants are actively involved in the research process. As with other participatory research it has created conditions that empower the participants to:

- develop increased understandings of their practices and instigate new ways of conducting them,
- have a common language and discuss aspects of their practice critically,
- develop their own actions and interactions within the practice,
- develop and participate in relationships within practices,
- transform the conduct and consequences of their practices.

(Adapted from Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 5)

Each of these conditions reflects the principles advocated by Practice Architectures. From this the close relationship between DBR and Practice Architectures is clear. However, DBR also enhances Practice Architectures by incorporating the promotion of theoretical and design knowledge. This strong design basis provides a systematic format essential to transformative inquiries (Ling, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

DBR and Practice Architectures also reflect the aims of transformative research in a number of other ways. For example, transformative research requires that participants’ awareness will be raised and that the specifics of the social problem be revealed. The researcher and the participants will then work together to improve or transform the situation. Researchers and participants are strongly invested in the research process and provide a wide variety of perspectives on a social problem. This subjectivity is balanced by the shared view of the political context that contributes to the situation (Ling, 2017; Ling & Ling, 2017).
4.2 Practice Architectures

As discussed in Chapter 3, Practice Architectures has its basis in practice theory. However, while practice theorists (e.g. Schatzki, 2001; Nicolini, 2017) conceptualised practices as involving the actions of *sayings* and *doings*, but only implying the importance of relationships, Practice Architectures brought relationships to the forefront by adding *relatings* to *sayings* and *doings* (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). These three types of action exist within their respective arrangements: *cultural-discursive, material-economic* and *social-political*, which enable or constrain participants’ actions in particular practice events. These arrangements, in turn, *hang out* within their respective intersubjective spaces or dimensions termed *semantic, physical space-time* and *social* spaces. Kemmis et al. (2017) described these intersubjective spaces as central to the theory of Practice Architectures and its aim to explore and understand what happens in practices as they unfold during everyday-life. The three intersubjective spaces or dimensions always appear together in a practice (Kemmis et al., 2017) and overlap (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Practices are formed within the intersubjective spaces and they open up as these practices are practised. During this process participants’ practices unfold and enmesh with existing and new practices. However, participants’ practices are also pre-shaped and prefigured but not predetermined by the existing arrangements in the intersubjective space. Similarly, as participants take part in practices, they are acting in the present but their actions in the intersubjective space are shaped by their remembered past and their anticipation of the future (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

Moreover, in Practice Architectures, it is stated that practices require specific sites that act as a nexus for the intersubjective spaces where *cultural-discursive, material-economic* and *social-political* arrangements can be found (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Mahon, Kemmis, Fransisco and Lloyd (2017) elaborated on this, stating that practices are situated, always occur at a site or sites, and are social phenomena that take place at a particular time and place where particular conditions and circumstances exist. Through their site-based practices people learn how to inhabit the three intersubjective spaces, *semantic, physical space-time* and *social* (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

When individuals take part in a practice all their actions will be influenced and enabled or constrained by the arrangements that are present at a specific site (Kemmis et al., 2017; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017). These arrangements may have been pre-existing or have been brought into the practice; they may enable or constrain practice, but they are not fixed. Ultimately, human beings control the ways in which practices are carried out or not and they can
act creatively and innovatively (except in extreme or oppressive circumstances) (Kemmis et al., 2017). During practice activities, individuals will develop an understanding of practice restraints but also be able to consider different approaches, which will lead to new and better practices.

At educational sites, such as in classrooms, the main practices taking place are those of teaching and learning. Participants in the practices, teachers and students, meet each other in the classroom where teachers enact their teaching practices as *sayings, doings* and *relatings* (which can be enabled or constrained by their respective arrangements). A teacher’s *sayings, doings* and *relatings* occur simultaneously (opening up the three intersubjective spaces of teaching and learning practices). The students perceive the teacher’s *sayings, doings* and *relatings* as a unified Practice Architecture, which may enable or constrain their own learning practices, whilst the teacher perceives the three intersubjective spaces as being unified in the purpose of their teaching practice (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). This example of teaching and learning practices demonstrates how, in Practice Architectures, learning is seen as a shared, collective and intersubjective achievement of students and teachers (Edward-Groves & Grootenboer, 2017; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

The previous example of teaching and learning practices also illustrates how the concepts, of Practice Architectures, of intersubjective spaces, arrangements and actions are all closely interrelated and entwined. However, Practice Architectures separates them analytically to enable deeper, more critical analysis, whilst still acknowledging their inseparability empirically (Kemmis et al., 2017). The characteristics of, and the relationships between actions, arrangements and dimensions have formed the nexus of Practice Architectures’ theoretical framework. This framework has provided researchers with a new way of understanding practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. 2014).

Proponents of Practice Architectures have described practices as,

> socially established cooperative human activity involving utterances and forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people relate to one another and the world (relatings) that ‘hang together’ in characteristic ways in a distinctive ‘project’.

(Mahon et al., 2017, p. 24)

Therefore, in addition to having actions (*sayings, doings, relatings*), a practice must have a purpose or project. Actions carried out in a practice form the middle phase of a project; they are preceded
by the forming of the aim or intention of the project and followed by its completion. Completion of the project may or may not result in the achievement of its aim (Rönnerman & Kemmis, 2016).

4.3 Design Based Research (DBR)

DBR has evolved gradually over the last 25 years and various interpretations of it have been proposed; examples are: the Iterative Learning Design Framework, (ILDF) as explained by Bannan-Ritland (2003), Reeves’ Four Stage model (Amiel & Reeves, 2008), and ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), which can be seen to be an umbrella term for research involving an instructional design model (Molenda, 2015). However, Easterday’s six-phase model (2014) was chosen for this project due to its more highly detailed description of each phase (a brief outline of the processes involved in each phase is provided in Table 3).

Table 3: Easterday et al.’s Six-Phase Model (2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Specifies: the audience, the designers, the general problem and the scope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Investigates the problem using empirical and secondary resources and synthesises the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Goals and assessments are set. The framing of the problem is considered—what the research questions will be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceive</td>
<td>Designers imagine solutions, analyse these and create conceptual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build</td>
<td>Implementation of the solution—different aspects of the design may be tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Evaluation of the effectiveness of the design.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Design phases are not linear, and iterations can take place during any phase with designers returning to earlier phases to improve concepts.

This six-phase model was developed to combat uncertainties about the research processes involved and improve the consistency in which DBR was conducted, new researchers were trained, and processes were communicated to the wider community. Legitimacy and credibility were also increased as this model provided a clear *argumentative grammar* (Easterday et al. 2014).

As mentioned previously, the key characteristics of DBR, as with Practice Architectures, of collaboration, context and iterative analysis have made it a particularly apt research approach for this transformative study. Each of these are now re-introduced in regard to their role in DBR and their relationship with the stated aims of advancement of theoretical and design knowledge, and the promotion of generalisability will be considered.
4.3.1 **Collaboration.**

Collaboration has been described as being central to the process of DBR as participants in the research are seen as partners throughout a study (Barab & Squire, 2004; Wang & Hannafin, 2005). Anderson and Shattuck (2012) expanded upon this, specifying that researchers should negotiate with educators from formulation of the original problem, through the literature review, design and construction phases, implementation and assessment to final completion and publication of theories. Wang and Hannafin (2005), however, cautioned that whilst research designers should consult with participants, they should remember that DBR must add to existing theories or create new ones and should balance the practical needs of the participants with the theoretical aims of the research.

4.1.2 **Context.**

Anderson and Shattuck (2012) highlighted the vital importance of context to DBR. They stated that there was an increased validity to research in authentic educational settings, as, once effectiveness has been demonstrated in a real-life context, it will have greater potential to be used successfully in other settings. An earlier study by Wang and Hannafin (2005) supported this view but added that in order for design principles to become generalisable they need to have been tested in different contexts where principles may have been adapted or modified but the original system has remained unchanged. In this way the relationship between context and improvement of practice will have been established.

4.3.3 **Iterative analysis.**

The necessity of multiple iterations was justified by Anderson and Shattuck (2012) who noted that any design practice involves an evolutionary process with many refinements before a product can be considered to be ready for general production. Therefore, when research has a strong design component, as with DBR, *iterative adjustments* must occur before the intervention can be used on a wider scale. Similarly, Barab and Squire (2004) viewed the iterative process as essential if the design framework was to have sufficient validity to be added to existing theoretical knowledge.

This section of the discussion has highlighted the similarities between Practice Architectures, DBR and transformative research. It has also provided a more detailed explanation of Practice Architectures and DBR and demonstrated how these two approaches can be used effectively for research in early childhood settings. The section that follows considers the characteristics of the research sites selected for this study.
4.4 Characteristics of the Research Sites

4.4.1 Site selection.

The sample selection of sites for this research was both convenient and purposeful, or purposive, in nature. Convenience (e.g., chosen for its location, cost effectiveness etc.) of sample choice alone is not generally thought to be advisable as it has often yielded less credible or information-poor cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). However, when convenience sampling is combined with one or more types of purposeful sampling, credibility is improved through triangulation of data, flexibility is increased and varied needs or interests can be met (Patton, 2002). This research was convenient in two ways, (i) it was located within a one-hour drive of the university and my home and (ii) there was an established relationship between the university and the Kindergarten Management Group (KMG). However, collaboration with the KMG also enabled maximum variation sampling (one form of purposeful sampling) to take place because the preschools involved in the project were located in three different communities.

The KMG was responsible for the management of eighteen preschools in a coastal region located about one and a half hours from central Melbourne. The region covered an area of slightly over 700 km² consisting of rural, coastal and urban landscapes. It had a similarly diverse economy which included tourism, wine production, agriculture, retail and manufacturing. Most residents in this area were born in Australia with international migrants mainly coming from the UK (8.9%) and New Zealand (1.4), with lesser numbers (below 1%) coming from countries such as Italy, Germany, Holland, USA, South Africa and Canada. Linguistically the majority of residents spoke only English (88.9%), a few spoke an additional language (5%) and a small minority had limited or no English (0.6%). The socio-economic background of residents in this area varied widely from low (less than $650 p/w) to high ($2,500 + p/w) (Profile.id the population experts, 2018).

The three preschools selected for the study were spread across the region and served three very different communities (see Table 4); one was located in an affluent rural/coastal area, one in a mid-range urban socio-economic area, and one in a partially industrialised low socio-economic urban area which was originally established to provide low cost government housing in the 1960s (Victorian Places, 2015).
Table 4: The range of communities that the preschools were situated in and the ECTs worked in.

Socio-economic background of the communities served by the three preschools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Context S Affluent rural/coastal</th>
<th>Context B Mid-range urban socio-economic</th>
<th>Context M Low socio-economic, partially industrialised, urban.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(below $650p/w)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>($2,500 + p/w)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parent</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of housing</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(medium-high)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate houses</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Participant profiles.

Additionally, opportunistic sampling (a second form of purposeful sampling) occurred in the early stages of the field work when a fifth ECT requested to join the project. She had lower levels of experience which contrasted with the extensive experience of the initial participants. The ECTs’ qualifications and experience are listed in Table 5. This outline is followed by some additional background information about each participant.
Table 5: Profile of teacher participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Participants</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>Diploma of teaching in Early Childhood (three-year degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Diploma of teaching in Early Childhood (three-year degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bastow leadership course*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Educational Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamsin</td>
<td>8 years in childcare (mid-way through degree course) 7 years after completing degree</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Masters’ of Early Childhood Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>2 years as a qualified teacher (11 years ECE in three year-old kindergarten)</td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bastow Educational Leadership is part of the Department of Education and Training and provides leadership courses for secondary, primary and early childhood professionals in Victoria, Australia.

The ECTs taking part in the project came from a range of backgrounds and had diverse levels of teaching experience. Gloria, from Context B had been working with children for 35 years in a variety of contexts including preschools, the children’s hospital and library programs. She had completed a Diploma of Teaching in Early Childhood which was a three-year degree program. Her colleague, Melanie was also trained to diploma level but had continued her studies and had recently undertaken a leadership course funded by the Department of Education and Training. She had been teaching in preschools for 30 years and was at that time working as a centre-manager with some hours in the preschool rooms. Louise, from Context S, had spent 18 years working in preschool contexts and had both Bachelor of Early Childhood and Bachelor of Educational Studies degrees. She was very interested in alternative approaches being an early advocate for *bush-kinders* in her region and was also in the process of training as a music therapist. Tamsin from Context B had spent 15 years working in Early Childhood Education – eight years in childcare and seven years after completing her Bachelor’s degree. She had also recently completed her Masters of Early Childhood Education. Leanne, from Context M, was the least experienced teacher participating...
only just entering her third year of teaching, however prior to completing her Bachelor’s degree she had spent 11 years as an ECE.

As this research used a participatory approach, DBR (Štemberger & Cencič, 2014), an additional participant also needs to be considered, me as the researcher. I have more than 20 years teaching experience in early primary education in both England and Australia. Due to the differences in the school structures between Australia and England my experience spans both Early Childhood Education (four year-old preschool) and primary school. I have completed a Masters of Education by research, specialising in Early Childhood Education, and this thesis will be submitted for my Doctorate of Education. The research is based around my concerns about the number of children entering school with lower than expected levels of oral language (DET, 2018). I hoped to address this, in a small way, by instigating a collaborative professional learning program based around enhancing ECTs skills in narrative discourse teaching. Children’s oral language skills were also concerning the ECT participants, who perceived a gap in their knowledge and skills in the area of oral language teaching and aimed to improve this by taking part in the program.

4.4.3 Participant recruitment.

Participant recruitment took place during the first phase of DBR, Focus. It began with an exploratory meeting with the KMG management team. This meeting broached the possibility of undertaking the present project within their cluster of preschools. Attendees of the meeting—myself, my supervisor (who had a working relationship with the KMG through a variety of other projects) and two KMG managers—discussed the basic premise behind the intervention. It was agreed that it would be advantageous to their ECTs and that the project could take place during Term 4, 2017 and Terms 1 and 2, 2018.

An introductory meeting was then arranged between the KMG managers, a number of ECTs (prospective participants), myself and my supervisor. At this meeting, a general outline of the project was presented, explaining its aims and the processes that would be involved. This was followed by a general discussion allowing the ECTs time to ask any questions and clarify any misunderstandings or areas of concern. This discussion assisted with pre-planning of the project and the development of the ethics applications.

Once ethics approval had been received from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee and permission to conduct research was approved by DET (the Victorian Department of Education and Training), a further consultative meeting was held. Attending ECTs who were
interested in the study were provided with explanatory statements and consent forms. When the completed consent forms were received, dates were arranged for the semi-structured interviews to take place. The parents of children at participating preschools were then informed of the research project and parental consent was obtained. The children taking part in the collection of baseline data also had the research explained to them in child-friendly terms and their assent to participate was gained. Following consent and assent, oral language assessments took place during Term 4 of 2017. A second phase of participant recruitment, for parents and children, took place at the beginning of Term 1, 2018. This second phase of recruitment was necessary as this included participation in classroom activities. Consent and assent were applied for in the same manner as before and when children returned these forms, they were able to take part in the videos of their teacher’s practice.

4.4.4 Researcher Position.

The positioning of the researcher (me) in this project, in relation to the implementation of the professional learning program, was twofold—as the facilitator of the SPSs and as a participant observer. These two roles were not exclusive of each other and overlaps occurred.

As the SPSs facilitator I did not have a neutral role but was a co-participant sharing the ECTs general goals in a collaborative enterprise (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). I brought some additional expert knowledge with me, which had been gained through my research studies, but was aware of the importance of the ECTs “wisdom, professionalism and experience” to the project (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014, p.217). This recognition necessitated my initial objective, the development of relational trust and mutual respect between all participants (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) so that our professional learning could thrive in conditions where belonging, inclusion and solidarity were promoted (Kemmis, McTaggart et al., 2014). This active participation as facilitator was complemented by my positioning as a participant observer, (i.e. learning about the, co-participants and their activities by actively engaging in their activities and observing them [Kawulich, 2005]). In order to perform the role of facilitator effectively (see Appendix 13) I had to carefully observe and reflect on my own practices and those of the ECTs during SPSs. These reflections were facilitated by the video recordings of each SPS which provided a permanent audio and visual record of the collaborative discussions. Additionally, I gained further insights into ECT practices when I visited their preschools for filming, once again acting as a participant observer. Reflecting on these enabled me to guide and scaffold discussions at following SPSs (as well as providing a major data source for the Build phase of this research).
4.5 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out throughout the majority of the research project and was used to inform subsequent stages of DBR and also for final analysis and evaluation of the project as a whole. There were three main types of research data: ECT semi-structured interviews (initial and concluding), children’s oral language assessments and VSR which included clips of ECT practices with their preschool children and also video recordings of the SPSs where these were used.

A discussion of the three types of data collection (bold typeface) follows Table 6. This table demonstrates the purpose of each type and clarifies the stage of DBR in which it occurs. It also includes peripheral data (normal typeface) that was collected and informed the research or supported its findings.

Table 6: Summary of when each of the three main data types are collected during the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>DBR Phases</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>No formal data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>• ECT semi-structured interviews (initial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Children’s oral language assessments (Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument, Highpoint Analysis, Tell Me)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Review of literature (oral language/narrative discourse teaching, effective professional learning &amp; design-based research etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Define</td>
<td>• Feedback of Assessment Data (meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Conceive</td>
<td>• Brainstorming of strategies (meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Build</td>
<td>• Videos of ECT professional practice (VSR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Videos of SPSs (VSR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>• Final data collection – ECT semi-structured interviews (concluding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collection of work programs, children’s work samples, artefacts etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold type face denotes main data types. Normal type face denotes peripheral supporting data.

The initial data collection during the Understand Phase for this project took two forms: assessment of children’s oral language (specifically narrative discourse) skills, and teacher interviews. Narrative discourse assessments are considered first, followed by a brief discussion about the nature of semi-structured interviews. The oral language assessments provided the collaborators (the ECTs and the researcher) with information regarding the narrative discourse skills of the children at their
preschools. A series of standardised narrative discourse assessments: the Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument (ENNI) (Schneider, Dubé & Hayward, 2005), the Highpoint Analysis (Bliss et al., 1998) and Tell Me (part of the SEA – School Entry Assessment) (New Zealand Learning Media/Curriculum Corporation Australia, 1999), were administered which provided base-line information regarding the children’s abilities in the production of both personal and fictional narratives (See Appendix 4: The main characteristics of the different narrative assessments illustrating how a comprehensive picture of the preschool children’s language abilities was achieved).

These assessments provided information regarding the targeting of the intervention, as “effective teaching depends on effective assessment and monitoring” (Carroll, Bowyer-Crane, Duff, Hulme & Snowling, 2011). Through these assessments the teachers were able to gain the information they needed to make constructive decisions about their teaching (Scull, 2013) and thus provided the children with learning experiences at an optimal level (Care & Griffin, 2009; Lonigan, Allan & Lerner, 2011). These data were, therefore, assessments for teaching and needed to be followed by ongoing, formative evaluation of teaching and learning, and implementation of new teaching strategies or extension of learning themes (Care & Griffin, 2009; Lonigan et al., 2011). Consequently, ECTs made their own informal evaluations of children’s progress during the research period to enable appropriate adjustments in practice. The reflective nature of this assessment process thus mirrored the iterations of the Build phase of this DBR project and the reflective practices advocated by Practice Architectures.

In this way the use of the data achieved its principal objective, to inform initial teaching practices. Teaching was further supported by ongoing, informal formative assessments; however, summative formal assessments did not take place at the end of the research period for two main reasons. Firstly, children’s oral language skills, including narrative discourse, could be termed unconstrained, since they continue to develop in complexity over an individual’s whole life with no finite limits and are therefore more difficult to teach and assess (Anderson et al., 2019; Paris, 2005). This was exemplified by the results of a one-year program, the Early Reading First program, where researchers found that it was extremely difficult to measure the vast number of words, language structures and language uses that may have been developed in a short standardised test (Hoffman, 2010). Despite this Hoffman emphasised that “A lack of change in a standard score, however, does not represent a lack of learning” (2010, p. 12). Therefore, it was unlikely that the children’s abilities in the areas of personal and fictional oral narratives would increase sufficiently during the five months of this research for measurable changes to occur, according to the standardised assessments.
Secondly, the main focus of this project was the production of an effective professional learning experience and the development of teachers’ skills in the teaching of narrative discourse. These two areas will form the main areas for later analysis and discussion.

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.

This DBR project required information concerning ECTs’ knowledge, opinions, beliefs and skills in the field of narrative discourse teaching at the beginning of the project (the Understand phase) and the end of the project (the Test phase). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a highly suitable method of data collection as they provide “a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experience” (Rabionet, 2011, p. 563). Rabionet continued by highlighting the advantages of using semi-structured interviews during research, stating that they promote the inclusion of desired topics without being over-prescriptive and limiting participant responses. Hatch and Coleman-King (2015) explicated this, describing a semi-structured interview as the provision of guiding questions that would act as an aide de memoire for the researcher. These could be described as an informal schedule of open-ended questions, not all of which will necessarily be broached, although the first and last question of each interview will often be the same, with interviewees’ responses shaping the central part of the conversation and often leading it in differing directions (Forsey, 2012). Similarly, a variety of follow up questions or prompts to gain extra detail about the chosen themes may be employed, whilst clarifying comments may also be used to encourage further contributions (Rapley, 2011). By using this interviewing technique, it was hoped that participants would provide the researcher with extended comments that would not only be descriptive but also would illuminate their thoughts and reflections. It should also be noted that for extended explanations and reflections to be encouraged a researcher must have developed highly effective active listening skills (Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015).

4.5.1 Video Stimulated Recall (VSR).

VSR formed both the major method of data collection and the basis of the ECTs’ professional learning experiences during the Build Phase of this research. The VSR process involved the video recording of ECTs using their chosen narrative discourse teaching strategies with their own children. These vignettes of teaching provided ECTs with a visual record of their practice that enabled them to observe and reflect on their own and others’ ‘live’ practice. Many advantages to this process can be observed; for example, transient learning interactions that teachers may have
been too busy to observe at the time may be noted (Reitano & Sim, 2010; Zhang, Lundeberg & Eberhardt, 2010). Through later, possibly multiple, viewings the teachers concerned could reflect more deeply on their own practice and focus on the thinking behind their actions to consider why they did something and how they chose to do it (Reitano, 2006). Extended reflections could also occur through the consideration of their original intentions for an activity, what actually happened, how they responded and how their intentions may have been modified during the activity (Reitano & Sim, 2010).

In addition to its role in the improvement of teachers’ personal reflective practice, VSR can also be used in collegiate contexts, as it was in this research. Nind, Kilburn and Wiles (2015) proposed that VSR could be used as a focus for group discussions or with a single research/teaching partner. The benefits of this approach were also supported by Reitano and Sim (2010) who recommended that teachers work with critical friends to analyse and reflect on practice. Additionally, they recommended that in this type of collaborative community the VSR process should be repeated with all members participating as the subject of the videos and that these should be interspersed with the sharing of professional readings and informal discussions about their classroom practices. Reitano (2006) also emphasised the benefits of using VSR in collaboration with others in a process that allows constructive advice to be given. He further suggested that VSR could provide one of the most comprehensive methods for reflecting on classroom practice. These beliefs were reinforced by Nolan, Paatsch and Scull (2018) who highlighted (i) the importance of being able to transport participants to earlier moments of practice thus stimulating reflection and (ii) the benefits of a collaborative approach to “strengthen research practice and make a sustainable difference to classroom teaching” (p. 10).

From this it is apparent that many of the characteristics of collegiate VSR mirror aspects of DBR and complement Practice Architectures, including such aspects as collaboration, reflection and repeated cycles. This meant that VSR was considered a highly suitable form of data collection in the present research.

4.5.2 The DBR process.

The actions involved during each phase of the DBR process are now outlined and the opportunities for data collection in each phase are highlighted (See Table 3, p. 95, for the six-phase model). My role as the researcher is summarised at the end of each phase.
Focus.

This was a consultative phase in which an audience was approached (the KMG and stakeholders – parents, children and ECTs). The general topic was decided upon; improving children’s oral language, specifically narrative discourse skills, as under-developed skills lead to problems in reading, writing and general academic performance, and the scope of the research was considered (including constraints and scale). Due to project constraints (e.g., time, a single researcher) its scope was limited to improving children’s narrative discourse skills. Information from meetings was used to formulate and delineate the topic and questions. Data for analysis were not collected at this stage.

Researcher’s Role.

My role was to liaise with the prospective participants and stakeholders. This involved a preliminary meeting with the KMG managers and an open information/discussion session with ECTs. The research was discussed in an informal way with parents and children at each of the preschools. Information from the meeting and discussion session was used to formulate and delineate the research topic and questions.

Understand.

During the Understand phase the problem was investigated in several ways. Data were collected from ECT interviews, children’s oral language assessments and also from secondary sources. These are discussed sequentially.

ECT interviews were designed to gain insights into their confidence levels in teaching oral language, how they used the classroom centres to develop narrative discourse skills, and their knowledge and implementation of oral language techniques (See Appendix 5 for questions and prompts that were used to support semi-structured interviews).

The base-line oral language assessments (personal and fictional narrative) took place with children who were attending three year-old sessions and planned to attend four year-old programs at each of the participating preschools in the subsequent year. This established the children’s narrative skills and helped to inform decisions regarding the targeting of the intervention. Literature on relevant topics was reviewed, current solutions to similar problems were reviewed and design principles were identified.
**Researcher’s Role.**

During this phase my role was three-fold. Firstly, the oral language assessments had to be completed and analysed in preparation for meetings in the Define phase. (At these meetings the ECTs were to reflect upon the analyses and come to an agreement on target areas for teaching and learning). Secondly, I reviewed literature pertaining to best practice in the teaching of oral language, specifically narrative discourse teaching, and effective professional learning strategies. Thirdly, I explored the DBR process and linked it to the present research, including the analytical framework of practice architectures.

**Define.**

This phase involved the ECTs setting preliminary goals or targets to inform their practices in the Conceive and Build phases. These meetings, therefore had a procedural role but they also provided additional data for analysis.

Meetings to discuss the assessments took place at each of the three preschools. Analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews and the baseline assessments were used to inform the discussion. These meetings were video-recorded and had a dual purpose. Firstly, they provided data for later analysis (see Test phase) and secondly, they informed the following phase (Conceive). Analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews and the baseline assessments were used to inform the discussion. ECTs set goals according to the results of the oral language assessments (i.e., areas of narrative discourse that children had problems with were identified and ECTs decided which to target in their teaching).

**Researcher’s Role.**

During this phase I used my knowledge surrounding oral language development and the teaching of narrative discourse to facilitate the discussion. Additionally, I ensured a balance between the children’s learning needs and the professional needs of the ECTs.

**Conceive.**

This phase included the accessing of tools for planning and modelling (trialling) the intervention’s design.
Planning took place at a meeting with all five ECT participants. ECTs brainstormed ideas for teaching narrative discourse in their preschools. Strategies were recorded, explained and chosen. Each ECT chose a strategy to trial during the final two weeks of Term 1, 2018, before the main intervention began in Term 2 during the Build phase. This meeting was video-recorded and was used as part of the data analysis in the final phase (Test).

Researcher’s Role.

At the meeting my role was to act as a meeting facilitator, according to the CoP (Communities of Practice) model (Fleet & Patterson, 2009; Sheridan, Pope Edwards, Marvin & Knoche, 2014; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). During the trial period I was contactable by email to discuss any problems that arose. ECTs were also aware that they could arrange for me to visit preschools during this time if they required any additional support.

Build.

During this phase ECTs implemented their chosen teaching strategies. Three iterations were carried out. Each iteration involved visits to the preschools and a VSR shared practice session (see Appendix 6 for schedule). Each implementation or iteration answered questions about whether a goal had been achieved and provided data for final and ongoing analysis.

Preschool visits were prearranged and ECTs implemented their chosen strategies with individuals or small groups of children. During the preschool visits I videoed ECTs’ practices. These were then downloaded and emailed to the ECTs, ensuring that they had time to view them and select clips for reflective discussions at SPSs. During SPSSs each video-clip was viewed by the researcher, the participant (provider) and critical friends (viewers). The viewing followed the format suggested by Reitano and Sim (2010). The ECT provider began by describing the subject of the clip, stopped and started it at intervals and discussed her actions. Other group members were invited to question and comment. Viewers used prompt sheets to guide their reflections (see Appendix 7). At SPSSs the ECTs reflected on their practices and developed individual goals. In some cases, these goals continued over several iterations, while in others the goal was achieved and the ECT involved set a new goal. Some examples of goals from each SPS follow.

At the end of SPS 1: A variety of goals were set. Tamsin’s goal was to trial new ways to encourage children to end stories. Leanne was to trial different story genres (fairy-tales). Louise wanted to find a way to encourage her children to sequence their narratives (end-at-highpoint or classic, rather
than leap-frog or chronological narratives – McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994, see Appendix 8). Gloria had made her story pond but had not been able to use it – her goal was to introduce it to all children over the next two weeks. (Melanie was unable to attend).

At the end of SPS 2: Tamsin was to continue to use her one-page approach with more children but use different teaching strategies. Leanne was going to continue with her story book approach but introduce story stones with children who had more developed narrative discourse skills. Gloria was going to trial an approach she had observed Tamsin using during the SPS in order to slow her children down and encourage them to think about their stories more. Melanie wanted to use the iPad program with more children particularly those who rarely took part in talk-based activities. (Louise was unable to attend).

At the end of SPS 3: Gloria decided that she was going to make changes to her story pond so that it could be differentiated to suit children’s differing abilities and give them more autonomy in their learning. Louise aimed to make her story pond narrower, therefore encouraging her children to move through their stories more sequentially as Gloria’s had. Melanie wanted to train other staff members in the use of the iPad story maker so that more children would be able to create their own narratives using the technology. (Leanne and Tamsin were unable to attend).

Data collection was diverse during this phase. All SPSs were video-recorded and used for analysis. Viewers’ prompt sheets were collected and scanned. Additionally, ECTs’ work programs—see Appendix 9—from the beginning, middle and end of the research period, and the resources that were used throughout the study were collected, including scribed stories from the story tile activity, iPad books and photographs of artefacts.

**Researcher’s Role.**

At all the SPSs I took on the role of meeting facilitator; for example, when narrative discourse teaching strategies were being discussed, ECTs could access my more detailed knowledge of this area of language development. At the end of each session prompt sheets were collected for scanning and were returned at the next for ECTs’ future reference. In the final SPS I also collected the data listed above.

**Test.**

This was the final phase of DBR and evaluation of the effectiveness of solutions took place. Feedback occurred and the validity of the theoretical proposition was also considered.
Researchers Role

During this phase of DBR, my role entailed final data collection, data analysis, evaluation and reporting of the program. Semi-structured interviews with the ECTs took place and concluded the collection of the data. These interviews were video-recorded and transcribed for final analysis (see Appendix 10 for the list of questions). Data from all sources (e.g., initial and concluding semi-structured interviews, visual data from all sources, VSR prompt sheets) were analysed through Practice Architectures.

Findings have been reported through this PhD thesis initially with the possibility of further opportunities for reporting through publications or conference presentations. When all tasks associated with the PhD thesis have been completed the ECTs will receive formal feedback on the study as will DET.

The legitimacy and rigour of research processes were considered, and validity of research was reflected upon to ensure credibility. Additionally, flexibility of the design process was reflected upon and its suitability for other settings was considered.

4.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout this research: data sources included visual/audio and written formats of the children’s oral language assessments, initial and final and semi-structured interviews, and SPS (VSR) sessions. Additionally, ECTs completed VSR prompt sheets and provided samples of their work programs. Most of the data was analysed through Practice Architectures according to the actions of sayings, doings and relatings. However, the children’s oral language assessments were analysed in a different way to the other sources (i.e., they were analysed according to the macro and micro-structure of each oral narrative). This was because the characteristics of the children’s narratives were being analysed rather than their actions (sayings, doings, relatings) within a practice which was the case for the other data sources. Therefore, these

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11 As previously stated, oral language/narrative discourse assessments were not analysed for the purposes of the final research project. Information gained from children’s language assessments was used to inform teaching during the Conceive and Build phases.
different approaches to analysis are considered separately starting with the macro and micro structural analysis of the children’s narratives.

4.6.1 Analysis of children’s narratives.

Macro Analysis.

Westerveld, Gillon and Boyd (2011) explained that the macro structure of a narrative refers to the general content and quality. Moreover, Hayward, Schneider & Gillam, (2009) cited Anderson (1994) and added that a macro structure provides a scaffold for the speaker’s and listeners’ understanding of the story. Four different forms of macro analysis were used and the purposes of each are now elucidated:

Story Grammar.

Hayward et al. (2009) further explained that this scaffolding follows a pattern\textsuperscript{12} and contains specific elements such as characters, setting, problem, solution, feelings, ending. These elements are often referred to as story grammar elements. The ENNI (Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument – Schneider et al., 2005) framework, a standardised test using these elements, was applied to each of the narrative samples. Results from these demonstrated how complete the children’s narratives were and revealed aspects that required extra support.

ENNI First Mentions.

The ENNI First Mentions analysis was used to discover the children’s ability to create referentially cohesive texts (Schneider & Haywood, 2010). This showed whether the children were able to reference characters, places or actions, in such a way that the listener could fully understand the story, an important factor in decontextualised language development.

\textsuperscript{12} These patterns are typical of Westernised story-telling, so when children come from different cultural backgrounds, their story telling styles will vary—see Table 1).
The Highpoint Analysis.

The Highpoint Analysis (McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994) considered the overall structure of a narrative, analysing it according to five different levels:

1) two-event,
2) leapfrog,
3) end-at-highpoint,
4) classic,
5) chronological.

These were approximately associated with children’s chronological age. McCabe and Rosenthal Rollins (1994) suggested that the simplest narrative contains two events, which is common for children aged two and a half, while the most complex, not usually produced until a child reaches age six plus, would be appropriately sequenced, build to a climax and have a resolution (see Appendix 8).

Tell Me.

The final macro assessment was carried out on the narrative retell, *Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth*, used the Tell Me records system (Tell Me formed part of the School Entry Assessment kit [New Zealand Learning Media/Curriculum Corporation Australia, 1999] and could only be used with the related series of books). This analysis looked at comprehension, sentence structure and vocabulary as well as organisation, description and expression. These aspects could be scored as none, basic, plain or developed (see Appendix 11). By using a variety of macro assessments, a richer set of data was available to inform planning.

Micro Assessments.

Micro assessments were undertaken to ascertain the children’s abilities to use language semantically, syntactically and grammatically, and with verbal fluency (Miller, 2018; Westerveld et al., 2011). The SALT software system was used to analyse speech samples, as this provided a standardised method through which language samples could be transcribed and analysed according to a wide range of micro features. Language features from the SALT system were chosen according to their relevance to classroom practice and were linked to the ability to create a coherent, fluent, extended narrative (e.g. duration of narrative sample, total number of words spoken, words per
minute, intelligibility, errors, pauses and mazes). In this way the inherent complexity of micro analysis was reduced and made more manageable and useful when planning appropriate learning experiences.

4.6.2 Analysis of remaining data sources through Practice Architectures.

The final analyses of data, from ECT interviews, SPSs and prompt sheets, took place during the Test Phase of DBR. These were through the Practice Architectures’ actions of sayings, doings and relating and noted how they were constrained or enabled by their respective arrangements, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political. Earlier in this chapter a general description of ECTs’ practices was given using these actions and providing contextual information about common teaching conditions. The inter-relationship between these actions and the other key concepts, dimensions and intersubjective spaces, were explained and the way in which they could be extended to further understand and interpret practices and professional learning was discussed. During the data analysis, Practice Architectures was used initially to interpret practice and learning but then more rigorously and critically to aid the generalisation or remaking of practice in different times, places or circumstances (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018).

Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) suggested three beneficial conditions that promote professional learning and hence development of practices. The three conditions, examples of typical activities demonstrating them, and their associated dimensions are illustrated in Table 7. Consideration of these features framed the data analysis, through Practice Architectures, within this research.
Table 7: Conditions necessary for professional learning and their associated dimensions and activities (based on Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>How they may be fulfilled</th>
<th>Dimension (Associated Activity)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cultivation of Care and Collaboration | * teachers and leaders working as a team  
* joint focus on improving student learning                                        | Social Space (Relatings)        |
| Agentic Collegiate Responsibility | * realisation that practice was not individual but shared with others over time and space  
* acceptance that practice could collide or connect with other school practices. | Physical Space-Time (Doings)     |
| Deprivatising of Practice         | Sustained development occurred through a variety of practices, e.g. team teaching, shared reflections, coaching conversations. | Semantic Space (Sayings)        |

Professional learning and practice development should be **context specific** and respond to the individuality of sites and those who *inhabit* them.

NB These are analytically separated not empirically (Kemmis et al., 2017)

### 4.6.3 Techniques for data analysis.

All the video data collected were transcribed and these transcripts were used for analysis purposes. In order for the data to be understood comprehensively a number of processes needed to take place. These included: initial organising, multiple readings, categorising, and coding and the finding of themes; additionally, the research questions were regularly referred to, to ensure new perspectives on the data were considered (Castle, 2011). Coding of the data took place to provide a *formal content analysis* (Needleman & Needleman, 1996). The data were then reviewed, codes were applied to segments and groups were formed. These coded groups were then reviewed in order to find relationships and patterns between the groups. In this way themes were identified, and generalisations made based upon them (Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015). To gain a deeper insight into the data a *hermeneutic analysis* (Needleman & Needleman, 1996) also took place so that more subtle meanings could be identified. This analysis involved an immersion in the data through repeated readings in order to identify themes and provide a framework for inferring meaning.
themes had been identified they were analysed in one of three ways before generalisations were made; these included an holistic approach, a selective highlighting approach and a line-by-line approach (Manen, 1990, as cited in Castle, 2011). In this research the first two methods were employed as they offered the means of gaining a general overview of each theme and also a method of identifying significant concepts that were relevant to the research.

4.7 Legitimacy and Rigour

Reflection upon issues of validity, to help ensure the credibility of the research also took place during the Test Phase. It should be noted that the legitimacy and rigour of research has traditionally been assessed against measures associated with validity, reliability and generalisability. However, these measures can be seen to be closely aligned with quantitative studies, conducted within a positivist paradigm, which are based upon on scientific facts and reasoning with no allowance for human behaviour (Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015). Hatch and Coleman-King further suggested that it is inappropriate and unrealistic to expect qualitative researchers to be able to effectively apply these measures to their own studies, whilst Marshall (1985) emphasised that if these measures were applied to qualitative studies, they could undermine their inherent strengths. However, Hatch and Coleman-King (2015) also recognised that an alternative method for substantiating qualitative research had to be utilised.

During the 1980s the notion of trustworthiness was developed (Castle, 2011; Lincoln & Guber, 1985, as cited in Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015), which aimed to provide a framework to ensure the legitimacy and rigour of qualitative research. In order for research to be deemed trustworthy it needed to demonstrate the elements of creditability, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Researchers, who wished to ensure rigour within their projects, had to be able to demonstrate the presence of all four elements that constitute trustworthiness although not all the techniques needed to be employed. However, Castle (2011) cautioned that researchers needed to remain mindful that the key facet of good qualitative research is that it will be useful to others.

The four elements of trustworthiness, and techniques that are used to establish them, are extremely compatible with DBR. Techniques for establishing dependability, confirmability and transferability, were all present in the research design section of this proposal. Dependability and confirmability were established, as ongoing analysis of data formed a vital component of the iterations. Similarly, the probability of successful transferability was promoted through the iterative process that provided substantial amounts of information, which was refined during DBR,
demonstrating flexibility and therefore a greater likelihood of generalisability. Prolonged engagement and the iterative process also supported the element of creditability. However, as the research was participatory and collaborative in nature, the personal views and values of the researcher could lead to creditability being decreased. In order to counteract this, as the researcher I took on the role of a *virtuous researcher* and *individualistic reflexivity* was employed (Maton, 2003, p. 54–55). Through these I critically reflected on both the research practices used and my social identity. Any possible biases based on my social and cultural background were made explicit and attempts were made to counteract them.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the critical role of ECTs in developing young children’s narrative discourse skills in order to support their future learning. The research was based within an educational setting and involved a small group of teachers, working collaboratively with me, as the researcher, in a community of practice. It was necessary to have a conceptual framework that reflected the aims, characteristics and context of the research; therefore, Practice Architectures provided an optimal choice. The methodological design, DBR, aligned with Practice Architectures, provided a structured yet flexible approach to the research process. Through the application of these approaches to the research design a deep, rich understanding of the processes of reflective professional learning was achieved. This understanding was then used to identify the features of a professional learning program that had a positive impact on teacher practice.
5. Understand, Define and Conceive Phase Findings

Introduction

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected throughout the DBR process the research findings are divided into three chapters. These chapters relate directly to the research questions and to the phases of DBR. Thus, the purposes of the data collection are twofold: firstly—the overarching goal—to provide evidence that will support responses to the research questions, and secondly, to ensure the integrity of DBR in which, at a procedural level, each stage of data collection informs the next stage of DBR. In order to develop a clear, in depth understanding of the rich qualitative data that has been collected a data reduction process is used. This allows data to be selected according to their relevance to the specific research question that is being addressed (Berkowitz, 1997). Nicolini’s (2017) zooming-in technique is employed in all three chapters as practices are analysed according to the ECTs actions of sayings, doings and relatings. In this way individual actions are analytically separated and closely examined, while it is recognised that multiple actions of sayings or doings or relatings are empirically entwined. Moreover, these bundles of sayings, doings and relatings are also entwined together, influencing each other, as are their respective arrangements cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political (Kemmis et al., 2017). In the Conclusion of the Research Findings (p.196 onwards) the focus zooms-out and takes a broader focus encompassing both the DBR process and the professional learning program (Nicolini, 2017).

13 It should be noted that the first phase of DBR, Focus, acted as a preliminary phase to the research and specified the audience, designers, general problem and scope. Data were not collected for analysis at this point.
The present chapter, presenting the *Understand, Define* and *Conceive* phase findings, relates to Research Question One: What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts? Data supporting this question were gained from the ECTs’ initial interviews, which provided their personal perspectives on the role of narratives within the wider field of oral language in the *Understand* phase. Oral language assessments also took place during this phase in order to provide a foundation for the ECTs to design and plan for children’s oral language learning. These empirical data forms were supported by an ongoing analysis of the relevant literature. In addition to addressing the first research question, these data also informed the next phase of DBR, *Define*. During the *Define* phase the assessment data were reviewed with the ECTs and target areas and teaching goals were discussed. Data from the ECTs’ discussions demonstrated the practical application of their existing knowledge and understanding of children’s oral language skills and also informed the following DBR phase, *Conceive*. The *Conceive* phase involved the brainstorming of ideas for the implementation of the project in the *Build* phase. These phases mainly entailed the building of understandings and took place within the semantic space (see section 3.2.3 Concepts of Practice Architecture, p. 79), through the medium of language, therefore the activities of the participants are analysed through the actions of *sayings* and also *knowings* and *understandings*.

The next chapter presents the *Build* phase findings and relates most closely to Research Question Two: How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse? This phase, most prominently, involved the *doings* and work of the project evident in the application of strategies in the settings and the discussion of these in the shared practice sessions (SPSs). *Relatings* also came to the fore as the group developed and worked as a team with a joint focus on improving practice and thereby enriching children’s learning (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Similarly, *sayings* were a necessary aspect of the practice at this stage as the ECTs used their new common languages and applied their prior knowledge and understanding to the collaborative reflections at each SPS. In addition to informing the second research question, data from the SPSs also supported ECTs’ comments during their final interviews in the *Test* phase of DBR.

The final findings chapter, *Test* Phase Findings, relates most closely to the third research question: What were the features of a professional development program that impacted on teacher practice? During this stage the entire project was evaluated and ECTs were interviewed in order to establish their views about the professional learning program. As the data were analysed, the significance of the practices’ *sayings, doings, and relatings* to ECT learning were revealed. The impact of the
‘common professional languages’ ¹⁴ (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) (sayings), the reflective processes supported by VSR (doings) and the roles of collaboration, reflection and feedback (relatings) were noted. As this was the final phase of the research, data from these ECT interviews were used to support responses to the third research question and the final process of evaluation and reporting.

The findings of the research are now considered chronologically, according to the DBR phases, analysed through Practice Architectures’ actions of sayings, doings and relatings, and specific reference is made to the research question that they address. Findings are regularly summarised and each chapter is linked to the following section. A general conclusion provides an overview of all three findings chapters.

**Overview**

In this chapter the data collected during the Understand, Define and Conceive phases of the DBR process are considered. Data from each of these phases informed the next phase of the DBR process and also provided information about the sayings at each shared practice session (SPS). During the Understand phase, data from interviews with ECTs and children’s oral language assessments were collected. The first of these provided information regarding the ECTs’ experiences, knowledge and understanding of oral language teaching in general and the role of narrative discourse. The oral language assessments informed both the ECTs and myself about the children’s skills in narrative discourse. The data from these assessments were discussed during the Define phase feedback meetings and enabled appropriate goals to be set. Transcripts and notes from these meetings provided further data concerning the teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the teaching of oral language and narrative discourse. The ECTs met as a whole group during the Conceive phase, brainstormed teaching strategies and took part in the general planning for the implementation or Build phase. Data from this phase were in video format and were then transcribed.

Data collected during the Understand, Define and Conceive phases of this DBR (see Table 8) project were interpreted through the Practice Architectures lens of sayings (which also encompasses participants’ knowings and understandings). Sayings has been selected for this

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¹⁴ In the context of this thesis the term common professional languages has a similar meaning to discourses and is used in the same manner as in Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014).
interpretation and analysis, as these DBR phases required the use of skills found in the semantic space and realised through the medium of language. These skills necessitated both individual and collective self-expression in order to create a culture for growth and learning (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018). Future practices were being established as the ECTs shared their knowledge and experience.

Table 8: Understand, Define and Conceive phases of DBR (based on Easterday et al., 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DBR Phase</th>
<th>UNDERSTAND</th>
<th>DEFINE</th>
<th>CONCEIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong> (based on Easterday et al., 2014)</td>
<td>Investigates the problem using empirical and secondary resources and synthesises the information.</td>
<td>Goals and assessments are set. The framing of the problem is considered, determining what the research questions will be.</td>
<td>Designers imagine solutions, analyse these and create conceptual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECTs Actions</strong></td>
<td>During interviews ECTs’ knowings and understandings were elicited. Oral language assessments took place to inform knowings and understandings in the Define Phase.</td>
<td>ECTs reflected upon oral language assessments developing their knowings and understandings. These were articulated through their sayings.</td>
<td>ECTs used their knowings and understandings to plan strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Data from the Understand Phase

The data collected during the Understand phase took the form of ECT interviews and children’s oral language assessments. These data were used to inform the subsequent Define and Conceive phases of DBR. Additionally, the data from the initial ECT interviews were used to support the first research questions regarding ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in preschool contexts. Furthermore, the ECTs’ responses about their own classroom practices and their perceived strengths and weaknesses revealed some early evidence of self-reflection, which they consolidated and extended during the Build phase of DBR (Chapter Six, p. 155) when the second research question was addressed.
5.1.1 ECT interviews.

The data from the ECTs’ interviews, are considered first. The interviews covered three core areas:

1) ECTs’ knowledge of children’s oral language skills.
2) ECTs’ present classroom practice.
3) ECTs’ perceptions of their own practice.

The ECTs’ responses in each area are outlined and interpreted with reference to the cultural-discursive arrangements. Their existing abilities in the use of a shared professional discourse (sayings), and their personal levels of knowledge (knowings) and understanding (understandings) of oral language teaching are revealed. This is followed by an overview of the oral language assessments, which were carried out in order to inform the ECTs practice by building on their existing knowledge and understanding of their children’s language development.

ECTs’ knowledge.

The ECTs’ knowledge and beliefs about oral language development in young children were elicited in order to discover the extent of their knowledge and understanding in this area and also their perceptions about their children’s oral language development. When the ECTS were asked which areas of oral language development they felt were important, the range of responses was confined to a narrow range of skill areas in some cases. Two out of the three ECTs at Context B highlighted the importance of conversation skills—Gloria discussed conversational protocols whilst Tamsin focused on developing children’s thinking skills through conversations (SST).

Gloria, focused, in the main on giving children the opportunity to talk and also providing them with rules about taking turns and paying attention—“that ability to have a conversation to appreciate what the other person is saying not just to be listened to”. In this way her thoughts reflected the views of Riley (2006) and Grugeon et al. (1998), who note that listening is an essential complementary skill to speaking in conversations. However, she also emphasised that the ability to follow instructions, which Grugeon et al. (1998) warned could become the sole form of listening in a busy classroom, and interactive listening skills might be neglected. As she reflected further, Gloria separated the ability to follow instructions and the ability to listen, understand and respond:
…definitely listening, definitely following instructions, umm but whether that’s a language thing or whether that’s just a learnt behaviour. You know, Mum becomes a bit of a white noise in the background and if I just don’t listen to her, I don’t have to do what she’s asked. But I think that, yeh, children’s listening skills, their ability to comprehend exactly what you’re saying.

Gloria seemed to be viewing the appreciation of another’s opinions as being as important as following instructions. In this way, through her *sayings*, she was extending her own understanding of the different facets of speaking and listening.

Tamsin explained how her teaching of oral language had developed, “my teaching has trended more towards group discussions, talking, pondering things, working out problems together”. This approach reflected the pedagogical approach of SST, recommended in the EPPE/REPEY projects, which stated that children could achieve extended levels of understanding when they work with an adult, to solve problems, clarify ideas or create narratives etc. (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). At first it appeared that she carried out many of her conversations during whole group time rather than on a one-to-one basis as recommended by Sylva et al. (2004) and Siraj-Blatchford (2010). However, as our conversation continued, she also highlighted the need for being in the moment, not answering questions too quickly or dismissing what the children were saying. This showed a deeper understanding of speaking and listening skills both on the part of the adult and the child, which she could bring to the Shared Practice Sessions.

Similarly, Melanie, the third ECT from Context B, recognised the importance of conversation skills noting that “we’re social beings and we need to use language, conversational language, in everything that we do, and it enhances social interactions”. However, she added that children needed to develop their vocabularies and be able to tell a story. I think that is the precursor to literacy in education, and if you can’t orally share a story, how are you going to then be able to put together a written story? Which is one of the fundamentals of literacy in school.

Thus, she showed that she understood the links between oral and later written narratives (Faulkner, Kirkby, Manly & Perrin, 2014) and their importance in later education, through their incorporation of decontextualised language skills (Nicolopoulou et al., 2006; Raban, 2014, Reese, 1995). Later in the conversation she further demonstrated her breadth of knowledge when she discussed rhyming and alliteration assessments and the children’s developmental processes, “I would argue, that some
of the ones in our skills audit are actually foundation into year one assessments rather than for children that are four to just five”. During our initial interview, and on many other occasions, Melanie showed her ability to contribute, through her *sayings*, her knowledge and experience in order to develop her own understanding and that of others.

Louise, from Context S, also demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of storytelling, explaining how she included this in her program along with activities to enhance the children’s articulation. Similarly, she used storytelling for developing emotional language—which she understood to be an essential prerequisite for emotional regulation—interpersonal skills (Joseph & Strain, 2003) and overall school readiness (Bierman et al., 2008). The final ECT participant, Leanne, was less able to articulate her views, stating that all areas of oral language were important before specifying “Having good communication. Being able to articulate what they want and getting their speech out”. She thereby seemed to be focusing on the Instrumental Function of oral language (Halliday, 1973 see Appendix 1).

From this discussion it is evident that the ECTs clearly valued specific areas of oral language, while possibly only focusing on one or two that they viewed as most important. However, as their individual interviews progressed, the ECTs demonstrated a greater knowledge and understanding of oral language activities; for example, Gloria and Tamsin talked about dialogic reading activities, Melanie spoke of music and rhyming, Tamsin added storytelling through story stones and ‘Stop animation’ app. When the responses were combined numerous oral language activities were brought to the forefront. At later SPSs, the combining of individual’s knowledge and understanding, demonstrated through the ECTs *sayings*, added to the learning as well as the sociality of the learning process within the group. Kemmis and Mutton (2012) suggested that this type of knowledge distribution reveals an example of how effective practices may be achieved collectively and not simply individually.

Whilst there was some degree of variation in the ECTs’ views about oral language teaching, their observations about children’s language patterns were consistent. All ECTs reported that there were more children attending preschool with speech delays or issues often requiring the services of speech pathologists. The three ECTs working at Context B also noted that children had narrower vocabularies, were less skilled in their use of language and gave less information during conversations. They further described their children’s speech strengths as being needs-based, single word answers or related to activities that they had experienced at preschool, such as dialogic reading. Therefore, it could be ascertained that the children’s preferred and predominant use of
language at Context B was Instrumental (Halliday, 1973 see Appendix 1). The children were largely using the first of the Seven Functions of Language rather than a broader range of speech functions and purposes.

Conversely, Louise, from Context S\textsuperscript{15}, stated that her cohort of children in fact had wide vocabularies and were participants in conversations that supported SST.

Interestingly, when the ECTs considered the areas of oral language that their children were less advanced in there was a clear association with the areas that they considered to be important. For example, the Context B ECTs felt that their children’s conversational skills needed to be extended and this was an area they felt was important. It should be noted that Leanne, from Context M, found this question difficult to answer, as she had only been based at the preschool for a week and had moved from an area with a different cohort of children.

ECTs’ present classroom practice.

In order to ascertain ECTs’ present language teaching practices they were asked about their current concerns, how they were addressing these and how they monitored the children’s progress. The ECTs’ areas of concern mirrored the areas they felt were important in oral language development and those that the children were less advanced in. The ECTs from Context B again focused on conversational skills, with Melanie further explaining that the children were disinclined to develop either stories or conversations, and required constant probing to do so: “I’m constantly digging, digging, digging” to extend their speech. Tamsin (also Context B) highlighted how children missed opportunities for developing advanced language skills through imaginative play, such as meta-language and code-switching\textsuperscript{16} (Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2011). She noted that the children appeared to spend little time in imaginative play or self-talk during play:

\textsuperscript{15} Context S was situated in a high socio-economic area, Context B a mid-range socio-economic area and Context M a low socio-economic area—see Table 4.

\textsuperscript{16} Code-switching occurs when children switch between different languages or forms of language, e.g. multilingual children may swap between English and a home language during discourse or play, during imaginative play children may swap between their role-play language and language to direct their play.
just going by what parents have said, [they] do spend a bit of time on electrical devices where they’re not communicating as much as they necessarily would be if they were sitting and playing in the lounge room with their dolls and they’re still talking [to] each of them.

Teacher concerns were addressed at point-of-need, often through modelling, whilst peer-modelling was also encouraged, and children’s understanding would be checked for regularly during activities. The other two ECTs focused on children’s ability to articulate words, Leanne (Context M) addressed such issues by contacting the health authority for assessments. Louise (Context S) had classroom-based strategies that she could use to strengthen their articulation:

...we do a lot of music stuff. A lot of, as I said, the chanting with particular sounds that I know they’re having issues with. Stories that have particular words in them that are repeated so that I know that they can really be participants in that story to be able to practice those words.

In this way Louise revealed her knowledge and understanding of both the physical processes involved in speech articulation and the ways in which children learn. Through a variety of enjoyable activities, she was able to engage the children in meaningful learning experiences (as suggested by Clay, 1998) that directly target their needs, such as the ability to produce sounds with clarity and accuracy. Louise also regularly used storytelling to develop her children’s emotional language. Its priority had been raised, as one of the preschool children had high-needs (physical, social, emotional – Autistic Spectrum Disorder) with lower self-regulation skills than many of his peers, and as such required more time to develop these skills (Joseph & Strain, 2003; Stanton-Chapman, Walker & Jamison, 2014). Louise’s understanding and knowledge of this need had been extended by regular visits from a preschool officer, a specialist employed by DET who provided practical advice and support through collaboration, consultation and coaching for ECTs who had children with additional needs attending their preschool program (DET, 2015), and she was starting to embed this in her practice.

When the ECTs described their methods of monitoring progress, they all mentioned the KMG Skills Audit which took place on a twice-yearly basis. This audit had only been recently introduced and ECTs commented that some changes to the skills that were tested at each stage would occur. These changes were to reflect the acquisition of new skills between Terms One and Three, but skills tested in Term One were not reassessed and therefore progression could not be observed. ECTs also made quarterly observations on a variety of developmental areas, not just oral language. Melanie (Context
B) added that direct language samples formed an important part of her anecdotal records because they can “indicate if there’s a concern or illustrate what they’re thinking … it tells you so much”. She also explained how she used her knowledge of children’s language development to inform her planning and practice, in order to extend the children. In regard to future teaching, both Tamsin and Gloria stated that they used a child-centred or point-of-need approach in the area of oral language, acting as needs arose, demonstrating the use of short-cycled formative assessments (Wiliam, 2006). Leanne answered the question more generally but still demonstrated a child-centred approach, planning based on the interests of the children and then adding their individual goals to her four-weekly planner. Like Melanie, Louise also included direct speech samples in her records which involved the most systematic approach to progress monitoring, using medium-cycle formative assessments (Wiliam, 2006) to inform planning for future learning:

We write observations on post it notes so as things are happening, we’ll write down exactly how they say things. Then, when I’m sitting down doing individual planning, we file them into their little section of the folder and then when I’m doing individual planning I can go right, this is where they’re at language wise. This is where they’re at physically. This is where they’re at with this. Then I’ll analyse that and make my plan for them.

ECTs’ perceptions of their own practice.

Towards the end of the interviews the ECTs were asked about their personal strengths in oral language teaching and what they would like to learn more about. When describing their personal strengths, the ECTs’ responses reflected or extended their earlier responses regarding which areas of oral language they felt were important. Gloria considered conversation skills to be important and she saw one of her strengths as

being able to give them time and being able to sort of sit and let them process what I’ve asked before I change it around or do something different. Um I think also just letting them talk.

Tamsin returned to conversations as well, particularly SST, but expanded her strengths to include dialogic reading techniques and the ability to take advantage of teaching moments. Louise viewed storytelling as an essential part of oral language development and perceived whole and small group storytelling activities as some of her strong points. Melanie approached oral language confidently, seeing it as her metier:
I find teaching in language very easy. I’m a good talker. And I’ve got a very rich vocabulary myself, and have a good understanding of language, so that definitely helps in sharing that with children.

Leanne lacked confidence and emphasised that oral language was not one of her strengths but wanted to know more about all aspects of it. Two ECTs expressed a desire to learn more about classroom management aspects of oral language teaching. Gloria queried how she could assess whether a communication issue such as following instructions was a concern or if it had a behavioural cause. Tamsin was interested in learning how to ensure that quieter, more independent children did not make less progress than expected, due to the demands of those with higher needs. Louise wanted to know more about how to develop children’s expressive language:

I feel like I understand a lot more about receptive language than I do expressive. So just yeah, that increasing my knowledge on the other things I can be doing for expressive language because we’re always obviously talking about can they follow one-, two- or three-part instructions? Are they understanding what I’m saying to them?

Melanie had no specific goals but felt that it was very important to continue to learn and that specific points might come up as the project progressed. While Melanie had no specific issues that she wished to address through the program she confidently, explained her strengths. Her experienced co-participants were able to explicitly describe their own strengths and also outline clear learning goals. However, Leanne, the least experienced ECT was only able to provide minimal responses to both questions. The differences between the experienced ECTs responses and those of Leanne demonstrated Snow’s (2001) view that the ability to reflect is developed after considerable knowledge has been acquired and embedded into practice.

The preceding reports illustrating the ECTs’ knowledge, understanding and practices in oral language, were created through repeated readings of the initial interview transcripts. Their different levels of experience, perceived abilities and goals were all reflected upon and considered during subsequent phases of DBR. The interpretation and analysis of the interviews according to sayings, knowings and understandings, formed a foundation for understanding later interactions at group meetings as these were not unmediated but affected by individual ECTs’ understandings acquired throughout their lives. According to Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014, p. 4):

To understand one another, they engage in sophisticated processes also acquired over a lifetime of inhabiting the social world. They use different kinds of acquired languages that
make the world mutually comprehensible to speakers with those languages in common. These languages help them to enter the physical and social dance of interactions that make up a practice like teaching or learning or leading.

During the *Understand* phase the children’s oral language assessments also took place, at each context, in order to establish the children’s narrative discourse skills and thus inform the targeting of teaching strategies during later phases.

### 5.1.2 Oral language assessments.

Four different observational oral language assessments were carried out: personal narrative, ENNI practice story, ENNI 1A story and a narrative re-tell of the children’s story book *Bernard O’Brien’s Tooth* by Diana Noonan. The assessments were undertaken over two non-consecutive days at each context; recordings of these assessments were transcribed and analysed using both macro and micro methods. Macro-analyses were conducted according to story grammar units and First Mentions (ENNI), the Highpoint Analysis (McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994) and the Tell Me Records System. Micro-analyses were carried out through the SALT database and considered: duration of narrative, number of words used, words per/minute, mazes, repetitions and errors. The style, content and scoring systems of the assessments were varied in order to achieve a comprehensive picture of the children’s language skills (see Appendix 4). It was important to provide the children with different stimuli for their oral narratives, which had a variety of levels of support and complexity. More complete (number of story grammar units), and fluent (i.e., with few or no mazes, repetitions or errors) oral texts are likely to be created when tasks are less complex or levels of support are higher. However, as tasks become more complex or have lower levels of support oral texts may be more limited (Boudreau, 2008).

As the assessments were selected in order to inform ECTs’, teaching the results will be presented for each context separately. Both the macro- and micro-analyses for each language assessment are discussed mirroring the way they were used with the ECTs during the *Define* phase of the research. Collated data tables were used to clarify specific discussion points at each context. Assessments and analyses from each context will be considered sequentially – Context B, Context M and finally, Context S.
Context B.

Macro-analysis.

Macro-analyses of the oral assessments are considered first according to story grammar units, First Mentions and the Highpoint Analysis, which were used for most of the assessments. The narrative retell (of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth) will then be discussed according to the Tell Me Records System. The following table (Table 9) shows the number of children in Context B that used each story grammar unit and the type of narrative they created according to the Highpoint Analysis (see Appendix 8 for further information about levels).

Table 9: Context B’s children’s narrative discourse abilities according to story grammar and Highpoint Analyses.

Context B: Story Grammar and Highpoint Analyses  
6 Participants (5 for the ENNI Assessments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Grammar Units</th>
<th>Bernard O'Brian's Tooth Retell</th>
<th>Personal Narrative</th>
<th>ENNIE Practice Story</th>
<th>ENNIE Story 1A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Number of children who used specified Story Grammar Unit)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters (nouns)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Attempt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+ 2 unrelated to subject)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highpoint Analysis</td>
<td>6 End-at-Highpoint</td>
<td>5 Leapfrog</td>
<td>2 leapfrog</td>
<td>1 Leapfrog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Two event</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 End-at-highpoint</td>
<td>4 End-at-Highpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1 classic but no feelings)</td>
<td>1 Chronological</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicate that Context B children are beginning to use noun labels for characters in their stories with at least half of them doing so for each assessment. However, in the narrative retell in particular, the application of noun labels is not extensive. This is clearly demonstrated when the
retell is looked at in greater detail through First Mentions (see Table 10A, B and C). Here the use of noun labels was inconsistent: no child referred to the main character Bernard by his name or as the boy, while only one child used a noun label for dad and two children for mum. This text had a large number of characters, making the labelling task harder but also more necessary – out of the four human characters, three were male, so the use of the pronoun he was insufficient to maintain a story point of reference. This difficulty with referents was also apparent in the children’s ENNI Practice Story (PS), Table 10B, where both characters were male and only the adult at the end was given a noun label by three out of the five children (the remaining children used pronoun labels or no label). The children’s references were, in general, clearer in the ENNI 1A, (Table 10C) narratives as there were male and female characters and three of them used noun labels at First Mention.
Table 10A, B, & C: Analyses of oral narratives according to First Mentions at Context B.

**Context B: First Mentions Analyses**

### Table 10A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: <em>Bernard O’Brien’s Tooth</em></th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernard</td>
<td>Mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

### Table 10B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: ENNI Practice Story</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>someone 2</td>
<td>man 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>he 1</td>
<td>Dad 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>he 1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>he 1</td>
<td>shopkeeper 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

### Table 10C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: ENNI Story 1 A</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giraffe</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>boy 2</td>
<td>elephant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>he 1</td>
<td>he 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>giraffe 3</td>
<td>elephant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>giraffe 2</td>
<td>elephant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>he 1</td>
<td>she 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*
Most children were able to use settings in their personal narratives, in places they were accustomed to, and the ENNI PS which was set in a supermarket, a setting which would have been very familiar to them. The inclusion of a problem was also most common in personal narratives however only half the children included consequences and topic related actions. Endings and feelings were not commonly used by the children – the exception to this was when four children narrated that the man at the supermarket (ENNI PS) was angry due to an unambiguous illustration.

When story grammar and First Mentions analyses were applied to Context B children’s narratives some of their most complete narratives were personal ones (although feelings and endings were rarely used). However, when the Highpoint Analysis was applied to them, contradictory results were produced – the personal narratives were, in fact the weakest of the four oral texts (see Appendix 8). These narratives were comprised of Two-events, the first type on the Highpoint Analysis continuum and Leapfrog, the second type. Context B children produced their best narratives, according to the Highpoint Analysis, in their retells of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth, which were End-at-highpoint, the second most complete type of narrative.

The final macro-analysis tool, the Tell Me Record System, was only applied to the retell of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth. This analysis was originally designed for children on first entering school, therefore the test was not used in a normative manner but to highlight children’s overall language and narrative development in five areas: sentence structure, vocabulary, organisation, description/expression and content. This analysis produced the most consistent results with all children working at a basic or plain level (see Table 11). Results showed that children required the most skills development in the areas of vocabulary, organisation and description.
Table 11: Analysis of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth at Context B. Bold print shows results from children at Context B.

Context B: Tell Me Records System Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level standardised scores</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description/Expression</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic (1)</td>
<td>Unconnected labels</td>
<td>Labels – nouns, pronouns, verbs</td>
<td>Unlinked picture by picture</td>
<td>Limited description of events or characters</td>
<td>One main event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain (2)</td>
<td>Short simple sentences (links and/and then).</td>
<td>Some descriptive words</td>
<td>Retold picture by picture with repetition of linkages</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place described. Some expression</td>
<td>Two or three main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed (3)</td>
<td>Sentences have several ideas, clearly related clauses &amp; phrases</td>
<td>Wide range of description and mood setting</td>
<td>Detailed explicit story line and sense of climax.</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place, reason explained with expression</td>
<td>More than three main points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Micro-analysis.

The micro-analysis, as generated through the SALT database measured: the total number of words, the number of words per minute, intelligibility, errors, pauses and mazes. For the purposes of this study the most valuable results were those, which focused on: duration, verbal facility (speed) and intelligibility as these could be most easily be related to ECTs’ own observations of children’s existing skills and progress. Mean averages were calculated in each of the language areas for the four assessments. In this way, the ECTs were provided with a general overview of their children’s fluency when creating narratives.

The data from the micro-analysis has been presented in table form (Table 12) so that comparisons can be made quickly and accurately between children’s skill levels in each of the different assessments. It should be noted that the final column provides information about average language skills, for personal narratives, of children in Australia according to age (as found in the SALT database). Therefore, calculations are based on different sample numbers for Context B as compared to Context M and S.
When Context B average scores for Personal Narrative were compared to the SALT database scores there were inconsistencies. Context B averages indicated that the children’s speech was of mid-range according to intelligibility and number of errors. However, their narratives contained more mazes than the maximum score on the database and were of shorter duration. Although the average number of words per minute was slightly higher than the minimum score on the database, when the total number of words was considered in relation to the number of mazes (almost 15% were mazes) the average fluency of personal narratives at Context B was not high. Overall, the average narratives at Context B appeared to be less developed than those on the database. SALT database averages will be considered again in the General Reflections (p. 147). The key points regarding the children’s oral narratives at Context B—the duration of the narratives and the relationship between verbal facility and intelligibility—are now discussed.

Table 12: Micro-Analysis showing narrative fluency at Context B (mean averages are shown and were calculated on Excel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency Measures</th>
<th>Retell</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>ENNI Practice</th>
<th>ENNI 1A</th>
<th>SALT DATABASE: 6 examples averages not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of narrative sample</td>
<td>2 m 09s</td>
<td>1 m 24s</td>
<td>1 m 36 s</td>
<td>1 m 33 s</td>
<td>Min: 1m 43s Max: 5m 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words spoken by child</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>66.75</td>
<td>Min: 83 Max: 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of words per minute spoken by child</td>
<td>38.36</td>
<td>60.68</td>
<td>32.85</td>
<td>41.98</td>
<td>Min: 47.27 Max: 135.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligibility (utterances)%</td>
<td>69.39</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>81.86</td>
<td>82.09</td>
<td>Min: 70 Max: 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors %</td>
<td>19.77</td>
<td>14.83</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>25.27</td>
<td>Min: 5.08 Max: 26.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses %</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>Non observed</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Min: 0.0 Max: 3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazes (repetitions etc.)%</td>
<td>28.83</td>
<td>14.77</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>Min: 7.78 Max: 12.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Duration of narrative, verbal facility and intelligibility.*

The ENNI PS and 1A assessments were of a very similar duration, while the personal narrative was shorter, and the narrative retell considerably longer. Conversely, the children spoke at the highest rate in their personal narratives and with greatest intelligibility, indicating greater levels of confidence with this oral text type (mirroring the results from the Highpoint Analysis macro-analysis).
The words per minute spoken by the children in the narrative retell and the two ENNI assessments were very similar and considerably lower than the number spoken in the personal narratives. Levels of intelligibility of speech in the retell were the lowest, contradicting evidence from the Highpoint Analysis macro-assessment, where they produced high quality narratives, suggesting that greater levels of effort were put into creating the text content and therefore their verbal facility was reduced.

**Context M.**

**Macro-analysis.**

Only three children took part in the oral language assessments at Context M. However, their language skills did provide a clear overview of the abilities of the children within the context as their skills could be categorised as high, medium and low (the child with the lowest levels of language skills had been attending speech pathology prior to starting preschool). Their oral narratives are discussed according to the macro-analyses of story grammar, First Mentions and the Tell Me Records before the micro-analysis through SALT is considered.

The top section of Table 13 shows the children’s use of story grammar, specifically: character, setting, problem, action, consequence, ending and feelings. The children are beginning to use all the different components of story grammar but very rarely include feelings or endings in their narratives, while problems and settings are sometimes included. Conversely, they are including actions and consequences fairly consistently. Two out of three children were able to give their characters a noun label in all their stories, but their use was not consistent which becomes much clearer when the assessments are considered through First Mentions.

When comparisons were made between the quality of the children’s narratives according to story grammar and the Highpoint Analysis (see Table 13) there were some similarities.
Table 13: Context M’s children’s narrative discourse abilities according to story grammar and Highpoint Analyses.

**Context M: Story Grammar and Highpoint Analyses**

3 Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Grammar Units</th>
<th>Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth Retell</th>
<th>Personal Narrative</th>
<th>ENNIE Practice Story</th>
<th>ENNIE Story 1A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Number of children who used specified Story Grammar Unit)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters (nouns)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Attempt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highpoint Analysis**

1 Leapfrog
1 End-at-Highpoint
1 Chronological
3 Two Event
3 End-at-Highpoint
3 End-at-Highpoint

The ENNI PS had the highest level of story grammar units and also was one of the most successfully told according to the Highpoint Analysis, with all three children creating end-at-highpoint narratives—the second most complete form of narrative (see Appendix 8). This was unexpected, as the assessment provided the lowest level of support for the children (there is no adult input before the retell) though the story itself was quite brief. The story board consisted of only five pictures, the setting was familiar, and the children were also asked to provide details as the listener could not see the illustrations. The comparisons between story grammar and the Highpoint Analysis for the ENNI 1A story were also similar, with two of the three children producing complete recounts according to story grammar and all three creating end-at-highpoint recounts. The personal narratives were the weakest according to both story grammar and the Highpoint Analysis, possibly due to a lack of experience in this area.

Table 14A shows the children’s use of labelling nouns in the ENNI Practice Story. This story had two male characters, a small boy and a man, therefore for the story to make sense the children really needed to use noun labels for both characters, yet only one of them managed to do so. In ENNI 1A,
Table 14B, the children did not effectively discriminate between the characters either, with none of them labelling both characters appropriately.

In the retell (Table 14C) where there were 4 characters, noun labels were used most inconsistently; one child used no noun labels and two used two. This demonstrates that when tasks are more complex children’s texts become less comprehensive (see also Boudreau, 2008).

Table 14 A, B & C: Analyses of oral narratives according to First Mentions at Context M.

Table 14A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First mentions Units: ENNI Practice Story</th>
<th>Cookies</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>kid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

Table 14B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child 1</th>
<th>Giraffe</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: ENNI 1A Story</th>
<th>Ball</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giraffe</td>
<td>Giraffe</td>
<td>Ball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>something</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

Table 14C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child 1</th>
<th>Bernard</th>
<th>First mentions Units: Bernard O'Brians Tooth</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Tooth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1 mum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1 mum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1 -</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

An additional analysis, the Tell Me Records System, was carried out with the narrative retells (see Table 15). There were slight variations in the results from this analysis when compared to story grammar and First Mentions analyses. All children used vocabulary and description at a basic level...
and had content and sentence structure at a plain level. Two children were able to use repetitive links and one was not. This would suggest a need for greater focus on vocabulary development, description of characters and events (linking to the low use of noun labels and feelings in story grammar analysis), and also use of story language, such as repetitive refrains.

Table 15: Analysis of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth Narrative Retell at Context M. Bold print shows results from children at Context M.

**Context M: Tell Me Records System Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level standardised score</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description/Expression</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Unconnected labels</td>
<td>Labels – nouns, pronouns, verbs</td>
<td>Unlinked picture by picture (1 child)</td>
<td>Limited description of events or characters</td>
<td>One main event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>Short simple sentences (links and/and then).</td>
<td>Some descriptive words</td>
<td>Retold picture by picture with repetition of linkages (2 children)</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place described. Some expression</td>
<td>Two or three main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Sentences have several ideas, clearly related clauses &amp; phrases</td>
<td>Wide range of description and mood setting</td>
<td>Detailed explicit story line and sense of climax.</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place, reason explained with expression</td>
<td>More than three main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Micro-analysis.**

Comparative data from the SALT database was only available for Personal Narratives. Average scores of Context M children in these narratives are compared to the SALT database. This is followed by a general discussion about the analyses of all four of narrative assessments that the children undertook. The Personal Narratives of Context M children were short, about half the length of the shortest comparable sample on the database and their speech was slower. However, the intelligibility of their speech was high with no observed mazes or pauses. The number of errors they made was in the middle of the range of SALT samples. Despite having high levels of speech intelligibility, the average Personal Narratives from Context M cannot be considered to be as well developed as those on the database due to their brevity.

When micro-analyses of all four oral narratives were undertaken through SALT, those which could be most easily related to ECTs’ own observations of children’s existing skills and progression—
focusing on duration, verbal facility (speed) and intelligibility—were prioritised and are discussed now. These are illustrated in Table 16. Notably, personal narratives were of the shortest duration at Context M and were less than half the length of similar samples in the SALT database. This brevity mirrored the results of the story grammar and the Highpoint Analysis, which showed them to be the least complete of the four narratives produced. However, the children’s intelligibility was at its highest (96%) when they spoke of personal experiences. The retells were of the longest duration and had the next highest level of intelligibility (85.87%). The retells provided high levels of support for the children but they spoke at a faster rate, which reduced their oral clarity. The ENNI assessments had the lowest levels of support and therefore it was not unexpected that the children’s speech showed the lowest levels of intelligibility and that they were speaking at slower rates than for the retell and personal narrative. However, these results contradict those of the story grammar and the Highpoint analysis—the children produced more complete narratives in the ENNI assessments but had lower levels of verbal facility. This would suggest that the children needed to concentrate more on the content of their retells and therefore the fluency of their speech was reduced.

Table 16: Micro-Analysis showing narrative fluency at Context M (mean averages are shown and were calculated on Excel).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context M</th>
<th>Micro-Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency Measures</strong></td>
<td><strong>Retell</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of narrative sample</td>
<td>1 m 48s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words spoken by child</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of words per minute spoken by child</td>
<td>50.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligibility (utterances)%</td>
<td>85.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors %</td>
<td>13.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses %</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazes (repetitions etc.)%</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Context S.**

*Macro-analysis.*

The sample size for the oral narrative assessments at Context S was the largest but it should be noted that two to three children did not respond to the different story stimuli. This meant that the averages were calculated for either three or four children on each occasion. The lack of response may have been due to the children being unwilling to talk to a new adult, although attempts to prevent this were made as the researcher made several visits to the context for familiarisation purposes before assessments took place.

The results of analyses according to story grammar (Table 17) were interesting as the children produced their most complete narratives for the ENNI PS and 1A stories, which had the lowest levels of support. The children were usually able to use a noun label for at least one character, often included settings and actions, and were beginning to include consequences and endings. However, when the narratives were analysed through First Mentions, it became apparent that although they were using some noun labels these were not always specific enough to enable listener understanding. For example, the children used ‘they’ or ‘that’ in ENNI 1A (Table 18A) and ‘he’ and ‘man’ (for two male characters) in ENNI PS (Table 18B). Similarly, the children’s use of noun labels in the retell (Table 18C) provided insufficient point of reference to ensure the listener’s understanding—for example, the main character was only referred to by the pronoun, ‘he’, and two of the other characters were male.
Table 17: Context S’ children’s narrative discourse abilities according to story grammar and Highpoint Analyses.

Context S: Story Grammar and Highpoint Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Grammar Units</th>
<th>Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth Retell</th>
<th>Personal Narrative</th>
<th>ENNIE Practice Story</th>
<th>ENNIE Story 1A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Participants</td>
<td>4 Participants</td>
<td>6 Participants</td>
<td>5 Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Number of children who used specified Story Grammar Unit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Participants</th>
<th>4 Participants</th>
<th>6 Participants</th>
<th>5 Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters (nouns)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Attempt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+2 unrelated to subject)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+1 unrelated to subject)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3 unrelated to subject)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highpoint Analysis</td>
<td>1 Leapfrog</td>
<td>2 Leapfrog</td>
<td>2 Leapfrog</td>
<td>3 Leapfrog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 End-at-Highpoint</td>
<td>2 End-at-Highpoint</td>
<td>2 End-at-Highpoint</td>
<td>1 End-at-Highpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Highpoint Analysis, however, revealed that at least half the children were unable to tell a logically sequenced story and produced leapfrog narratives. This was quite surprising, as in her initial interview their ECT had stated that, “Their vocabulary is amazing and they have sentence structure like I’ve never seen kinder children have before”. However, she was referring to specific vocabulary and conversational skills and the results of this assessment show that these were not necessarily transferred over to their narrative discourse production. Additionally, she was referring to the previous cohort’s abilities, possibly viewed at the end of four year-old preschool rather than the present cohort at the beginning of four year-old preschool.
Table 18 A, B & C: Analyses of oral narratives according to First Mentions at Context S.

**Context S: First Mentions Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: ENNI Story 1 A</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giraffe</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>animal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: ENNI Practice Story</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1*</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>kid</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

*Child 1 only used nouns at first mention and then only used pronouns so there was little clarity overall.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>First Mentions Units: Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bernard</td>
<td>Mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 5</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 6</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scoring System Key: no referent 0, pronoun 2, noun only 2, noun + article 3.*

The children’s personal narratives were the least complete regarding the use of story grammar units, with high levels of inconsistency and confusion when attempting to include actions, consequences and endings. These problems were confirmed by the Highpoint Analysis, which showed that half the children were producing leapfrog narratives.
The final assessment was the narrative retell of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth. During this narrative all the children included actions and consequences but settings and feelings were rarely or not included. Noun labels were included by most of the children, however, when this was looked at more closely through First Mentions analysis (Table 18C), although half the children were using character noun labels effectively, half of them used only one.

Overall the story grammar analysis showed that the majority of the children were able to create almost complete narrative retells which lacked only feelings and endings. The Highpoint Analysis confirmed this with three children creating end-at-highpoint narratives and one creating a leapfrog narrative. The Tell Me Records System (Table 19) was also used to analyse the narrative retell, this showed that the children were in general creating narratives with a basic level of vocabulary, organisation and description, and a plain level of sentence structure and content. This would imply that children need more work on organisational structures, vocabulary and description – areas which also needed to be developed in their personal narratives.

Table 19: Analysis of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth Narrative Retell at Context S. Bold print shows results from children at Context S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level standardised score</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description/Expression</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None (0)</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic (1)</td>
<td>Unconnected labels</td>
<td>Labels – nouns, pronouns, verbs</td>
<td>Unlinked picture by picture</td>
<td>Limited description of events or characters</td>
<td>One main event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain (2)</td>
<td>Short simple sentences (links and/and then).</td>
<td>Some descriptive words</td>
<td>Retold picture by picture with repetition of linkages</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place described. Some expression</td>
<td>Two or three main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed (3)</td>
<td>Sentences have several ideas, clearly related clauses &amp; phrases</td>
<td>Wide range of description and mood setting</td>
<td>Detailed explicit storyline and sense of climax.</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place, reason explained with expression</td>
<td>More than three main points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Micro-analysis.

Microanalysis examined the fluency with which the children produced their oral narratives, thereby providing a fuller picture of their language abilities. Initially, the average Personal Narrative scores of the children from Context S are compared to the maximum and minimum recorded on the SALT database (comparative data was not available for the retell, ENNI Practice or ENNI 1A discourses). This is followed by a general discussion about all four of the narrative discourses that the children undertook (see Table 20).

The average Personal Narrative length at Context S was of a similar length to the shortest example on the database. The average Context S discourse contained nearly 50% of errors (almost 20% more than the comparative maximum number on the database) and more than four times the comparative minimum number of mazes recorded. However, more words were spoken per minute and the intelligibility was 100%, equalling that of the maximum on the database. No pauses were observed. Thus, when Context S children’s narratives were compared to those on the SALT database, strengths and weaknesses were evident and therefore could not be considered as well developed.

Each of the four narrative assessments are now considered according to SALT fluency measures: the length of narratives, total number of words spoken, wpm, intelligibility, errors and pauses. The first four of these measures were most easily observable during normal classroom observations and so formed the basis for the discussion with the ECT.
Table 20: Micro-Analysis showing narrative fluency at Context S (mean averages are shown and were calculated on Excel).

**Context S**

**Micro-Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency Measures</th>
<th>Retell</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>ENNI Practice</th>
<th>ENNI 1A</th>
<th>SALT DATABASE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of narrative sample</td>
<td>2 m 17s</td>
<td>1 m 14 s</td>
<td>1 m 22 s</td>
<td>1 m 25 s</td>
<td>Min: 1m 03s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words spoken by child</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>52.75</td>
<td>75.25</td>
<td>Max: 8m 0s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of words per minute spoken by child</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>61.96</td>
<td>40.94</td>
<td>53.98</td>
<td>Min: 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligibility (utterances)%</td>
<td>92.52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97.25</td>
<td>88.63</td>
<td>Max: 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors %</td>
<td>27.61</td>
<td>46.43</td>
<td>20.04</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>Min: 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses %</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>27.78</td>
<td>Min: 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazes (repetitions etc.)%</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>Min: 2.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all of the narrative forms the children had very high levels of intelligibility in their speech with the lowest levels being found in the ENNI 1A assessment (88.63 %). This could have been due to the ambiguous nature of illustrations—for example, the bouncing ball and the unusual giraffe representation—making comprehension more difficult or because they were concentrating on including extra information (story grammar units) as they knew the listener could not see the illustrations. They were also speaking at a relatively high speed, which did not aid speech clarity. The highest levels of intelligibility and verbal facility (intelligibility + wpm) were found in their shortest texts, the personal narratives. This demonstrated that the narratives were approached confidently, but when looked at in conjunction with the macro-analysis recounts, were not told effectively.

The oral narratives produced for the retells, when considered through micro-analysis, were shown to be of the greatest length but had a relatively low number of wpm when compared to the other text types. Similarly, the intelligibility levels (92.52%) were at the second lowest level. This meant that, despite the high levels of support (adult pre-reading and ongoing access to the illustrations), the children were hesitant in their story production.
General reflections.

As the assessments from all the preschool contexts were analysed it became apparent that there were many inconsistencies in the way children produced their oral narratives. For example, at Context B the strongest oral narrative according to the Highpoint Analysis was the narrative retell, yet the children included the least number of story grammar units and spoke with the lowest levels of intelligibility. At Context S the children produced narratives with the highest number of story grammar units in the ENNI 1A assessment, but they were the weakest according to the Highpoint Analysis and their speech was at its lowest level of intelligibility. At Context M their strongest oral narratives according to story grammar, the Highpoint Analysis and speech intelligibility were in the ENNI PS but they spoke at the lowest rate of wpm. Additionally, when the average personal narrative samples from each preschool were compared to the Australian averages in the SALT database, more inconsistencies became apparent. When compared to SALT (see Table 12, p. 135) the Context B children spoke for a shorter length of time, made more errors and used more than the maximum number of mazes recorded in the SALT database. However, their speech was slightly more intelligible than the SALT average and they spoke at a faster rate. At Context M (see Table 16, p. 140) the duration of the children’s narratives was approximately half the duration of the minimum length recorded on SALT and they made more errors, but their intelligibility was at a high level. The children at Context S (see Table 20, p. 146) produced narratives above the minimum according to duration, total number of words, words per minute and intelligibility. However, they made almost twice as many errors as the maximum in the SALT database comparison group and used three times as many mazes as the minimum recorded.

Inconsistencies in the quality and completeness, on both a macro and micro level, of the children’s oral narrative building were probably occurring because they were discovering new language features that they wanted to explore. During such explorations some previously used features (whether content based or semantically, syntactically or grammatically based) were ignored. Clay (1991) referred to this as the pebble on the pond effect. She believed that new learning, given time, will become incorporated with older learning just as the ripples created by a dropped pebble merge into the rest of the pond. Thus, the ECTs’ awareness of the need for intentionally teaching and planning of ongoing narrative discourse experiences across all types of oral narrative emerged. This could be achieved through a variety of adult-guided activities followed by reinforcement through child-guided activities (Epstein, 2014). During these activities ECTs should include modelling, thoughtful questioning and active listening (Raban, 2007; Riley, 2006). Ways of implementing
these aspects were discussed during the Conceive phase once the ECTs had considered the assessment results during the Define phase.

5.2 Data from the Define Phase

5.2.1 Purposes of the assessments.

The Define phase began in February 2018 at the beginning of the first school term. During this phase meetings were held between ECTs and me in order to discuss the results of the children’s oral language assessments and use them to inform future teaching target areas. These assessments were undertaken during the previous phase of DBR, Understand, in order to provide a general overview of the possible levels of children’s narrative discourse skills. The information was important to the professional learning program because children have been found to make better progress when formative assessments have been used to ascertain their learning needs 17 (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2006; Wiliam et al., 2004). These assessments were then analysed before written summaries were discussed with the ECTs at meetings during the Define phase. At the end of each preschool’s summary there was a suggestion for possible next steps in children’s learning, an example of these is shown in Figure 5, that might be taken, based upon these analyses.

17 Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2006) recommended formative assessments to differentiate the curriculum for individual children. The formative assessments in the Understand phase provided a starting point for the ECTs and they then informally assessed individual children’s progress in an ongoing manner.
Possible Next Steps In Children’s Narrative Discourse Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context M and B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Next Steps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The results of these assessments/observations show that the children are beginning to create short oral texts and these can be equated to their chronological age in most cases according to the Highpoint analysis. These texts are generally quite short and when they are looked at more closely through a story grammar analysis, areas for development can be observed. The children are beginning to include some of story grammar units but they are not using them consistently and so it is important that they are able to practice their narrative skills regularly and be encouraged to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Refer to characters by a noun label especially at first mention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Provide a setting for the story near the beginning of their narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Include the problem, action and consequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Add the characters’ feelings and an ending to the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intentional teaching of these skills and practice of them will help to develop the children’s ability to create narrative texts, improve their fluency and enable them to create longer texts. This practice should also lead to increased periods of sustained shared thinking between peers and between adults and children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context S differs only in Point 1:**
Refer to characters by a noun label when there are larger numbers of characters.

---

**Figure 5: Summary of next steps in children’s narrative discourse development**

An example of one of the meetings at Context B with Melanie and Gloria follows, illustrating the ways in which ECTs applied their prior knowledge and understanding (*knowings*) of children’s general cognitive and oral language development during the discussion. This demonstrated how their learning was enabled through the cultural-discursive arrangements. The role of the assessment data in the *Conceive* phase is then outlined, followed by an account of the ways in which two ECTs, Tamsin and Louise, applied their new *knowings*, based on the narrative assessments, to their teaching practices with their children.

**5.2.2 Assessment feedback and discussion.**

Melanie and Gloria had a joint meeting with me, though Tamsin was called away at the last minute and viewed the meeting recording in her own time. At the start of the meeting the ECTs were given a two-page summary of the results and analysis and an information sheet (see Appendix 12), which gave additional information about the assessments. The four observational assessments were then briefly described and discussed before the actual results of the analysis were explored.

The ECTs were very interested in how each assessment was carried out and were keen to understand the processes involved. Initially the ENNI resources were viewed and the children’s responses considered, the ECTs liked the ENNI Practice Story and debated its use as part of their skills audit.
However, they were not as impressed with ENNI 1A as they felt that the illustrations would be confusing, given that the giraffe character really did not look like a giraffe, the clothing was misleading, and the bouncing ball illustration was a concept that the children would not be aware of. Consequently, they were not surprised when they heard that the children had not created as complete (using all or most story grammar units) or fluent (according to the SALT analysis) a narrative from this stimulus. ENNI First Mentions (the analysis of data which looked at children’s first referent for characters – noun, pronoun or proper noun) was also discussed at this point. The ECTs felt that their children’s use of pronouns rather than noun labels was not unexpected:

Melanie: I was going to say that, it’s very typical of kindergarten aged children. They’re going to talk about … He and she, that would be much more common than saying, “And then the elephant, climbed over the fence and called out to the giraffe.”

Gloria: Even with their friends. They’ll come to you and say, “Oh, he did this,” and if you prompt them and say, “Who is it? Who are you talking about?” They’ll know the child’s name – but …

This discussion of typical language behaviours of preschool children, the use of noun labels for people and the use of pronouns, provided a glimpse of their extensive experience and understanding of preschool education. Melanie also showed her willingness to add to her knowledge when she considered the “need to refresh my memory on the developmental status of pronoun development”.

They also actively discussed the use of story retells using pictures and books. Melanie reflected upon the newly introduced skills audit and how the children had been expected to retell a relatively long story, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”:

…last year, in skills audit, it was the first time that we more closely looked at children’s ability to retell a story with the support of pictures and then to retell a story without support. That’s what all this is, really, except that I was looking at that, wouldn’t it be much simpler, to use something like that which was just three pictures long like that.

Gloria added to these reflections, suggesting the use of a similar resource they already had at their context – sequencing cards, “those sort of sequencing type pictures could be retelling a story too”. Through these reflections Melanie and Gloria demonstrated their ability to apply new-found
knowledge to previous experiences and improve future practices enabled by the *cultural-discursive* arrangements.

The results of the personal narrative were then discussed. The ECTs were very interested in how these narratives were elicited and once again they were not surprised by the results. The narratives were relatively short, and the children talked mostly about themselves, as Melanie said this “matches very well with the ego-centricity of children at that age”. Personal narratives from this cohort were nearly all considered to be in the leapfrog narrative bracket of the Highpoint Analysis, which are most usually created by children between the ages of 4 and 5 years. Therefore, children at Context B were creating personal narratives at an approximately age-appropriate level.

Once all the data had been reviewed the next steps were considered. Suggestions were based on the children’s usage of the story grammar units as they provided clear reference points for teaching and would directly aid in the creation of complete oral narratives. The ECTs took the summaries with them for further consideration and were asked to reflect upon the types of goals or teaching targets they would like to work towards during the *Conceive* and *Build* phases of the research. This meeting not only utilised data collected during the *Understand* phase to set goals or teaching targets but also became evidence about the ECTs activities within the *cultural-discursive* arrangements, their *sayings*, *knowings* and *understandings* at Context M.

In the *Conceive* phase, ECTs were able to combine their knowledge of their children’s narrative discourse needs (generated from the prompt sheets and *Define* phase discussions) with their understanding of the children’s preferred learning styles to select teaching strategies to be used in the *Build* phase. In the *Build* phase the ECTs again referred back to the oral language assessments in order to focus their teaching strategies appropriately. Over time, they used a variety of the CLASS *language modelling* strategies (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) to develop the children’s inclusion of: *characters*, *settings*, *actions* etc. based upon the initial language assessments and their own ongoing informal assessments (e.g., Louise’s questioning and prompting in Narrative 2, p. 171). The children’s problem with ending stories was also considered, which was initially noted by Tamsin (as part of her ongoing assessments and reflections) and became a focus for her teaching (see p. 160). By focusing their intentional teaching on one or more of the specific points suggested in *Next Steps* (Figure 5) the ECTs *doings* were enabled by their *knowings* (an overlap between learning in the *material-economic* and *cultural-discursive* arrangements).
5.3 Data from the *Conceive* Phase

5.3.1 The practical aspects of being involved in the professional learning program.

The initial DBR meeting provided the first opportunity for group interactions for the ECTs from the three different contexts and was therefore the starting point for the formation of relationships within a new group. The first part of the meeting centred on the practicalities (the how) of the project and consequently a large part of the time involved researcher explanations of processes with occasional questions and comments from the ECTs. At this stage the ECTs were also re-introduced to the CLASS language assessment system, part of a protocol used by the KMG, (Pianta, et al., 2008, 2009) that they would be using as a reflection tool during the shared practice sessions:

**Rachael (researcher):** A lot of it you probably already know, but it just gives you some examples. And it gives you ideas of things you should be looking for when you’re looking at their oral language, that you know, the frequent conversations, open ended questions, repetition and extension, self-talk, those kinds of things, and it gives you the examples further on.

5.3.2 Demonstration of existing knowledge and understanding through brainstorming.

The second part of the meeting became much more interactive with a focus on the planning of the project (the what). At this point the ECTs brainstormed strategies for teaching narrative discourse and the various levels of knowledge and experience in this area became evident. ECTs brainstormed their ideas on a large piece of paper, using different coloured text as in (Picture 1). The majority of the ideas came from two of the ECTs, Louise (green) and Tamsin (purple), (dark blue was the researcher’s).
Picture 1: Brainstorming of narrative discourse teaching strategies.

Tamsin and Louise were very open about sharing their practice, some of their ideas were known to the others already, however, the iPad apps appealed to the ECTs and became the next focus for the discussion. Both clearly articulated the processes involved, Tamsin described the ‘Stop animation’ app and a new app she had just discovered:

They write a story first and then we use two figurines and a ‘Stop’ animation app. They then use it to move things around, take photos. Then … There’s a new app, that I’ve got it was awesome … That they could then record and tell a story as it plays. It was in two stages. It was really cool.

Similarly, Louise explained how she had previously used an app to make physical books for each child:

…you can make a story with eight pages. We always do our social story about coming to kinder as a week-long story. Then you just photocopy it onto A3 paper, or you can just say, make a little book and you fold it up and you just do one little cut. It turns it into this little tiny book that they can all have.
These vignettes provide evidence of the ways in which the ECTs were able to share their existing knowledge and experiences with their colleagues. They effectively used the semantic space to further develop the group’s understandings in the practice of narrative discourse teaching.

When all the ideas had been discussed the ECTs were eager to choose a strategy to trial—Melanie demonstrated her managerial abilities by leading the way and pairing up with her Context B colleague Tamsin to trial a new iPad app, while Louise and Gloria teamed up to trial Story Ponds. The latter of these was a kinaesthetic strategy which involved the children jumping on stepping-stones as they told a story which Louise reacted to positively, demonstrating her understanding of this learning style: “A physical aspect to it as well. I like that…”. This meant that the four more experienced and confident teachers had paired leaving Leanne on her own. I intervened at this point and asked her what she would like to do—this drew the attention of some of the other ECTs (Melanie and Gloria) who immediately showed support for her, encouraging her ideas and bringing her into the team. They suggested keeping things simple and carrying on with a strategy she had already introduced. Their notice and advice cheered Leanne, added to her confidence and led her to say “Actually, it’s so exciting”.

From this discussion, it can be seen that during the first DBR meeting ECTs were demonstrating and sharing their existing knowledge and skills in the area of narrative discourse, and also forming and developing relationships within this new group. As a result of our meeting, the ECTs were able to trial their chosen strategies and thus prepare for the next phase of DBR – the Build phase.
6. Build Phase Findings

Overview

This chapter provides an analysis of the data from the Build phase. The data from the Build phase involve the implementation of teaching strategies within the preschool contexts and reflections on these practices through VSR (video stimulated recall) at SPSs. Videoing at the preschools took place during the week prior to each SPS (see Appendix 6 for schedule). This was to allow ECTs time to work on their goals before videoing, and to reflect and prepare these video clips for the following SPS. Thus, several different sites were involved in this phase of the research: the meeting room in which the SPSs took place and the three preschool contexts where the ECTs carried out their narrative discourse strategies with their children. Initially the ECTs’ practices during SPSs are considered and then their professional practices in the preschools are discussed.

The data from the SPSs are presented in a descriptive way before being interpreted and analysed through the three Practice Architectures’ arrangements, material-economic, social-political and cultural-discursive. As each of these arrangements is brought to the forefront, the ways in which they enable or constrain their respective actions of doings, relatings and sayings are considered. The material-economic arrangements and the doings of the practice, specifically the ECTs’ reflective practices and responses to children’s learning development in narrative discourse production, are considered first because their role is most prominent during the Build phase. The influences of the social-political and cultural-discursive arrangements are then discussed, and these analyses inform the response to the second research question.
6.1 Site 1: SPSs

6.1.1 Material-economic arrangements.

The SPSs all took place in the meeting room at Context B, this was a compact room consisting of a small kitchen and dining area and a larger lounge area with two couches and a coffee table (Picture 2).

![Meeting Room Context B Sketch (Not to Scale)](image)

Picture 2: Sketch of Context B’s meeting room, the main site of practice used by participants during SPSs.

During the SPSs the ECTs chose to sit in the more comfortable seating area where an afternoon tea was served (Picture 3). This physical space formed part of the material-economic arrangements and acted as an enabler of practice as it provided a safe and welcoming environment (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). Similarly, the ECTs had some time to relax and chat before the SPS began, which meant that they were more able to focus on the practice clips without being distracted by immediate reflections on their busy days or by the need to catch up on personal news (see role of facilitator/researcher, Appendix 13).
At the first meeting, new objects were introduced to the practice space. These included the laptop for viewing video clips, the prompt sheets and supporting boards. The use of the laptop both constrained and enabled practice. By having a laptop computer available to view the video-clips, practice was enabled as the ECTs were able to gather in a comfortable space rather than huddle around a desktop computer in a smaller office area. Nevertheless, when the first video clips were shown, the sound was very low and this, to some extent, constrained the practice, as ECTs had trouble hearing the dialogue between the provider and child. However, this constraint also enabled the action of *relatings* as ECTs had the opportunity to continue to build and solidify their relationships through good-natured laughter, which was a common occurrence during SPS:

**Rachael:** Very relevant to him. So, what did you discover by listening to that? What strategies did Tamsin use?

**Gloria:** All that I discovered is I couldn’t hear it very well.

**Group:** Laughing.

This constraint to the *doings* of the SPS was soon overcome by one of the ECTs bringing in a set of speakers. The prompt sheets were also introduced at the first SPS and, once explained, these clearly enabled ECTs to focus and reflect on *language modelling* (CLASS) (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) strategies and story grammar concepts (Appendix 14, Appendix 15 and Figures 6–8) although this did require some practice:
Rachael: So, which of the story grammar units were covered in that? Those are the little pictures at the bottom. [See Appendix 7 for an example of a prompt sheet]

Louise: I forgot to look at that at the beginning … I was focusing on the top and then went, “Oh there’s something at the bottom I need to do too.” So, I started ticking those towards the end.

Rachael: At the end, what did you discover Louise?

Group: Laughing.

Similarly, the ECTs responded positively to the clip boards that were used, these acted as enablers of *doings* in the *material-economic* arrangements and also of *relatings* in the *social-political* arrangements:

Gloria: I didn’t need to take it off, did I?

Louise: Ah, are you trying to take the bit of cardboard and the giant paperclip!

(Gloria nods)

Don’t trust her with anything!

Gloria: I was pretty impressed with the piece of cardboard and the giant paper clip.

Louise: I love those big paper clips, they’re kinda cool!

These short excerpts demonstrate how the group maintained and constantly strengthened the nascent relationships of solidarity—belonging and power—and harmony.

**Summary.**

Thus, the *material-economic* arrangements present at this practice site, Context B’s meeting room, in general enabled the *doings* of the SPS. The main *doings* or activities, throughout this and all the SPS, were the providing, explaining, viewing of and reflecting on teaching practice video clips.
Hence, the activities of the practice were not only explicit through the element of *doings* but also through the element of *relatings*.

A selection of vignettes will now be used to demonstrate how ECTs’ understanding of their own and each other’s practices developed, through their reflective discourse (*relatings* and *doings*), over the duration of the *build* phase.

### 6.1.2 *Social-political arrangements.*

An analysis of the reflective discourses, from all the SPSs, revealed the actions (*relatings*) through which the ECTs’ learning took place. These actions differed between the ECTs and over the course of the SPSs. Illustrative examples of the learning pathways of an experienced ECT, Tamsin, and a graduate ECT, Leanne, during SPS 1 and SPS 2 are now provided. Tamsin’s learning was very specific and was in relation to a problem that she had encountered during the research and also on previous occasions. In contrast Leanne’s learning was broader and encompassed many aspects of teaching narrative discourse.

As a confident and experienced ECT, Tamsin was able to provide a clear contextual introduction to her clip, stopping and starting it at relevant points to give additional information and explanation. Throughout her ‘presentation,’ Tamsin developed a clear story (Gray, 2007), constructing the meaning of her dialogue with her peers (Coia & Taylor, 2005). Firstly, she explained her story stimuli (the story tiles and the excursion) and then provided background information about Child LT, the storyteller:

**Tamsin:** So, the little cards that you can see here, have got Australian animals on them. They’re part of a set, what is the name of it?

**Louise:** The ones you get through Garma Study.

**Tamsin:** Yeah, so they’re Indigenous markings … so there’s tracks, animal tracks etc. Yeah, but I didn’t use all of that because it’s the first time we’d done this. And it’s a massive set even on the table there’s still too many. (pointing to screen)

**Louise:** I never take a whole set out.

*
**Tamsin:** We had just come back from excursion to Temple Gardens, where we’d done a program ‘Murrawee and Me’*. We’d been talking about Murrawee and different sorts of things years ago … So that’s the concept of this …

**Tamsin:** Child LT, he’s not seeing anyone for speech, I’ve tried to refer him but … And he doesn’t usually talk during his play, so this was awesome … I had him last year so he’s very comfortable with me. But still, there’s not a lot of discussions with Child LT.

*Actual name of program “You and Me Murrawee”

Leanne’s first clip presentation had less clarity and detail than Tamsin’s, probably due to her lower levels of knowledge and experience, an important factor in reflective thinking (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Snow, 2001). She appeared to be slightly embarrassed and gave only a brief introduction with little real information about the choice of book or the narrative discourse skills of the children involved:

**Leanne:** Well we’ve already done this a couple of times. We did a couple with props last term. We’ve done all the … “There was an old lady books…” … We found the original. This is the first time these children have done the original. I’d read the story to them first and they used props. And it was Child AL’s turn …

Both ECTs’ feedback was positive and encouraging, however Tamsin’s did not contain any suggestions for future growth so she took the opportunity to ask for advice when the ECTs considered ‘where to from here…’. Tamsin was unsure how she could get children to end their narratives, a concern which was apparent in Child LT’s narrative (see Narrative 1 and Appendix 16). He appeared to have reached an end point but became distracted by a final picture tile. He had used strong butterflies to rescue the animals, a suitable end point, but then decided that the people should be reintroduced going shopping before meeting a rather violent end. By adding these unrelated facts Child LTs’ story took on the characteristics of a less advanced leapfrog narrative (see Appendix 8).
ECT Tamsin = T, Child LT = L

(Context B)

T The butterflies were turning strong… Right lovely so, I wrote that down. I wrote “The butterflies were strong and they took the animals away.

L And the person… Fly…… jumped high and bouncing.

T And the people jumped high, did they?

L Like bouncy boots.

T Like bouncy boots (nodding). Where’d they get bouncy boots from?

L From the Op Shop

T Hmmm, bouncy boots from the Op Shop, were there shops around in Australia a long, long time ago do you think? They made things to wear, they made their clothes, didn’t they?

L And the person was cooking their selves.

T Urr, I think that that would hurt. I don’t think anyone would really cook themselves unless they were burnt by the sun. And when someone gets burnt by a campfire it’s an accident.

L And they’re making their arms strong. (pause)

T So LT is your story finished now? Have we got a beginning a middle and an end?

L Write some more right there.

T What would you like me to write just there?

L And they were cooking their selves and they got really hurt.

T Ahh, OK…

Narrative 1: Child LT did not want to end his story.

The ECTs all agreed that story endings were a problem and there appeared to be a deficit discourse developing, whereby the ECTs were no longer focused upon improving children’s learning:

Gloria: If it was something that you were doing everyday with the same child, and they’re getting that one-on-one time, quality time, all the time. They may not think, “I actually don’t want this to end.” but I think that’s mainly the problem.

Louise: Yeah, and I’ve got your undivided attention, and I’ve all these kids standing around waiting for a turn. I know that I’ve got this power. I can say when it’s over.
This deficit discourse could have caused learning through *relatings* to be constrained by the *social-political* arrangements (Wilkinson, Rönnerman, Bristol & Salo, 2018). However, as the meeting facilitator, I scaffolded the dialogue by introducing an idea from a professional reading (Miller, 2011), (See Appendix 13: the role of a researcher/facilitator—sharer of knowledge, connecting and building ideas and scaffolding experiences).

**Rachael:** One of the things I’ve been reading, to get that ending might help … one of the specialists in this area suggested that you only wrote on one page. They were only allowed one page. So, they realize that there has to be an ending … that reduces that level of, “I’m gonna go on and on and on and on.”

This led to Louise making links with her previous experiences of using an app to create an 8 page book, thus showing her ability to link pre-existing knowledge (*sayings/knowings*) with new knowledge (Leung & Kember, 2003). The dialogue continued and Tamsin reflected that when using apps on iPads you could also put a limit on the number of pages used.

When the ECTs reflected on Leanne’s clip there was a greater emphasis on how she could overcome some of the problems she had encountered during the activity. These included suggestions for enabling the children’s narratives specifically for her chosen story (constantly displayed visual clues, Picture 4) and for her future choices of story stimuli:

**Louise:** If you like those sorts of stories, there’s The Enormous Turnip … where there is a setting because it has to be on a farm … there are similar sorts of stories where there is that repetition and order of things.

**Tamsin:** Cos you’d be able to do more advanced language with different stories. But that story doesn’t really let you…

**Group:** general agreement

**Tamsin:** …It’s not you as such—it’s the story—it’s not got very descriptive language that you could embellish on.
While Gloria suggested that traditional stories, rather than a cumulative nonsense text such as “There was an old woman…”, could provide more opportunities for open-ended questions and ways to extend the children’s narratives. Within this short reflective dialogue Leanne’s co-participants provided her with a practical example of how she could improve the effectiveness of her chosen strategy. The ECTs dialogue was enabled by their use of the common professional language (see p. 165) of the CLASS system (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009), evidenced in their use of terms such as repetition, open-ended questions, advanced language. This represented an overlap of learning between the social-political and cultural-discursive arrangements as the ECTs were using their new sayings to clarify their meaning and promote shared understanding.

Both ECTs applied the knowledge they had gained after their first SPS presentations. Tamsin effectively applied the one page technique (see p. 204) at the introduction to her story telling activity with Child H:

**Tamsin:** Ok, Child H … let’s think about a story. We’re going to write a story today that’s going to start at the top of my page. Can you see my page? I’m going to write the words that you tell me, all the way down to the end of the page. We need to think about the start of our story…

**Child H:** Yeah.

**Tamsin:** …the middle of our story and then we’re going to write the end as well.
Child H: Yeah.

Tamsin: How would you like to start your story?

Similarly, in her next SPS Leanne showed a clip of practice where a more complete traditional story had been used for the children’s narrative activity. This demonstrated that through group reflections (relatings), with her more experienced colleagues, her classroom practice had been supported and extended (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). She was also more comfortable when introducing the context of the clip, volunteering more contextual information:

Leanne: It’s Little Red Riding Hood with two puppets. So, Child AM went first *.

Gloria: Right.

Leanne: She breezed through it, looking through the book with occasional prompts. But Child B was a little bit harder to … and he’s read it with me a few times, he does have some speech but not much and he’s only just four.

Gloria: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Leanne: He’s got some separation anxiety and I’m his favourite…

* See Narrative 3 and Narrative 4 (p. 183) for samples of children’s narrative dialogue.

Summary.

The ECTs advanced their knowledge and skills through reflective practices at the SPSs but in different ways and to different degrees. As an experienced teacher, Tamsin focused on learning within the social-political arrangements that was specifically directed towards an issue which had been troubling her. Through reflective discourse, she was able to realise that other ECTs also shared the same problem (Louise, Gloria and Melanie), thus she (and the others) developed feelings of belonging and solidarity (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018), whilst also achieving a solution to her problem.

In contrast, Leanne’s learning process was more general and continuous. She was eager to learn throughout, although much of her participation during the SPSs was non-verbal or through minimal responses (Adger, Hoyle & Dickinson, 2004). She demonstrated increases in both her knowledge
and skills through her classroom practice and later presentations of VSR clips (an overlap of learning between the social-political and material-economic arrangements). These were enabled by the “positive, productive and trusting relationships” between the ECTs that had developed over time (Mahon & Galloway, 2017).

### 6.1.3 Cultural-discursive arrangements.

Whilst the social-political and material-economic arrangements were most explicitly visible during the Build Phase of this research (Pennanen, Bristol, Wilkinson, & Heikkinen, 2017), learning also took place within the cultural-discursive arrangements through the sayings of the SPS. The importance of a shared or common language as an aid to learning and understanding is highlighted in this section, and the ways in which the ECTs applied their prior knowledge and experiences to their current learning development are considered (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). ECTs’ prior knowledge took two forms, professional readings and children’s oral language assessments. An example of how professional readings influenced one ECT’s practice is provided whilst the role of the oral language assessments in ECTs learning was discussed extensively in the Define phase of this study. The importance of context specific understanding is also outlined. This is followed by a brief explanation of how the ECTs’ learning was enabled or constrained through this final bundle of arrangements.

#### Use of common professional languages

The dialogue which took place during the SPS was facilitated by the use of two professional languages—CLASS Language Modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) in regard to the strategies the ECTs used to promote growth in narrative language and Story Grammar, which referred to the development of narrative structures. CLASS was reintroduced to the ECTs, who were already familiar with it, as it formed part of the KMG’s standardisation of routine observations of ECT practice. Story grammar provided the ECTs with a new vocabulary to identify the parts of a story, recognise them in context and teach their inclusion to the children. The implementation of these two professional languages had the benefits of: enabling whole group understanding of concepts and processes – through the cultural-discursive arrangements (Inasaridze, Lobzhanidze, & Ratiani, 2018). Components were used to label the different parts of a story – providing teacher reference points rather than using a commercial program as a whole.
2015), providing a framework for discussions (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010), focusing dialogue (North Liverpool Teaching Partnership [NLTP], 2012), and ensuring greater clarity (Freeman, 1991; Hargreaves, 2004) during reflections.

Over the course of the 10 weeks, the ECTs’ understanding and application of the two professional discourses improved. Evidence demonstrating this growth was available from two sources: the prompt sheets which were completed during the viewing of the video clips, and transcripts of the reflective dialogue that followed each clip. The different ways pairs of ECTs (Tamsin and Leanne, Gloria and Louise) used their prompt sheets to extend their knowings were visible through their written reflections on each prompt sheet, and are considered first.

*Prompt sheets.*

Sample sections from Tamsin’s and Leanne’s prompt sheet from SPS 1 and 2 are discussed first. The sample sections, from each of them, refer to the same clips of practice in each SPS (see Figure 6). Both these ECTs showed increased understanding of the language modelling vocabulary giving much fuller accounts of how their colleagues had used them during their narrative discourse activities. Tamsin also showed an increased knowledge of story grammar; ticking the appropriate box each time a unit was used by the child or prompted by the ECT and noting specific examples. Neither Tamsin nor Leanne recorded their thoughts about the children’s responses to their teacher’s talk.

Gloria attended all of the SPSs and samples from her prompt sheets (Figures 7 and 8) are discussed alongside Louise’s, who attended the first and third SPSs. They both demonstrated their pre-existing understanding of language teaching and adapted this to the new language modelling vocabulary with ease by completing this section of the prompt sheets in great detail on all occasions. In contrast neither included much information about the Story Grammar units in SPS 1, a professional language that was completely new to them, however both showed greater understanding in later weeks. After the first SPS Gloria adopted the same tick system as Tamsin to show how often units were used by children or prompted by ECTs, whilst Louise added additional information to this section to aid her later reflections. Louise also noted the children’s responses in greater detail than the other ECTs at both SPSs.
Tamsin only recorded observations of two language modelling strategies in SPS 1 but recorded specific details, about why, to aid her during collaborative reflections. This also showed more developed understanding of the two concepts.

Leanne also noted use of strategies but did not elaborate showing less developed knowledge and understanding of the purpose of the strategies.

Tamsin had an increased awareness and understanding of all the language modelling strategies at this stage. She once again recorded extra detail, why a strategy was used, to aid later collaborative reflection. This also showed a growth in understanding to include all the concepts.

Leanne’s awareness of language modelling use had also increased and she added more detail on this occasion but was not thinking more deeply about why the strategies were used.

Figure 6: Sections of Prompt Sheets showing development of Tamsin and Leanne’s knowings between SPS 1 and 2
Both ECTs showed strong awareness of the language modelling strategies and in some cases gave reasons as to why they were used showing deeper knowledge and understanding. Louise recorded more about the child’s responses showing a greater understanding of how SST is developed between two participants, and how a successful narrative can be created (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Sylva et al., 2004 ).

Figure 7: Prompt Sheets showing Gloria’s and Louise’s initial skills.
Gloria once again showed a strong understanding of language modelling strategies but on this occasion, she did not record any children’s responses, possibly because she was focusing more on extending her understanding of story grammar (as demonstrated by her multiple ticks showing when units were used).

As with Gloria Louise was developing her understanding of the story grammar units and started to record extra information for reference during collaborative reflections. She also recorded children’s responses as she did in SPS 1 but not in as greater detail possible because she, like Gloria, was focusing on extending her understanding of story grammar.

Figure 8: Prompt Sheets showing Gloria’s and Louise’s learning development over the Build phase.

Specifically, their understanding of Tamsin’s use of language modelling strategies and promotion of story grammar units in SPS 1 & 2 and Melanie’s in SPS 3.
The ECTs’ use of the prompt sheets indicated the ECTs’ growing knowledge and understanding of narrative discourse teaching, aided by shared professional discourses. Sample sections were used to illustrate this growth, in Figures 6–8. These sample sections were annotated to show how the use of the prompt sheets enabled the ECTs’ learning in the cultural-discursive arrangements. They supported the ECTs’ verbal use of the professional languages and thereby enabled their reflections in SPSs. The ECTs’ growing abilities to orally use the professional languages is now considered.

*Reflective use of professional languages.*

In SPS 1 it was apparent that the ECTs were not confident in using the new language structures, which without the presence of a researcher/facilitator with greater knowledge of the various structures could have constrained learning within the cultural-discursive arrangements. During SPS 1 it was necessary for me, as the facilitator of the meeting, to model (Kennedy, 2004) the use of story grammar terms and language modelling strategies as an aid to reflective discussion. The following vignette, which followed Louise’s story pond clip (Narrative 2, p. 171) demonstrates how the ECTs started by using the new meta-language terms most familiar to them from the CLASS language modelling dimension (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009), such as those connected to questioning. The dialogue was stimulated further by my use of the term repetition and the ECTs expanded on this. Similarly, they were able to use the terms characters and problem but the terms setting and consequence required modelling.

**Tamsin:** …there were a fair few open ended questions to get him to keep telling the story.

**Gloria:** And leading questions.

**Rachael:** And there was the repetition as well…

**Tamsin:** It kinda helped him to think about what to say next, hearing you say it again.

**Tamsin:** Characters and went to the beach…

**Rachael:** So, we have characters and setting.
Tamsin: He did have a problem at the end because of the dog chasing the cat…

Rachael: Yeah there was a kinda consequence, they had a fight – they got hurt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECT Louise = L, Child AS = AS (Context S)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS  Baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   What about the baby what’s the baby’s name?</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS  Car (shows his car)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Car, and the Baby Car. What’s happening to the Baby Car in your story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  His name is Car.</td>
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<tr>
<td>L   Yeh, that’s ok, so what happened to Car in your story? Which bit did you want to jump to next to add to your story?... Tell us what’s happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Umm. And then that one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   So tell us how that goes into your story… The Baby Car and now you’re standing on… So, what happened to the Baby car and the doggy in the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  I think it got h…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   It got hot?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  No it got hurt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Oh it got hurt! And then what happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Oh no where did the ambulance take them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  To the hospital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Ok and then what happened in your story?</td>
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<tr>
<td>L   What’s that, that your standing on? Who’s that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  A Mummy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Mummy. So, what happened with Mummy in the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  She went to the beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Oooo. Ok stand on the beach. And what happened when she was at the beach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  MMM she saw a cat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Ooo! what happened with the cat at the beach. I wonder what it was doing there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Hmmm. (Looks around)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   What was the cat doing at the beach AS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Chasing a dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   …Was the cat chasing the dog that you had in the story before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L   Yes (laugh) How would you like to end your story before you get to the grass?... I know, tell me what’s happening with it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS  Cats fighting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative 2: Louise and Child AS’s story pond narrative

Evidence of the ECTs’ growing ability to interactively construct knowledge (Adger et al., 2004) through the use of the two professional languages was visible in SPS 2 (an example of the overlaps between learning in the cultural-discursive and social-political arrangements). The distributed nature (Kemmis & Mutton, 2012) of the ECTs’ knowledge of the professional languages was also apparent as they collaborated in their reflections using both language modelling and story grammar terms automatically without additional prompting after Tamsin’s second clip:
Melanie: I thought all of them were covered. In *advanced language* “How do I introduce the mouse?” You also said you’re going to enter the story now, so enter.

Gloria: Using adjectives like cheeky possum and then what might the mouse say? Using those fairly *advanced language* concepts rather than saying what did he say?

Melanie: We have plenty of *characters*.

Gloria: *Settings*.

Melanie: The *problem*, whatever happened with the stairs, up or down the stairs. Possum being under the blanket, the mouse ate his food.

By SPS 3 the ECTs had collaboratively developed their knowledge and understanding of the two professional languages so that that knowledge had become internalised (Adger et al. 2004). This was demonstrated by Louise’s summary of some key points observable after Gloria’s second story pond clip where she included both *language modelling* and story grammar terms.

Louise: It was just definitely asking *questions* to *extend* the story … about what happened then … or how did that happen? And *repeating* the story so far just to keep that ball sort of rolling. Asking about the *characters*. What are their names? Asking for *actions*. So, what did you do when you were there?

At this stage, Louise’s reflections, *sayings*, on the video-clip were clearly enabled by her ability to use the professional languages. She not only used the terms but also gave additional explanations of how they were used—and to what end—by her colleague, showing a greater depth of understanding.

*Summary.*

The prompt sheets have shown the ways in which the ECTs increased their understandings (*knowings*) of both professional languages over the 10 weeks of the project’s implementation. Their familiarity with the languages was extended and they began to devise their own ways of communicating this knowledge more explicitly in this written format (Freeman, 1991).
Interestingly, the ECTs’ oral use of the vocabularies associated with the new professional languages developed more slowly. This suggested that the ECTs were embedding their knowledge through classroom practice and personal reflections before using it extensively in collaborative reflections and analysis (Snow, 2001). Active learning that was directly related to their own working contexts, as recommended by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), was therefore taking place. Consequently, the prompt sheets could be seen to be an enabler of the ECTs’ learning within the cultural-discursive arrangements, providing them with a tool to explore concepts and express their knowings before doing so verbally as sayings.

Learning within the cultural-discursive arrangements, as demonstrated in their sayings, were not only affected by the application of common professional languages but also by their prior knowledge and understandings (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014). These may have been gained specifically—for example, through analysis of assessment data, or more generally through professional reading/learning or experiences, which may enable or constrain a participant’s future learning and practice. Specific prior knowledge gained from formative assessments of children’s narrative discourse skills was discussed in the Define phase. The effects of professional reading and personal experiences are now considered. Incidences of these were observable throughout the three SPSs and included: the possible constraining effects that a professional reading had on an ECT’s reflections and context based practice; the possible constraining effects of commonly held knowledge about the locality of one of the preschool contexts; and the enabling effects of the ECTs’ knowings gained from previous experiences.

**Professional reading.**

One ECT, Louise, explained her struggle with the practical application of her chosen narrative discourse strategy, Story Ponds. After having undertaken some professional reading about the Story Ponds she was convinced that she needed to have large numbers of pictures for the children to create their story from, in spite of her own experiences (she always reduced the number of Spinning Yarns picture tiles when using them in narrative activities, see p. 159) and professional judgements.

**Louise:** There’s … How many pictures are there on there? There’s probably about 20 pictures on there in total. And I’ve done animals, people, food, transport, some clothing …

**Rachael:** Maybe reducing the number of pictures.
Louise: Yeah but I was using the article 19 you’d given me about how they did it and they had so many more than I had. And I was sort of like, “That’s a lot of information going on there.” And they talk about having variety. So how can I have variety in all these different areas when I don’t have that many pictures on? Am I telling the children what the story needs to be if I’ve only got 10 pictures on there?

From this vignette it could be supposed that Louise’s practice was constrained within the cultural-discursive arrangements due to her professional reading. However, in reality it was more likely that she was going through a process of appropriation of knowledge (Grossman, Smagorinsky & Valencia, 1999; Longhurst, Jones & Campbell, 2017). Her professional reading had provided her with a pedagogical strategy, and she had begun to understand the basic concepts. However, she had not yet appropriated the conceptual underpinnings (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 71; Longhurst et al., 2017, p. 370) to effectively adapt and apply the tool in her own setting. Through self and SPS group reflections, her learning process was being expedited. Thus, this constraint to learning was partially offset by the interactive creation of knowledge (Adger et al., 2004) within the social-political arrangements, demonstrating the intertwined nature of the three arrangements (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

**Context specific understanding.**

Towards the end of SPS 2, a deficit discourse developed in regard to the location and population around Context M based upon the ECTs’ prior knowledge. Context M was situated in an area of economic and social disadvantage (see Table 4, p. 98, for information regarding localities), a factor which is often associated with developmental vulnerability in the area of expressive and receptive language skills (DET, 2018). This discourse could have produced a constraint on the practice and learning of the SPS group had it occurred earlier and it may have been necessary for me, as the researcher/facilitator, to intervene (see Appendix 13: Researcher/Facilitator Role in SPS researcher/facilitator’s role points 4 and 5). The possibility of this type of constraint occurring during collaborative reflections was noted by Bodone, Guðjoónsdóttir and Dalmau (2004) when

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19 The Galli Galli Sim Sim Story Pond Inspiring Children as Storytellers in India (Batada, Joshi, Ira & Mehta, 2010).
they considered the issues of “reiterating community held prejudices” (p. 761). Earlier interactions between the ECTs in SPS 1 confirmed that the ECTs did not always allow community held prejudices to affect their practices and that they were aware of the necessity of teaching at the appropriate level:

**Leanne:** So hard to get anything out of a lot of them.

**Group:** Murmurs of understanding.

**Tamsin:** You’re doing a lot of repetition and sequencing and retelling, which they obviously need.

**Gloria:** And once again, you’re working at the level for the children…

**Tamsin:** Yeah you were working to their level though. That was great, that was really obvious.

The overlap between the cultural-discursive arrangements and social-political arrangements was once again apparent as the ECTs’ learning via knowings overlapped with their learning via relatings.

The ECTs frequently applied their previous experiences and knowings to advance each other’s learning and practices. Some instances of this have been discussed earlier in relation to learning influenced by the social-political arrangements (the use of traditional stories and ways to facilitate story endings – SPS 1). Additionally, in SPS 3, they discussed the ways in which they could combine approaches that they had used in the past, thus linking old knowledge with new (Leung & Kember, 2003). Gloria planned to combine her new story pond activity with story-stones, thereby giving the children more control over their stories, aiding their thinking and development of a narrative.

**Gloria:** And we found, I think it would be nice, to have a bit like we do with the story stones, to have a series of mats available. They could actually lay them out themselves, and so be thinking about the story before they’ve kinda begun it. They’d actually be starting to make the story in their head, while laying them out and then getting to the point where they start saying it.
Summary.

Learning through prior knowledge and understandings, was largely enabled by the cultural-discursive arrangements, and the ECTs’ knowings were extended. SPSs, involving video review supported by prompt sheets, and the results of assessments informed their intentional teaching by highlighting specific story grammar components which the children were not using consistently. Moreover, their professionalism was confirmed when they were able to avoid the constraining influences of community held prejudices (Bodone et al., 2004) and to provide appropriate learning experiences for the children. The impact of professional reading would enable practice once concepts had been fully internalised, facilitating the use of strategies in different settings (Longhurst et al., 2017). Clearly, earlier discussions and prior knowledge of effective pedagogical practices enabled and extended the ECTs’ practices and added to ongoing reflective discussions.

6.2 Site 2: The Preschools as Contexts for Professional Learning

The previous section discussed ECTs activities through Practice Architectures within the the SPS at the meeting room in Context B. It revealed the learning of the ECTs through the activities of sayings, doings and relatings, and how these were constrained or enabled by their respective arrangements (cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political). The intertwined nature of the activities and arrangements were also noted. However, the SPS meeting room was not the only practice site used during this research; during the Build phase the three SPSs focused on teacher practice at individual context sites, and therefore activities at these sites should also be considered. When viewed through the lens of practice architectures the activity of teacher practice forms the work of the practice and consequently its doings. Therefore, the doings at the individual preschool contexts have been brought to the forefront of this discussion (Pennanen et al., 2017). At all the preschool sites, ECTs’ practices (doings) were both enabled and constrained within the material-economic arrangements. Their doings were affected in three ways: staffing levels, time availability, and resources – including the physical structure of the building.

6.2.1 Material-Economic arrangements.

Staffing and time availability.

The staffing levels at each of the contexts affected the doings of both the ECTs and the children. Context B ECTs were most fortunate as their practice was enabled by lower staff-child ratios. The Context B rooms had 23, or slightly more, children enrolled which meant that they were required
to have a third member of staff in order to meet government regulations of one adult to every 11 children (DET, 2016). At Contexts M and S, the numbers were below 23, and therefore their practices were constrained. Louise explained the issues she was facing due to these constraints and the presence of a child with high levels of additional needs who only received extra assistance on two of the three preschool days:

Louise: ...And also, I can only ever do these activities on Wednesday because on Thursdays there’s only two staff, we don’t have a Yooralla assistant. And we’ve got a little guy who takes one-on-one with us for nearly the whole day. So, all this one-on-one stuff is really challenging.

Similarly, time availability for narrative discourse activities was limited in all three preschools and constrained narrative discourse activity in the material-economic arrangements. However, at Context S, the situation was intensified because one of the three whole day sessions was at bush-kinder. As Louise stated, “Because really preschool is two days a week. We really don’t have a lot of time to do this stuff. It’s amazing how impacting … [this can be]”. In summary, these two site affordances (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. 2014) generally constrained practices in the preschools. However, due to higher numbers of children attending Context B preschools, an extra member of staff had to be present in each of the three rooms. This enabled practices, at Context B, as ECTs were able to spend more time teaching small groups while the two additional ECEs were working with the remaining children.

Physical resources.

The ECTs’ doings were also constrained or enabled within the material-economic arrangements at their respective preschool contexts via: the site’s physical space, its furnishings, and any objects that were present or were brought in to aid practice. The physical space available at the practice sites both enabled and constrained ECT practice. The indoor spaces available at both Context S and B were enablers of practice as they had partially enclosed quiet spaces available for individual or small group work (see Picture 5).
Furniture used to create a quiet area promoting reading and small group interactions.

Context B

L-shaped area to right forming a quiet area for individuals or small groups.

Context S

A very large open space with few opportunities for quieter small group interactions.

Context M

Picture 5: The physical spaces at each context as enablers or constrainers of practice.
The physical space at Context M was extremely large and open. Only one area, the home corner, was partially enclosed. To the right of the picture were tables and equipment for painting. The large beige carpet area was used for the narrative discourse activities. This was not a problem on days when most of the children were outside playing, however when most children were inside, this very open environment constrained the quieter activities of narrative discourse.

In addition to the physical environment, the ECTs’ practices were also constrained or enabled, through the material-economic arrangements, by the objects that were brought into the practice (or were already present) to use with their chosen strategies. Two ECTs, Louise and Gloria, created new resources, story ponds, for their chosen strategy and these are discussed initially. This is followed by a discussion about the pre-existing resources, story tiles and storybooks for retells, used by Tamsin and Leanne respectively.

The story ponds created by Louise and Gloria both constrained and enabled their practices. Gloria’s narrower story pond resource enabled her practice as it provided a clear path-way from the starting point at the green, ‘One day…’, stepping-stone to the concluding red, ‘The end’, stepping-stone. Children had fewer picture choices on a more linear lay-out that helped to develop their sequencing skills and understanding of story beginnings and ends. Louise felt that this was not the case with her wider resource, as there was not such a clear pathway and there was a larger number of scattered pictures (see Picture 6), which caused the children to digress rather than completing a story. Additionally, the opportunities to extend children’s narrative discourse skills could be constrained by these resources as the children tended to jump very quickly through the pictures, leaving the ECTs with a dilemma as to whether to interrupt their flow or ask questions for greater detail. To alleviate these issues, adaptations were suggested, such as having a variety of themed ponds and a process whereby the children chose their own pictures—this would however involve extra work for the ECT, and could therefore be a constraint to practice before ultimately enabling it.
Leanne and Tamsin used resources which were already available within their contexts for their narrative discourse activities. Leanne used story books and puppets as her stimulus for story retells. The first story she chose (for reflection during SPS1), *The old woman who swallowed a fly* was clearly a constraint on her practice, through the *material-economic* arrangements, as the repetitive nature of the text did not allow for expansion of the narrative (see p. 162). However, the traditional fairy-tale that she used in SPS 2, “Little Red Riding Hood” greatly enabled her practice as it provided many opportunities for her to expand the children’s use of the story grammar units as the other ECTs remarked in reflective feedback (through their learning within the *cultural-discursive* arrangements).

**Tamsin:** …they’ve all got a problem, they’ve all got a solution…

**Melanie:** The solution is not always…

**Tamsin:** Not always great, but it’s there.

**Rachael:** It was a good solution in this one, the shaking, they obviously got swallowed whole. Any other story grammar units?
Tamsin: Feelings?

Rachael: Yep, in the end.

Gloria: A couple of characters and a setting

Tamsin’s clever use of the “Spin a Yarn” story tiles (reliant on her previous experiences and knowledge [Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014], which demonstrated the influence of the cultural-discursive arrangements on the doings of her practice) ensured that this resource enabled her practice through the material-economic arrangements (see Picture 7). Tamsin estimated that she would usually use 12 out of approximately 32 tiles so that the children would not be overwhelmed by the choice (see p. 159).

When Child LT told his story, she had to stop him from getting any more tiles from the basket; he chose 18 but in fact only used a fraction of them in his story (see Appendix 16 for story created from the Spinning Yarn Tiles).

Picture 7: Spin a Yarn Story Tiles Activity Base (left) and being used by Tamsin and LT (right).

Summary

The physical resources that were available to the ECTs in their own preschool contexts in many cases both enabled and constrained their practices (e.g., storybook availability, story pond structure). These enablers and constraints provided a channel through which the ECTs’ practice could be enriched (Kemmis et al., 2017). Over the research period constraints were overcome and enablers were built upon thus enhancing the doings of both ECTs and children.
It is also important to note that as the ECTs practices (doings) were being enabled or constrained through the material-economic arrangements so were the children’s activities in the linked element of student learning. The ECTs action or output of teaching narrative discourse became an input for student learning. The links between: ECT learning, ECT practice, child learning, and responsive teaching were apparent throughout the Build phase.

6.3 Children’s Learning

6.3.1 Material-economic and social-political arrangements.

One of the clearest examples of children’s learning being enabled within the material-economic (through doings) and the social-political arrangements (through relatings) occurred during Leanne’s story retell activities. The introduction of more traditional, classic fairy-tales as part of her teaching strategy (Narrative 3 and Narrative 4) allowed her to adjust her language modelling strategies (learning through both sayings and doings) to suit the needs of the children (DEEWR, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004), whilst the sharing of a storybook provided a calm and comforting environment for the development of learning through relatings. Children’s learning through these two arrangements is now discussed.

Fairy-tale storybooks—children’s learning through doings.

As mentioned previously fairy-tales provide an ideal way for children to develop their understanding of and ability to create oral narratives. The following vignettes show how Leanne used open ended questioning to stimulate Child AM’s narrative, allowing her to tell the story independently (See Narrative 3). In contrast to this, when she was working with Child B she extended and elaborated on his responses and engaged him in conversation as his narrative discourse skills were less developed (See Narrative 4). She encouraged his involvement in the story not only through verbal responses but by physical actions such as pointing.
**AM retelling Little Red Riding Hood with Leanne.**

(L = ECT Leanne, AM = Child AM) (Context M)

L: So what happened in the story?

AM: …Little Red Riding Hood, because she had a red cape … and she lived in a cottage in a forest.

…Taking muffins to her Grandma  

(L whispers to Child B – Muffins to her grandma)

…and one dropped off. And had to go all the way through the forest and her Mum told her not to talk to any strangers.

(L whispers — Ok let’s turn over – No talking to strangers)

L: What did she stop to do?

AM: She stopped to bend over to get some blue flowers. She said, “Grandma will like those.” And then, then there was a wolf. A wolf was, was behind a tree and the wolf…

Narrative 3: ECT adapting her teaching to extend a child’s learning.

**B retelling Little Red Riding Hood with Leanne.**

(L = ECT Leanne, B = Child B) (Context M)

L: Okay, and where did she live?

B: The cottage.

L: In the cottage. Where was the cottage? (B points) In … what’s this?

B: In the forest.

L: In the forest, and what did her mummy ask her to do? What was wrong with her Grandma?

B: Was…

L: She wasn’t feeling very well was she? So, what’s this?

B: Pineapple.

L: Pineapple. Mmm that would be really awesome if you’re not feeling very well. So, here is Little Red Riding Hood. Where is Grandma’s house? (B points) All the way on the other side of the forest. What did mummy ask her not to do?

Narrative 4: ECT adapting her teaching to provide extra support for a child’s learning.

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**Fairy-tale storybooks—children’s learning through relatings.**

The nature of storybook sharing means that child learning will usually not only take place through the physical process of *doing* but also simultaneously through the more emotionally based activity of *relatings*. This was demonstrated when Leanne and Child B shared a story. Child B was very young, only 4 years and 3 months at the time of the activity, with limited speech and separation anxiety. Leanne involved two children in this particular retell activity; Child B retold the story after Child AM. During this time Child B’s learning was enabled by the secure relationship (DEEWR, 2009) he felt with Leanne which enabled him to relax and enjoy learning through participation in
one-to-one retelling of a story (see Picture 8). The ECTs reflected upon the importance of this at SPS 2:

**Melanie:** He was not really making any use of the props. He actually was really enjoying that intimate experience of sharing a story with you.

**Tamsin:** Mm-hmm.

**Gloria:** Mm-hmm. Absolutely, yeah.

**Melanie:** That snuggling up, it was as much about that as…

**Gloria:** Yeah, having you engaged with him was what he was really enjoying most, wasn’t it?

*Picture 8: Leanne and Child B enjoying the learning of narrative retell influenced the social-political arrangements.*

**Summary.**

By using storybooks as her strategy for developing children’s narrative discourse skills Leanne was able to promote children’s learning in both the *material-economic* and *social-political* arrangements. The availability of well-structured, enjoyable books (often with puppets or other props) enabled the children’s learning within the *material-economic* arrangements. Additionally,
the one-to-one sharing of a book facilitated the development of relationships and learning in the social-political arrangements.

ECTs professional learning during the Build phase of DBR has been viewed descriptively, interpretively and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017) through the Practice Architectures’ actions of sayings, doings and relatings. The ways in which data have been used to inform subsequent phases of DBR have been explained. Similarly, the ways in which the data addressed the research questions during each phase have been noted. The Test phase findings follow, and the final phase of data collection is considered.
7. Test Phase Findings

Overview

The Build phase of the project lasted for approximately 10 weeks and was implemented over the duration of the second school term (2018). After the final SPS the Test phase began with a series of semi-structured interviews, which took place in the last week of the term. The main purposes of these interviews were, firstly, to ascertain how ECTs’ understanding about oral language had developed over the research period and secondly their views regarding: the application of the two professional languages (sayings), how the VSR process, used in the SPSs (doings), and the collaborative nature (relatings) of the professional learning aided their teaching practice. These are now considered sequentially. (ECTs were also asked to reflect on the roles of the KMG and myself as the researcher, and the importance of trust throughout the project – these are considered further in the Discussion Chapter as part of the concept of ecologies of practices [Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014].)

7.1 Growth in Understanding of Oral Language Development

During the second phase of DBR, Understand, the ECTs were interviewed and asked about which oral language skills they thought were important for their children to be proficient in, narrative discourse or oral language generally. At this stage the ECTs’ responses were fairly similar, with most of them emphasising conversation or communication skills (Gloria, Melanie, Tamsin, Leanne). Vocabulary development was also mentioned (Melanie), as were articulation (Leanne and Louise) and emotional language (Louise). Additionally, Melanie and Louise mentioned storytelling skills, which was the focus of the professional learning. Towards the end of the research, in the Test phase, follow-up interviews took place. At this stage, it was important to discover how the ECTs’ understandings of the relationship between narrative discourse and those areas of oral language they deemed important had changed and developed as this was one of the foci of the research (relating to Research Question 1).
The ECTs strongly emphasised the links between the development of conversation skills and the teaching of narrative discourse. They felt that the children’s conversation skills had been enabled, stating:

**Leanne:** It’s opened up those types of conversations, one-on-one or with small groups of children, which is what a lot of them need…

**Tamsin:** …if that activity wasn’t there it still would have been just more needs-based conversations, and through story books…

**Gloria:** I think that initially the children that struggle with conversation skills, with simply waiting for you to finish what you’re saying, then speaking, waiting for you to speak, that type of skill, could well be developed through the Story Pond.

**Melanie:** Storytelling does naturally support and strengthen communication skills. If you look at CLASS and the language modelling component of that dimension, there’s back and forth conversations, and back and forth conversations can really be a form of storytelling, too.

Melanie’s comment demonstrated a deeper understanding of oral language development in general and also of the specialised language of CLASS *language modelling* (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009), which she had gained via her management role within the KMG (demonstrating an overlap in learning between the *cultural-discursive* arrangements and the *material-economic* arrangements). These responses revealed how the ECTs reflected on the development of their own knowledge and understanding over the preceding weeks and linked these to those held prior to the *Build* phase (Leung & Kember, 2003).

Additionally, the ECTs reflected on the ways in which the introduction of new narrative discourse strategies through the professional learning program had affected their children’s story-telling skills. This was exemplified in comments made by Tamsin and Leanne during their interviews at the conclusion of the intervention. Tamsin noted how through the use of story tiles two of her verbally reticent children had been able to create much better stories than she had expected (See Appendix 16 and Appendix 17).
Tamsin: So, having the tiles in front of them I think gave them that opportunity and that one-on-one time to have a much deeper shared language and conversation. If the activity hadn’t been there it would have been just needs-based conversations … Child H particularly did fabulously with his story telling.

Leanne observed that her own growing knowledge, developed throughout the SPSs, had helped her understand the variety of ways in which her children’s narrative discourse skills could be scaffolded and extended (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008). At her preschool, Context M, many children were exhibiting adverse signs of socio-economic disadvantage— for example, less developed language skills (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Jackson et al., 2006; Snow et al., 2014; Wasik, Bond & Hindman, 2006). She had therefore introduced a narrative discourse strategy that had involved retelling stories from picture books, thus providing the children with greater scaffolding (Boudreau, 2008). However, Leanne reflected that she had recently successfully introduced a story-stone strategy (children chose illustrated stones and created their own stories from the pictures) with Child AM, who showed the greatest aptitude for storytelling. Leanne was planning to introduce it to more children as they became more confident and ready to create stories rather than retell them.

During their concluding interviews ECTs were able to identify ways in which their understandings of narrative discourse had changed, both generally and specifically. Firstly, from a wider perspective they were able to recognise and acknowledge the additional role of narrative discourse in wider oral language development. Secondly, they were able to relate this directly to learning experiences of individual children, in relation to either storytelling in particular or to the sharing of oral language and conversation more generally. Through the ECTs explicit articulation of this development in their knowledge and understanding, learning influenced by the cultural-discursive arrangements was brought to the forefront (Pennanen et al., 2017).

7.2 The Professional Learning as Viewed by the ECTs

Once the ECTs’ new understandings regarding the role of narrative discourse in oral language had been established, the focus of the interview moved to the processes involved in establishing them: the introduction of common professional languages, the reflective process involved in VSR and the collaborative practice associated with this. (The ECTs’ responses to the final interview questions also help inform responses to the third Research Question about effective teacher professional
development programs.) These three processes were closely linked to the Practice Architectures’ activities of: sayings—the use of common professional languages and ECTs’ understandings of practice; doings—the work and activity carried out by the ECTs during SPSs; and relatings—their collaboration in the reflective processes involved in VSR and SPSs. These will be discussed sequentially and will consider whether the ECTs perceived that their practices had been enabled or constrained within the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements.

7.2.1 Cultural-discursive arrangements.

When the ECTs were asked to reflect on the first of these processes, the introduction of common professional languages, the discussion was divided into three parts: (1) the vocabulary of CLASS language modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009), (2) the vocabulary of story grammar and (3) the use of story grammar as an assessment and how ECTs applied the knowledge gained from the assessment to their practice.

Common professional languages.

Language modelling.

The first of these, the introduction of the vocabulary of CLASS language modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) strategies was viewed positively by the majority of the ECTs as it gave them greater clarity and focus (NLTP, 2012) enabling them to organise their thinking (Freeman, 1991), whilst Leanne, the least experienced ECT, found it gave her a “starting block to be able to develop from”. Two of the ECTs, Tamsin and Gloria, extended their reflections by considering how this new focus had not only enabled their practice in the SPS but also in their own preschool contexts. Tamsin explained how she was able to look for specifics in others’ practice (Freeman, 1991) and then apply it to her own teaching practice: “So I think that helped, one, to support the person you were observing, and then two, helped yourself because you’re practising it and you’re thinking about it”. Gloria explained that in addition to a specific focus it also “gave me a different insight into what I actually do every day and the way I use my language, in the way I encourage children to use their language” (Bochicchio et al., 2009). These extended reflections provide an example of how energy and ideas flowed between the different practices/sites linked together within ecologies of practices, (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) which are considered further in the Discussion Chapter.

However, not all the ECTs perceived the introduction of the common professional language of language modelling to be an enabler of their practice. One ECT, Louise, struggled with the
relationship between *language modelling* vocabulary and her own prior knowledge of the ways in which oral language may be developed:

…it’s just a bit mind-boggling for me. I just kind of looked at those things and said, okay that’s what I’m looking for, so that’s what I’ll write notes on. I don’t necessarily understand it very much at all.

I suggested that she must have understood the new vocabulary, otherwise she wouldn’t have been able to complete the prompt sheets at the SPSs, which she did very competently (see Figures 7 and 8, completed sections of prompt sheets) but she did not appear to be convinced, saying: “Yes, but I just don’t understand the CLASS system. So, I know what those things were in the boxes” (on the prompt sheet). Melanie was more considered in her views about the use of *language modelling*. She was enthusiastic about it, since she felt that as she had experienced additional “training and a greater depth of understanding, I could see very clearly what aspects of dimensions teachers were using”. However, she felt that it might not be used so effectively by those without this prior training: “with the videos the pace moves very fast. If your understanding of CLASS is basic, then you can miss things.” From this it can be seen that most ECTs had their learning enabled, in the *cultural-discursive* arrangements, by the use of *language modelling*, whilst others saw that it could potentially constrain practices if the vocabulary and concepts were not fully understood.

*Story grammar.*

When the ECTs reflected on the usefulness of the second professional language of story grammar their responses were positive. Surprisingly, several of them had not really considered the number of concepts required to create a traditional Anglo European story and had only focused on the concepts of beginning, middle and end, not really being aware of many of the story grammar units. Gloria illustrated this situation in relation to her teaching practice; she realised “that in order, for children especially … to tell an effective story, those elements need to be in that story, and then

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20 None of the children at the participating preschools came from alternative cultural backgrounds which would have required a different approach to storytelling—e.g., Asian backgrounds where short explicit stories with several linked experiences are defined as good.
teaching them how that works”. She continued to explain how she applied this new understanding in her context, drawing children’s attention to the units:

So, if I’m, particularly in a small group situation or one-on-one, reading a book, talking more about each of those elements of … what’s she’s doing now, where’s she going and how do you think she’s gonna be feeling … how would you be feeling…

Melanie focused on the usefulness of story grammar in the SPSs and how it provided a structure for their reflective dialogues (NLTP, 2012) as well as giving them greater specificity (Freeman, 1991). Without these she felt that their … conversations … and the analysis of the videos, potentially would have lacked structure … Having those evidence points there just really meant that we could be really specific in our feedback that we provided to each other.

In all these respects the ECTs’ appeared to have found that their learning was enabled through the cultural-discursive arrangements.

The professional language of story grammar also formed an important component of the children’s oral language assessments prior to the Build phase and implementation of teaching strategies. The ECTs used this assessment information, that was shared with them, in different ways in their practices. Tamsin focused on the final story grammar unit listed in Figure 5, which indicates that children should be consistently including endings in their stories, as this was something that she was aware of from previous experiences (Leung & Kember, 2003). She explained how our reflective discussions had also enabled her practice, as she would begin by talking “about story structure before we started, which was fabulous, ‘cause then I didn’t feel guilty when I was saying, oh we’re getting to the end of the page now” and forcing the children to end their stories. This again demonstrates how the arrangements are linked, in this case learning took place in both the cultural-discursive and social-political dimensions.

Louise focused on the character unit of story grammar as her children did not consistently name characters in their stories. She described how she was intentionally teaching this concept, asking for “more details about the character and giving them a personality and a name and those sorts of things”. She added that this was a direct result of the feedback on the children’s assessments, “So, yeah, I guess I have definitely increased that from that discussion with you at the start of the year”.

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The other ECTs considered the assessments in a more general way. They did not look at the specific elements that the children needed to develop, but reflected upon how they could use the elements in their future teaching and assessments. Leanne had the most basic understanding of the purposes of the story grammar assessment, reflecting that it gave her a better understanding of where the children were and what she needed to do to improve their narrative skills. This reflection showed that she was at the earliest stage of critical reflection, which Miller (2011) termed reacting. During SPSs her reflective practices benefited from her peers modelling for her or collaborating with her (Miller, 2011), again showing a relationship between learning in the cultural-discursive and social-political arrangements and indicating how they may enable or constrain practices.

Gloria clearly understood one reason why and how assessments are made, namely, to inform teaching and learning (Riley & Burrell, 2007; Shiel et al., 2012), but reflected on her own formative assessments, using story grammar rather than on how these results could be applied to present practice. Gloria explained how she has used her new knowledge of story grammar in her story pond strategy (a clear link between learning in the cultural-discursive and material-economic arrangements). Through informal formative assessments she had discovered that some children had more fully developed narrative discourse skills and required extending, whilst others still had only basic skills. She was, therefore in the process of adapting her story pond to allow for greater differentiation:

…you could change the pictures around and make them more evenly spaced. And also … just knowing the children too. For Child L, you could put far more detail into [it] than say for someone else who’s still at the, there was a dog and they went to the house and the end.

In this section, then, the ECTs were reflecting on the ways in which their learning was enabled or constrained by the cultural discursive arrangements through the introduction of common professional languages. Firstly, they considered how CLASS language modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) and story grammar assisted their professional learning and classroom practices, and then the use of story grammar in assessments. The general consensus of the ECTs was that both common professional languages had enabled either their reflective or classroom practices. There were some exceptions to this regarding language modelling. Melanie highlighted the importance of training in a new discourse for reflections to be thorough and comprehensive, without which—she argued—practices could be constrained. The lack of extensive training could have been the cause of Louise’s lack of confidence in adopting its vocabulary. This was probably only a
temporary confusion, whilst she was embedding the new knowledge (Snow, 2001), as it did not appear to constrain her understanding during the reflective process.

**Summary.**

The ECTs’ responses to the use of story grammar assessments was varied. They all believed that the assessments were useful. For two ECTs, Louise and Tamsin, the earlier formal assessments had been used to inform their practice, thus enabling it. Gloria’s practice had also been enabled by her own informal assessments. Leanne, the least experienced ECT, had not really been able to effectively apply the assessment results to her practice but by being involved in the discussion of them, her awareness of the children’s developmental levels had risen. It can be concluded that these assessments generally further enabled teacher practice particularly for experienced teachers but those with less experience could need further guidance as to how assessments can be used to inform practice.

7.2.2 *Material-economic arrangements.*

The next area that the interviews focused on was that of the VSR process – the *doings* at the SPS. The learning in this area was largely focused within the *material-economic* arrangements and was mediated by the use of videos (Mahon et al., 2017). However, these videos stimulated the reflective discussions and therefore an overlap in learning occurred between the *material-economic* and *social-political* arrangements. The ECTs were asked to reflect on the ways in which the viewing of the video clips had been helpful to them and, thus, informed their practice. The most common immediate response to this question was how much they had enjoyed being able to see others’ practices which was something that most of them never got to do (of the five only Melanie had the opportunity to do so as part of her leadership role within the KMG).

All the ECTs reflected on how the VSR process had enabled their reflective practices, regarding both self-reflection and collaborative reflection. Louise, Tamsin and Melanie emphasised how the VSR process had supported their self-reflections (Reitano & Sim, 2010). Melanie’s response was quite general, as she acknowledged that it gave her an opportunity to see areas that she would like to concentrate on more, ones on which she had not put as much emphasis in the past. Louise and Tamsin were more specific. Louise specified how “it really gets you to sort of analyse those techniques that you’re using – was I using enough of that? Was I giving them enough time to answer? Those sorts of things were what was going on in my mind while I was watching my own practice”. Thus, Louise was able to reflect more closely on specific practices that were perhaps
automatic and habitualised (Nolan et al., 2018). In contrast, Tamsin explained that the video clips helped her to self-reflect on her general classroom management—she could observe things that she would have been too busy to see normally (Nolan et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2010) or were of a transient nature and therefore hard to define (Reitano & Sim, 2010):

There’s always a million things going on, and someone needs help over there with something … and you’re trying to have an interaction here one-on-one.

Collaborative reflections were also enabled within the material-economic arrangements as most ECTs emphasised how useful it had been to receive feedback from their colleagues. This type of collaborative reflection also represented learning that could be enabled or constrained by the social-political arrangements. Leanne and Tamsin approached this in very general terms, recognising that it was a rare opportunity to gain constructive advice to enhance their practice (Nind et al., 2015), while Melanie appreciated the benefits of having “multiple pairs of eyes looking at your practice”. Gloria explained in more detail how this reflective process had supported her practice: “it gave me … the prompts to go on and rethink what I was doing or think of another way of saying it, or another way of presenting it to the children”, thereby clarifying her thinking and extending it to create alternatives (Bodone et al., 2004).

Summary.

It would appear that the ECTs believed their learning had been enabled by the VSR process and thus through the material-economic arrangements, however some of them did have reservations about the process, feeling a degree of discomfort about watching themselves (Reitano & Sim, 2010). Louise described viewing herself as “cringeworthy”, while Leanne stated that she hated watching or hearing herself. The reservations of the ECTs could have constrained their practice but a number of strategies were put in place to overcome these misgivings: they were able to view themselves first (Reitano, 2006; Nind et al. 2015); they were in control of the whole process—choosing clips, stopping and starting them when they felt necessary; and they were able to choose the focus of the discussion (Nind et al., 2015). A supportive environment had also been built up which was demonstrated when Melanie stated, “I wouldn’t believe that anyone would’ve felt threatened, ‘cause it is just a different type of learning. It was a very safe environment and way of looking at your practice”.

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The final area that the ECTs were asked to reflect upon was the collaborative aspect of the SPSs, that is, their learning through *relatings* in the *social-political* arrangements. When they considered the usefulness of collaboration, both Tamsin and Leanne returned to the opportunity it gave them to receive feedback that was purposeful and constructive, mirroring their comments about the VSR process and demonstrating the links between learning in the *social-political* and *material-economic* arrangements. Gloria and Melanie took a different viewpoint and considered their learning in a broader sense, focusing more on the processes involved. Gloria related how useful it was to feel able to have critical reflective discussions (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014), “to be I guess brave enough, for want of the better word, to stand up and say, ‘Well, I think that was really great,’ or, ‘We could’ve done this better’ … Because sometimes that’s not always easy to do…” Melanie agreed that a sense of collegiality had been created and that they were all learning and supporting each other. She expanded on this by highlighting the importance of equal participation (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014), “the expectations were not that just one person would be providing the video and it being analysed, it was all of us…”, ensuring that no one would feel threatened. Both of these reflections indicated the importance of the provision of a safe environment, without which learning would have been constrained rather than enabled (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). An overlap between learning in the two arrangements occurred where the *material-economic* arrangements of the practice could have constrained its *relatings*.

Whilst all of the ECTs believed that sharing through the collaborative process had enabled them to make or plan to make changes to their actual classroom practice, only two gave specific examples. Louise explained how the process had re-enthused her and enabled her to make positive changes, “I think when we were looking at all of those elements of storytelling it sort of re-enthused me … and re-educated me in the different areas of storytelling for sure, so I broke it down a lot more than I probably had”. Melanie described how the process had brought to the forefront the different areas of oral language that can be supported by narrative discourse, “The one that jumped out at me the most was the extending vocabulary… Those opportunities to extend vocabulary and really immerse the children in very rich language beyond the basic communication”.

The ECTs agreed that the degree and diversity of knowledge held by the SPG members had a positive impact on their discussions and enabled their practice within the *social-political* arrangements. Tamsin appreciated that she was able to have professional conversations with knowledgeable, non-judgemental people who would give her valuable feedback. Leanne valued the
opportunity to work with a number of other ECTs who could guide her and increase her repertoire of practice. She noted that “Everyone was generous. Some people can hang onto their ideas”. These comments from Leanne and Tamsin demonstrated the degree of trust that was present in our SPG; without it, the ECTs’ learning would have been considerably constrained (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). As one of the most experienced ECTs, Melanie, explained, she would never stop learning: “There’s always got to be something you can take away … a way I could be extending my awareness and my actual practice”. Gloria summed up the impact of multiple perspectives (Miller, 2011) quite succinctly: “I think there’s lots of different processes, lots of different ways that we all use to promote languages … We’re all quite different people and we bring that individuality here and into our teaching as well…” Thus, she implied that the diversity enabled both her SPG reflections and her classroom practices, revealing her perception of the flow of energy between different practices/sites in the ecologies of practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014), which is considered further in the Discussion Chapter.

Summary.

As the ECTs reflected on the collaborative processes that occurred during the SPSs, their learning within the social-political arrangements was evident. They appreciated the opportunity to learn through collaboration and collegiality within a trusting and safe environment (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). They were also able to identify relationships between these processes and their teaching practices, demonstrating high degrees of appropriation (Grossman et al., 1999; Longhurst et al., 2017). Furthermore, they recognised the benefits of having SPG members from a variety of backgrounds and with diverse levels of experience.

Conclusion of Research Findings

The three findings chapters, Chapters Five, Six and Seven, were organised according to the phases of DBR and their relationship to the research questions. Thus, Chapter Five considered the earlier phases of DBR, Understand, Define and Conceive, when the data collected and analysed were most relevant to the first research question concerning ECTs’ understanding of the teaching and development of children’s oral narratives in early years’ contexts. Chapter Six considered the Build phase of DBR, which involved the implementation of the professional learning program. Data collected and analysed during this phase were most relevant to the second research question concerning ECTs’ reflective practices and responsiveness to children’s competence in narrative discourse. Chapter Seven considered the Test phase of DBR, when data relating to the third research
question, concerning the impact of various features of the professional learning program, were collected and analysed.

In the first section of Chapter Five, data from the Understand phase were interpreted and analysed through the Practice Architectures’ lens of sayings, providing contextual information to support the implementation of the professional learning program in the Build phase. Interpretation and analysis of the ECT interviews established the teachers’ pre-existing understandings and beliefs. These data then facilitated a more individualised approach to each ECT’s professional learning during the intervention (Build phase), as recommended by Siraj et al. (2018). The analysis of children’s oral language assessments added to ECTs’ existing knowledge and understanding and this enabled targeted planning for the children’s learning. In the Define and Conceive phases, both the sayings and relatings of the practice were evident and an overlap in learning occurred. During the Define phase, ECTs used their existing knowledge (embodied through sayings) to aid their understanding of the children’s oral language assessments, however this was supported by their reflective discussions (relatings). Similarly, during the Conceive phase, ECTs used their knowledge of various teaching strategies to brainstorm future learning activities for their children, but also began to form and develop relationships in the new professional learning group.

In Chapter Six there was a shift in the Practice Architectures’ focus as the ECTs’ learning processes, during the Build phase, were further considered. The doings of the practices were brought to the fore, however sayings and relatings were also clearly discernible during this phase. The ways in which ECT learning was enabled and constrained by all three Practice Architectures arrangements: material-economic, social-political and cultural-discursive were therefore considered. The three actions and their associated arrangements were separated analytically in order to gain a richer interpretation of the ECTs practices both in SPSs, and in their own teaching contexts. Overlaps between learning through the different arrangements were noted to highlight how they are empirically intertwined. The relationship between ECTs’ practice and children’s learning was discussed.

In Chapter Seven, the Practice Architectures focus again returned to the sayings of the practice and the influences of the cultural-discursive arrangements during the professional learning program. During their concluding interviews the ECTs demonstrated their increased knowledge and understanding of the wider advantages of developing children’s narrative discourse skills, a greater awareness of the variety of strategies that can be used for teaching these skills, and an awareness of how their children’s learning had been supported and extended. However, during these
interviews the ECTs were also reflecting on their learning experiences and the ways in which these (the doings and relatings of the practice) had been enabled or constrained by the material-economic and social-political arrangements.

By using Practice Architectures as an interpretive and analytical tool throughout the phases of DBR, an in-depth illustration of the processes involved in the development and application of an effective professional learning program was achieved. The actions of sayings, doings and relatings. The actions of sayings, doings and relatings were analytically reduced and explicated in each of the learning and teaching sites (Berkowitz, 1997) through Nicolini’s (2017) zooming-in technique, while summaries at the end of each section demonstrated how multiple sayings or doings or relatings influenced ECTs practices. Actions of each type, during this reduction, were analytically separated whilst remaining empirically entwined in bundles. The complexity and richness of the data increased further as each of these specific action bundles are also entwined with the other action bundles as are their respective arrangements, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Thus, data reduction, and analytic separation of three actions, enabled salient aspects of the data to be emphasised and the specific research questions to be addressed (Berkowitz, 1997).

However, Practice Architectures’ actions and arrangements at other practice sites also influenced or were influenced by those present at the sites involved in this research. This is because practices cannot stand alone and are inevitably entwined with other related practice sites. These interrelated practices/sites have been termed ecologies of practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) and may include a practice of professional learning (in this research SPSs in the meeting room), a teacher’s practice and student learning—these are separate practices but they share the same site (in this research the three preschool sites), educational research practice and educational administration practice. The Discussion Chapter that follows briefly considers the relationships between the five different practices/sites, that are involved in educational ecologies of practices and how energy and knowledge flow between them as they relate to this research. The main focus of the chapter, however, centres on the roles of sayings, doings and relatings in illuminating the key features of a professional learning program that will impact on teacher practice.
8. Discussion

Introduction

Practice Architectures was introduced in the Theoretical Framework as a conceptual method through which researchers can gain a deeper understanding of educational practices. The framework provided an overview of the aims, concepts involved, and the ways Practice Architectures may be used to understand and analyse practices: empirically or descriptively, interpretively and critically (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2017). The main concepts (intersubjective spaces, dimensions, arrangements and actions) were described and their relationships, reciprocity and entwined nature were discussed. The Methodology Chapter extended the discussion and demonstrated how Practice Architectures methodology supported this research’s position within the transformative paradigm and how it complemented the DBR process. The Practice Architectures actions of sayings, doings and relatings were focused on in order to interpret and analyse data from each of the DBR phases. These chapters informed the implementation of the professional learning program that was the focal point of the research.

The data gathered during the different phases of DBR were analysed and discussed in three separate Findings Chapters to ensure breadth and clarity. The DBR phases of Understand, Define and Conceive were focused on in Chapter Five. The sayings of the practice were brought to the forefront in this section of the analyses, as the main skills the ECTs used at these times were those found in the semantic space and were realised through the medium of language. At these stages of DBR the main focus was on the ECTs’ understandings of oral language and the findings were therefore related to the first research question. In Chapter Six the DBR phase of Build was focused on. Sayings, doings and relatings were used to interpret the ECTs practices as they used actions that could be attributed to the semantic, physical space-time and social spaces. During this phase the ECTs were developing their reflective skills, supported by VSR, and applying the results of these reflections to their practices. Thus, findings in this phase related to the second research question. The Test phase of DBR, was considered in Chapter Seven, and was the evaluative phase of the
research, therefore findings in this phase related to the third research question. It should also be noted that the analysis of data in Chapter Five and Chapter Six informed the following phases of the research and had an important procedural aspect.

The Discussion Chapter draws upon Practice Architectures to illuminate the research’s key findings and show how these impacted on the professional learning program and through this, on ECTs’ knowledge, understanding and practice. The data from all the DBR phases are analytically reduced according to the three actions, sayings, doings and relatings transforming the data so that this overarching aspect of the research can be addressed (Berkowitz, 1997). Nicolini’s (2017) zooming-in technique is used to not only zoom-in, and analytically separate the three actions but it probes further revealing a complex tangle of strands or filaments with-in each of the action bundles. By examining each of these strands individually a more in depth understanding of each is achieved although it should be remembered that these strands are, in fact, empirically entwined with-in each action and each action is similarly entwined with each other as are their respective arrangements (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Each action is therefore discussed individually and the strands that comprise each are drawn out while at intervals, during these discussions the focus zooms-out (Nicolini, 2017) and the entwined relationship between the different actions and arrangements is intermittently noted.

Relatings are most explicitly visible and are discussed first. The impact of reflection and reflexivity, collaboration, relational trust and solidarity are considered. The sayings of the practice are explored next, demonstrating how ECTs’ understandings are developed and their knowings are internalised. The focus of the discussion then moves to the ways in which the ECTs’ reflective practices (relatings) in the SPS’s, and their new knowledge and understanding (sayings) led to changes or transformations in their preschool practices (doings). As the impact of the three types of actions (sayings, doings and relatings) is considered, the discussion traces the ways in which they were enabled or constrained through their respective arrangements (cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political).

It should be noted that through the discussions surrounding the sayings, doings and relatings of the ECTs practices the research questions are addressed further:

1) What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?
2) How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?
3) What were the features of a professional learning program that impacted on teacher practice?

Question One is addressed when the sayings, including the knowings and understandings of the practice, are explored. Question Two focuses on the relatings in the practice. Question Three is considered through the discussion surrounding the doings in the practice. The questions are not discussed sequentially but according to the Practice Architectures actions and as the most explicit of the three actions, relatings is now brought to the forefront (Pennanen et al., 2017).

8.1 Relating

The overarching aim of this research was to explore the ways in which ECTs’ skills and understanding of narrative discourse teaching could be enhanced through the application of a collaborative, site-based professional learning program. The reflective and reflexive processes (the relatings of the practice) involved in the professional learning were supported in several ways. Firstly, they were supported by the ECTs themselves: their backgrounds and histories, the ways in which they collaborated with each other and the elements of relational trust and solidarity that were established between them. Additionally, these collaborative reflections were mediated by the video clips which the ECTs viewed. During VSR, prompt sheets also mediated the ECTs’ reflective practices, however their role was more prominent as part of the sayings of the practice and they are therefore considered in the following section alongside the common professional languages, being a concrete representation of these.

8.1.1 The effects of ECTs’ backgrounds and personal histories.

Five ECT participants took part in the program, each of whom brought different life experiences, values, knowings and understandings to the group. Their teaching experience, as qualified ECTs, ranged from 2 years to 35 years, and there were a number of differences in their personal and professional backgrounds. These were discussed earlier in Chapter Four (see p. 99) but the ways in which the similarities and differences between them supported their learning are considered now.

The group may have lacked perspectives from younger, newly qualified teachers, but it clearly included ECTs from diverse backgrounds, whose life experiences enriched their contributions. As Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) noted, learning does not take place as isolated events but is influenced by all the participants’ various experiences, actions and learning which are then used to construct new knowledge. The participating ECTs recognised that their cohort was imbalanced
with a greater proportion of experienced teachers, but they saw this as advantageous—both Tamsin and Leanne highlighted the benefits of getting feedback from knowledgeable, experienced colleagues. Louise also noted an additional benefit for their cohort. She suggested that through their experiences they had developed strategies that enabled them to provide each other with “strength based critiques” meaning that they could emphasise the positives before providing constructive suggestions about future practice. In this way the ECTs’ learning and reflective practices, *relatings*, were enabled by the *social-political* arrangements. Similarly, reflective practices were supported by the ECTs’ previous *knowings* and were therefore also enabled through the *cultural-discursive* arrangements, demonstrating the entwined nature of the Practice Architectures actions (Kemmis et al., 2017).

### 8.1.2 Collaborative practices.

The ECTs’ collaborative practices, which led to increased professional *knowings* and *understandings*, were based around the video-clips of practice which they each provided at the three SPSs. During this VSR process, reflective practices were employed as the main method of professional learning. These reflections within the *social-space* dimension (see section 3.2.3 Concepts of Practice Architecture, p. 79) were collaborative, requiring teamwork and a joint focus on improving teaching and learning (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). The viewing of participants’ individual practice clips acted as a stimulus for discussion and provided them with a shared reference point (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017)—an overlap between the actions of *relatings* and *doings*.

For the ECTs, collaboration was an important factor in their learning, involving a process by which they could observe and critically reflect on both their own and others’ practices:

**Gloria:** It was a good process to go through to feel vindicated about what you’re doing in your own practice, as well as the feeling of being able to support others in a collegial way.

**Melanie:** It creates that collegial sense and that we’re all learning and supporting each other.

More specifically, through their collaborative reflections, the ECTs were able to interactively construct new understandings related to their own practices (Adger et al., 2004; Hollingsworth & Clark, 2017; Bodone et al., 2004; Reitano & Sim, 2010). This joint construction of knowledge was
exemplified when Tamsin raised a question with the group, one that she had been unable to solve through her own self-reflections—the problem of how to get children to bring their stories to closure. Collaborative discussions around this issue were ongoing and related to the practice of several of the ECTs. For Tamsin, a solution was suggested involving limiting children’s stories to one page. Before a storytelling event began, the child should be told that the scribing of his/her story would be limited to one page, as suggested by Paley in her storytelling-story-acting approach (Cremin et al., 2013; Nicolopoulou, Cortina, Ilgaz, Brockmeyer Cates & de Sà, 2015). This suggestion led to further reflection on how this technique had been used in the past and the possibilities for its use in the future (Miller, 2011). Tamsin acted upon these reflections and the effectiveness of the technique was visible at SPS2 when she showed a clip of a storytelling activity with Child H (p. 163 and Appendix 17).

As they reflected further a second question was raised – did the children really understand what a story ending was? Gloria noted that, unlike traditional fairy-tales, many modern story books lacked a specific ending and, therefore, children were not being regularly exposed to stories with clear endings. This was reinforced by Melanie who added that children had much less experience of fairy-tales than they had in the past. The ECTs continued their reflections by considering the ways in which fairy-tales could support children’s general understanding and production of narratives. They determined that fairy-tales not only helped children recognise endings, but they were clearly structured. Fairy-tales usually had most story grammar units, including those which their present cohorts of children were having trouble using in their own stories, such as consequences, feelings and endings. This showed that the ECTs were together able to develop their reflections with an understanding of wider social issues, leading to deeper critical reflections (Miller, 2011) and a sharing of past knowledge (Leung & Kember, 2003). This affirmed the importance of reading fairy-tales in preschool programs. The benefits of introducing fairy-tales as a way to develop children’s oral narratives were apparent when Leanne changed the type of storybooks she used to stimulate narrative retells from a cumulative style (see p. 162) to the classic style (p. 182), receiving feedback from her co-participants. These examples demonstrated that for both Tamsin and Leanne the collaborative reflections at the SPSs had a positive impact on their professional practices.

The final question that was raised in connection with story endings involved the reasons behind children’s unwillingness to end a story. On several occasions, the ECTs noted how the children were enjoying the one-to-one time with their teachers that they experienced through storytelling. This was in general regarded as a positive aspect, particularly for the children at Context M, who often had higher levels of social-emotional needs. However, Louise, at Context S, was concerned
that her cohort of children had recently begun to create extended, circular stories in order to spend time with her, rather than focusing on the content of their stories. She felt that this was probably due to the presence of a child with high levels of additional needs who was requiring most of her attention. She reflected upon this with Gloria and they came to the realisation that for the children at Context S, at that moment in time, their social-emotional needs should be prioritised rather than intervening and ending both the story and the period of emotional support (Siraj et al., 2017). In this instance, the collaborative reflections did not result in a change to Louise’s classroom practice, but rather affirmed her actions in allowing children to create extended chronological narratives and fulfil their emotional needs.

These examples demonstrate how the ECTs co-constructed their understandings and how they related them to their own practices, (Adger et al., 2004; Bodone et al., 2004; Hollingsworth & Clark, 2017; Reitano & Sim, 2010). They also reveal how ECTs benefitted from their co-participants’ knowledge and experiences and gained different perspectives on teaching and learning events (Miller, 2011). Similarly, knowledge and experiences were validated through the process and the ECTs could share problems and gain alternative solutions (Bodone et al., 2004; Leung & Kember, 2003). Learning in this way was particularly meaningful, as ECTs were empowered and empowered each other, shared responsibility for, and had ownership of their learning, and were able to shape and re-shape their practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014, p. 202). Thus, collaborative aspects of the professional learning program had a positive impact on ECT learning and context practice, which was enabled through the social-political arrangements. Additionally, collaborative learning was supported by the practice’s sayings through the application of the ECTs’ prior knowledge and understandings of pedagogy and their children’s social and emotional needs. The practice’s doings, identified through their agency when viewing and selecting the video-clips, also promoted independent and collaborative reflection. It should be noted that two of the ECTs indicated that they were somewhat concerned or nervous about seeing themselves on video, but these qualms were transitory and did not constrain their overall participation. The collaborative reflections – relatings (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017), were thus enabled by the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements, and these all ultimately had a positive impact on ECT knowings and understandings of narrative discourse teaching.

8.1.3 Relational Trust.

The collaborative reflections (relatings) prompted by VSR, therefore, had a significant impact on the development of ECTs’ knowledge, understanding and practice of narrative discourse teaching.
However, these reflective practices could not have been sustained without the development of trusting relationships (Mahon, Fransisco & Lloyd, 2018). These were particularly important, as VSR was the chosen professional learning method and the use of videos of practice to stimulate reflective discussion is known to require high levels of trust (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg & Pittman 2008). Consequently, it was necessary for the group to have an atmosphere of openness, safety, honesty and trust where participants felt able to ask difficult questions, have intense discussions and thus deepen relationships and extend their learning (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Furthermore, for collaboration to be effective during the SPSs, the ETCs needed to: listen to and value each other’s contributions (interpersonal respect), support and care for each other (personal regard), be proficient in their work (competence in role) and be consistent in their attitudes, actions etc. (personal integrity), that is, demonstrate relational trust (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014).

In this research, strong relationships between several of the participants already existed (e.g., three of the ECTs worked together at Context B and a fourth, Louise, had been in close professional contact with these three over a number of years). This meant as a group they shared many of the attributes (e.g., mutual trust, personal and professional regard) necessary for effective collaboration to take place. The fifth participant, Leanne, was new to the region, but she had begun to develop a relationship with Melanie, who was based at Context B, and was acting as her mentor in her role as ECT at Context M. Therefore, a solid base for the sharing of practice was already developing, even though Leanne, as the newcomer to the group, understandably felt a little nervous.

Feelings of nervousness in this situation would not be unusual and it has been recognised that many teachers might find the VSR process quite daunting especially when they are unfamiliar with each other. Reitano and Sim (2010) suggested that on first seeing and hearing themselves on video teachers might feel embarrassed and uncomfortable, and secondly, they might feel vulnerable and open to criticism. This issue was noted by Louise, from Context S:

I know the girls at Context B really well anyway, so, I felt very comfortable in that group sharing. Whereas, I think for people who might not necessarily be comfortable with their teaching, it could have been very confronting.

The possible constraining effects of embarrassment and vulnerability can be mitigated in a variety of ways. Teachers should be able to see clips prior to collaborative viewing giving them greater comfort and reducing feelings of vulnerability (Reitano, 2006). Similarly, teachers’ ownership of their own practice can be increased by giving them the opportunity to choose which parts will be
viewed (Nind et al., 2015). These strategies were instigated as part of the protocols of the practice prior to the first SPS to give the ECTs greater levels of comfort regarding the process. Additionally, there was an expectation that all members of the group would participate in the provision of clips for VSR at each of the SPSs. They would provide background information about the activity, have control of where clips were stopped and started, and explain their actions, before the collaborative, critical reflections began (Reitano & Sim, 2010). In the case of this research these measures were clearly effective because, as Melanie stated, everyone was participating equally and supporting each other so she did not believe that “anyone would’ve felt threatened by that type of learning, ‘cause it is just a different type of learning. It was a very safe environment and way of looking at your practice”.

This view was supported by her colleague Gloria who observed that “everybody was happy to be there; everybody was taking any criticism on board in the way that it was intended. It was … There’s that word again, a supportive environment”.

The development of a trusting and supportive environment, free from the risk of embarrassment and harsh or undue criticism, impacted positively on the ECTs’ ability to take part in collaborative reflections. They were able to have honest conversations with each other, which deepened their relationships and extended their learning (Wenger et al., 2002). Thus, the ECTs’ collaborative reflections (relatings) were enabled through the social-political arrangements.

8.1.4 Supportive relationships.

For the professional learning to be effective it was necessary for the ECTs not only to form trusting supportive relationships with each other but to develop them with other stakeholders involved in the professional learning (e.g., managers and researchers). These relationships can be linked to an ecologies of practices approach (see Appendix 18). This approach suggested that not only were the various Practice Architectures’ dimensions, arrangements and actions intertwined but the practices themselves could not operate in isolation. Each practice would be connected with other associated practices, which could be located on the same or several different sites. Five practices may be intertwined—professional learning (participants), the educational and administrative leadership (the KMG), the educational research (the PhD student’s practice), the teacher’s practice (preschool contexts) and the children’s learning (preschool contexts), (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).
Three of these are brought to the forefront when considering supportive relationships and include individuals from each—the professional learning site, the educational leadership site and the educational research site. The relationships (relatings) between the ECT participants have already been discussed in the previous section. Those between the ECTs and the researcher and the ECTs and the KMG were also important to the success of the professional learning program. Dickinson, Freiberg and Barnes (2010) recognised that the most effective professional learning programs have active researcher involvement, which, as Tyrén (2017) emphasised, necessitates positive relatings between participants and researchers.

Management.

The role of management in providing teachers with appropriate professional learning programs and maintaining a supportive relationship with them has been highlighted (Siraj et al., 2017; Zaslow et al., 2010). One of the ECTs, Leanne, recognised that the KMG had been proactive in working with the researcher to provide this professional learning opportunity. She asserted, “…KMG are very supportive, especially with this kind of research and learning. They’re very proactive in making a change”. Continued support was also given by the KMG as they provided time in lieu in recognition of the extra work that the ECTs had committed to, which was appreciated by their staff:

**Gloria:** It was lovely to be recognised by KMG for the time that we were putting into it and being able to have that day off, certainly felt supported by them along the way too.

**Melanie:** In terms of KMG’s involvement, I think that acknowledgement of the extra time that it’s taken and then allowing those teachers … Not myself because I had enough time to do it within my leadership hours, but giving them time to compensate for the time that’s involved in working in this project, I think that’s been very much appreciated by the other teachers.

**Tamsin:** KMG was really nice that they offered us a day, as time in lieu, that was kind.

However, one of the ECTs, Louise, was showing signs of disaffection with the KMG, the root causes of which are unknown. She was enthusiastic about taking part in the project, appreciating the opportunity to take part in professional learning concerning expressive language, but at intervals she demonstrated her resentment of the KMG. An example of this occurred during our final
interview when she persisted in claiming that she did not understand the principles behind the CLASS *language modelling* system. The CLASS system (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) had been introduced by the KMG as an observation instrument to standardise the monitoring of teaching and learning at their preschools. Louise had been invited to attend a professional learning program introducing CLASS, which was attended by several other participants. She explained that she had chosen not to attend because it took place during the school holidays. Similarly, she understood that they had given the ECTs time in lieu but showed no acknowledgement of this. The KMG’s interest in staff wellbeing in general improved staff morale which, in turn, had a positive impact on their classroom practice. The combination of collaboration, trust and the development of supportive relationships therefore enabled ECT learning and practice through the *social-political* arrangements.

*Researcher.*

The ECTs also revealed their perceptions of the support given to them by me at their final interviews. Two ECTs, Louise and Tamsin, appreciated the fact that I visited the contexts regularly and filmed their practice for the SPSs. They said they felt that without this support, filming would have been logistically impossible. Melanie highlighted the importance of my flexibility and understanding when participants were ill or suffering from workload issues. Gloria and Leanne explained how valuable my accessibility and prompt responses were to them over the research period.

Relationships between the staff and myself were positive, with the ECTs showing enthusiasm for the collaborative enquiry approach, which was voiced by Gloria at the final interview:

> …it would be a fantastic process to be able to go through with lots of different things that we’re doing each day. I mean, a great way of sharing knowledge and expertise and things that are working well for you.

ECTs were open to making changes in their practice and explored possible alternatives successfully (e.g., Tamsin trialled the one-page-story approach). They also planned to continue with a variety of storytelling strategies on an ongoing basis, making it a regular feature in their work-programs (Tamsin and Melanie), and to establish an additional intentional teaching group enabled by increased staffing (Leanne), thus demonstrating a proposed shift in practice (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Supportive relationships between the participants and the researcher, therefore, had a positive impact on the ECTs’ professional practices.
On the obverse side of the relationship, were my own perceptions of the professional learning program. When I reflected upon this, I realised that during the early stages of the project (Conceive and Define phases) I was quite anxious about entering a situation where I was expected to be an expert amongst many highly experienced ECTs. I only had a limited experience of working in preschool contexts and had spent many years as a Foundation Stage Teacher, often liaising with ECTs. I was, however, able to offer an outside perspective, bringing different knowledge and understandings to the group through my research studies (Wenger et al., 2002). My goal, then, was to highlight my awareness of ECTs’ existing skills and demonstrate the value I placed on these (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). I made efforts to spend time with the ECTs in their preschools and made regular contact with them through emails and our early interviews, ensuring that they were aware of the purpose of the project, and their roles and mine within it. I planned to be as involved as possible in the preschool contexts, as recommended by Dickinson, Freiberg et al. (2010), in order to facilitate the VSR process and consolidate my relationships with the ECTs. I hoped that this process would ensure that our SPS practices would not be constrained by power issues, within the social-space dimension (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014), and that a horizontal power structure would be formed. Fortunately, the personalities of the ECTs along with their desire to always be learning and improving their practice through collegial processes, helped to establish these conditions.

As the application of the professional learning program was drawing to a close, I found the process had been a rewarding one, although, there were some aspects that I would have altered. For example, the limited research period only allowed for three SPSs to take place. I believe that the ECTs’ practice, knowledge and understanding could have been further advanced if there had been more time available in which to apply strategies in the classroom and reflect on these. The cohort of participants were enthusiastic and engaged throughout the process, bringing a variety of viewpoints to our discussions and explaining the effects of strategies in their varied contexts. However, if I were to have the opportunity to extend this research, I would have attempted to involve ECTs with greater variations in their experiences in order to gain wider perspectives.

8.2 Sayings

When the sayings of a practice are brought to the forefront of an analysis, actions within the semantic-space dimension are considered (see section 3.2.3 Concepts of Practice Architecture, p. 79). Sayings can be seen as the articulation of a person’s understanding, knowledge or thinking (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018). Therefore, the roles of knowings, understandings and
thinkings will also be highlighted. Several key-points arise when practices are focused upon through their sayings—intentionality, complexity and, as with relatings, positive, trusting relationships.

8.2.1 Intentionality.

For the practice to operate it was necessary for it to have a purpose or project for the participants to focus upon (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). In this case, its overall purpose was to enhance the ECTs understandings of and teaching of narrative discourse in early years contexts. The ECTs took ownership of the project by asking specific questions, in order to add to their knowings. These were meaningful to their learning as they related directly to individuals’ context practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). The key question that marked the beginning of the ECTs’ ownership of the professional learning project was offered by Tamsin when she asked about how she could develop her children’s abilities to end stories; the collaborative reflections that took place surrounding this question have already been outlined in the previous section (relatings). Over the research period this question was revisited, and others were broached. As the ECTs’ learning was continually directed towards their own practices and centred around their own children’s learning, the professional learning positively impacted on their practices as well as on their knowings and understandings. The sayings, knowings and understandings of the SPS were, therefore, enabled through the cultural-discursive arrangements.

The ways in which the ECTs reflected upon and responded to these questions was influenced by their personal and professional habitus and by the habitus of the children attending their contexts (Kemmis et al., 2017). Their habitus, dispositions or practical understandings, were formed in early childhood and influenced by sociocultural conditions and historic events throughout their lives (Swidler, 2001). On consideration of the ECTs’ professional habitus, it was clear from their reflections that they shared similar beliefs (thinkings) about children’s autonomy due to similarities in their professional training. Several ECTs questioned whether they had the right to tell children what their stories should contain. For example, when the ECTs first began to implement their strategies, Louise explained her concern about (a) stopping the children from returning to pictures, and (b) the fact that the pictures she had placed on her story-pond were directing the children’s choices in their stories too much.

The ECTs’ reflections were also affected by the habitus of the children in their contexts. The children from the three contexts came from very different backgrounds: Context S children came
from an affluent coastal region, Context B children came from a mid-range socio-economic urban area, and Context M children came from a low socio-economic, partially industrialised urban area. The influences that were forming the habitus of the children from Context M were vastly different from those of the other two contexts. Many of the children from Context M were susceptible to the adverse effects of poverty and disadvantage, such as having less advanced speech and language skills (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Jackson et al., 2006; Snow et al., 2014; Wasik et al., 2006). The ECTs were aware of this as their reflections on the video-clips of practice showed, for example, when the ECTs were reflecting on Leanne’s language modelling strategies that were well-suited to the needs of her cohort at Context M.

The ECTs’ professional habitus was similar for each of them due to their initial training and the fact they used similar languages or discourses (sayings) to discuss their practices (Mahon et al., 2017). However, their participation in the professional learning program introduced them to new and deeper ways of thinking about the teaching of narrative discourse skills and necessitated the application of two specialised common languages. CLASS language modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) was re-introduced to them as a method for reflecting on strategies that are used to improve the children’s overall oral language discourses. Story grammar was introduced to provide them with a vocabulary to discuss the elements or units of a narrative. Through the appropriation of these new symbol systems, the ECTs’ collaborative reflections and understandings of narrative discourse teaching were aided (John-Steiner & Mann, 1996; Reynolds, Sinatra & Jetton, 1996).

This was demonstrated through the ECTs’ positive reflections during their post-research interviews. Two ECTs commented on how the use of prompt sheets, a visual reminder of the two common professional languages, had supported this understanding when they were viewing and reflecting on their practices. Melanie explained that the prompts acted as a reminder of the areas which the group were focusing on (points that were made explicit through the group’s adoption of the two common languages of language modelling and story grammar) and acted as an aid to reflective practice. As she stated, “Having those evidence points there meant that we could be really specific in feedback that we provided to each other”. Leanne highlighted how the sheets had helped her focus on specific strategies, particularly as she found that “it was hard to keep focus on everything that’s going on, so it was good to have the areas where you could quickly write that in”.

The positive impact of the two specialised languages on the ECTs’ professional knowledge and understanding was evident when their prompt sheets were analysed during the Test phase of the research. To demonstrate this, examples of Leanne’s and Tamsin’s completed sheets from SPS1
and 2 are discussed now. Leanne’s prompt sheets were chosen as she was the least experienced participant and, as such, had a very different starting-point in her knowledge and understanding of oral language from the other ECTs. Tamsin’s prompt sheets were chosen to represent the development in understanding of the other four more experienced ECTs as she was the instigator of the multiple tick system for identifying story grammar components and she appeared to be thorough in her recording of evidence of strategy use. Evidence of Tamsin’s understanding through the use of prompt sheets is considered first followed by consideration of Leanne’s.

Tamsin’s prompt sheets (Appendix 14) show considerable growth in her understanding of children’s oral narratives in her responses to both the language modelling prompts and story grammar prompts. In SPS1 (3 May, 2018), Tamsin recognised that Louise was using the language modelling strategies of open-ended questions and repetition, giving examples of how Louise had used these strategies (e.g., open-ended questions were used to encourage the child to move between pictures to tell his story). In SPS2, she had gained a greater understanding of the new language modelling vocabulary that had been introduced. Tamsin was able to recognise Melanie’s use of all five strategies and once again noted examples of these (e.g., Melanie used self and parallel talk when she was typing up her child’s story). Her understanding of the components that should be included in a story also increased in VSR1. She recognised that the child had included five story grammar units but did not make the link between the two problems in the story (the dog chasing the cat and their fight) and their role in the action of the story. In SPS2, Tamsin had instigated a tick system to help her remember the use of story grammar units with occasional details added. Her recognition and understanding of story grammar was not as apparent as that of language modelling. However, it should be remembered that the clips that the ECTs were viewing were highly paced and she may not have had time to add additional details to her prompt sheet.

Leanne’s understanding of children’s oral narratives was not as advanced as Tamsin’s, although her use of the prompt sheets (Appendix 15) demonstrated substantial growth in her understanding of language modelling strategies. Like Tamsin, she only noted the use of two language modelling strategies in SPS1 but by SPS2 she had recognised four. In SPS2, she demonstrated a greater knowledge and understanding of open-ended questions, not only noting question words which were used but also recording questions that were extending the child’s thinking (SST – Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). For example, Leanne noted when the question “Why was she picking the apples?” was asked, that the child had responded, “so she can get fruit”. She also recognised when advanced language (vocabulary) was used and that frequent conversations were taking place. Leanne was not as confident in recording her observations of story grammar, only using individual ticks to mark
occurrences in SPS2, but she did observe more units than she had in SPS1. Through the use of the prompt sheets, which supported the ECTs’ sayings and relatings during the SPSs, Tamsin and Leanne demonstrated how their early understandings of narrative discourse had developed over the research period. Thus, the ECTs’ learning was not only enabled by the cultural-discursive arrangements but also by the material-economic and social-political arrangements.

Moreover, they were then able to apply these knowings to their teaching practices and help their children recognise the elements of story as recommended by Dawkins and O’Neil (2011). Similarly, most of them believed that, by giving language modelling strategies a specific label, they were able to not only join in collaborative reflection at the SPSs but were able to use their new knowings in their own contexts. Tamsin stated that language modelling had aided her ongoing reflective practices with the children, while Leanne explained how they had directly influenced her intentional teaching, as prior to the professional learning program, she had been unaware of many of the strategies that could be employed. Louise, however, was less sure about the benefits of using language modelling terminology and stated that she did not understand the CLASS system (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009). After some discussion during her final interview it become apparent that she had not made links between her previously held understandings and the newly introduced common language

Rachael: …you already had the understanding

Louise: Yeah.

Rachael: …and you then had to learn different terminology.

Louise: Yep.

Rachael: Yeah. So, it’s maybe its main use for you was not what it was but being able to share things with others.

Louise: Okay, sure, yeah.

Louise was not increasing her understandings of oral language teaching but increasing her understandings of how to share it with others (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). The specialised languages therefore either directly or indirectly enabled the ECTs’ learning through the cultural-
discursive arrangements and had a positive impact on their professional knowledge and understanding.

8.2.3 Complexity.

Practices are highly complex when the sayings, knowings and understandings are focused upon. This is apparent even before a practice is first instigated, since there must be a questioning of the status quo. This occurs when would-be-participants start to act reflexively, questioning their own actions and becoming aware of the limits of their knowings and understandings (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). The ECTs who chose to take part in this research/professional learning program demonstrated reflexivity at the pre-professional learning interviews when they explained their existing understandings of children’s oral language development and their concerns. Some of the ECTs, like Tamsin and Melanie, had specific concerns, whereas Leanne’s concerns were much broader and covered her general lack of understanding of how to support her new cohort of children’s limited oral language skills. Tamsin understood the importance of conversation to develop SST (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) with individuals or small groups of children, and she was concerned that children were missing opportunities for developing advanced language skills, such as using pretend or meta language during play events (Christie et al., 2011), as parents reported that children spent a lot of time on screen-based activities. Melanie was concerned about her children’s unwillingness to develop or extend their oral narratives and had noticed that their vocabularies were basic. These ECTs were striving to find ways to improve their understandings, to develop new teaching strategies. This overlaps with doings of the practice, which are discussed later, demonstrating the entwined nature of Practice Architectures (Kemmis et al., 2017).

Later, as the professional learning program progressed further, examples of complex nature of the sayings, knowings and understandings of a practice became apparent. These included the ECTs’ ability to understand and respect each other’s differences (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014; Wenger, 1998). Gloria articulated this at her final interview:

…seeing different methods of achieving the same end. That if as teachers, we’re finding that different methods work better for us and we feel more comfortable with them, then there’s the recognition that children would find that too.

By responding to this realisation, as part of the reflective cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014), she could adapt her teaching methods according to children’s needs and ultimately their learning should improve. Thus, Gloria’s new understandings, developed
over the course of the professional learning program, led to a positive impact on her professional practice.

The ECTs’ application of their chosen strategies at their own contexts mirrored Gloria’s statement. For example, Leanne’s innate understanding of her children’s learning needs led her to adapt her approach from group teaching to working with pairs or individual children. In this way she could fulfill their social-emotional needs as well as develop their narrative discourse skills. Gloria’s and Louise’s children did not need such high levels of social-emotional support and they used their story-pond strategy as a group activity with small groups of children who wandered in and out of the activity as they chose.

As ECTs encountered the complexities of their practices, through the *semantic-space* dimension, their *sayings*, *knowings* and *understandings* developed. This led to positive impacts on both their reflective practices during SPSs and their professional practices at their contexts.

### 8.2.4 Positive trusting relationships.

The importance of positive trusting relationships has already been considered through the *relatings* of the practice (a demonstration of the entwined nature of the Practice Architectures actions—Kemmis et al., 2017). When they are discussed through *semantic-space* dimension, two aspects are considered: the actual words used by the ECTs (*sayings*) and how the ECTs appropriated new knowledge (*understandings*).

The ECTs’ perceptions of their relationships with the members of the group were demonstrated during their final interviews when they reflected upon the attitudes of the other participants, the atmosphere that was created during the SPSs, and how they themselves felt during the SPSs. The participants described the other participants as: honest, positive, supportive, open and generous. They found the atmosphere that was created through their relationships with other participants to be friendly, warm, welcoming, safe and collegial. Personally, the participants felt validated, vindicated, supported and enthused by their experiences. A culture of care and collaboration was being developed within the group (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) and through this the ECTs’ *knowings* and *understandings* were enabled through the *cultural-discursive* arrangements. This use of language demonstrates that high levels of relational trust had been developed, which in turn would have a positive impact on the ECTs’ learning through collaborative reflections (*relatings*) (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). This again demonstrates the entwined nature of Practice
Architectures as the actions within the *semantic-space* and *social-space* dimensions overlap (Kemmis et al., 2017).

### 8.2.5 Construction of knowledge.

When the construction of knowledge is explored through the *sayings* of a practice, the closely related viewpoints of socio-culturalism and social-constructivism are considered. These viewpoints affirm that knowledge (*knowings*) is constructed through social interactions between learners or between learners and artefacts (Adams, 2006; Leach & Scott, 2003; Reynolds et al., 1996). Learning through these interactions may be mediated through a variety of culturally derived signs or symbols (Fernyhough, 2008, p. 228). This is known as semiotic mediation and may include language (*sayings*), mnemonics and computers (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

During the professional learning program, learning through *sayings* was evident throughout, as the ECTs brought their own questions, developed through self-reflection, that were gradually addressed through collaborative reflections to reach new understandings (Bodone et al., 2004). This process was supported by the introduction of the two new languages (*sayings*), CLASS *language modelling* (Pianta, 2008, 2009) and story grammar, which were used both dialogically and in written and mnemonic forms on the prompt sheets. The ECTs interactively constructed their *knowings* and *understandings* of narrative discourse and its teaching across the three SPSs (Adger et al., 2004). This knowledge was internalised, that is, the ECTs were able to actively reconstruct their *knowings*, through appropriation, and re-apply it in other situations (Fernyhough, 2008; Leach & Scott, 2003).

Therefore, as the ECTs were involved in the active construction of knowledge (*knowings*) it was simultaneously being appropriated and internalised through their participation in the SPSs. At each SPS appropriation was supported by their experiences in earlier SPSs and was extended at future ones. Each of the ECTs was then able to re-apply their *knowings* in their own contexts. Melanie’s iPad activity with Child D provides an illustration of this ability to re-apply *knowings* to a new situation.

During her activity with Child D, Melanie used many *language modelling* strategies which have also been endorsed by other pedagogical experts. These included: open questioning (Christie et al., 2011; Hill, 2006; Pianta et al. 2008, 2009; Riley, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004), clarifying (Raban, 2014; Riley, 2006), prompting (Hill, 2006) and reminding (Shiel et al., 2012), inviting and suggesting (Riley, 2006), all of which were used to develop the children’s thinking and extend their
stories. In order for Child D to be able to track the progress of her story, Melanie also repeated sentences and, at intervals, re-read the whole story with her (Hill, 2006; Pianta et al., 2008, 2009; Riley, 2006). As she was typing Child D’s ideas, she also used the strategies of self and parallel talk (Hill, 2006; Pianta et al., 2008, 2009). Similarly, she scaffolded Child D’s thinking so that she not only included a beginning, middle and end, but also had the story grammar units of characters, actions, settings, a problem and an ending (see Appendix 19).

It is evident from this example that during the professional learning process the ECTs had their knowings and understandings enabled through the cultural-discursive arrangements. Moreover, their professional practices were positively impacted on through the active, social construction and appropriation of knowledge.

8.3 Doings

8.3.1 Transformation of practices.

The key concept that is associated with the doings of the group is that of transformation of professional practice. Consequently, a shift of focus away from the meeting room to the three preschool contexts is necessary. Practices cannot operate in isolation, but are connected to many other associated practices which may be located at the same place or several different ones in an ecologies of practices model (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Thus, the SPS meeting room (professional learning site) is inextricably linked to the preschool contexts (the site of the ECTs’ practices and the site of the children’s learning) as well as the KMG (educational and administrative leadership site) and the PhD student’s practice (educational research site). These entwined relationships are clarified by a diagram in Appendix 18.

Before exploring the doings of the participants at the kinder contexts it should be noted that the entwined nature of the sayings, doings and relatings of the practice is pronounced when the transformation of the ECTs’ professional practice is considered (Kemmis et al., 2017). Doings represent the work of the practice, and the skills and capabilities that are used (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). These doings are developed through professional learning workshops (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018). The ECTs’ reflective practices or relatings were enabled through the social-political arrangements, at the SPSs. Their knowings and understandings surrounding the teaching of narrative discourse developed through these reflective practices. Over time, these knowings and understandings were appropriated and internalised by the ECTs. Therefore, the ECTs sayings were enabled through the cultural-discursive arrangements, these sayings
(knowings/understandings) were then applied in the preschool contexts and in this way their doings were also enabled. Therefore, when the sayings and relatings of the group during SPSs were explored, in previous sections, the ways in which they impacted on or transformed practice were also noted. Examples of Tamsin’s and Louise’s collaborative reflections and the ways in which these enabled their doings in their preschool contexts were discussed in the relatings section of this chapter. Similarly, an example of Melanie’s practice was used to illustrate the impact of the ECTs’ internalisation of knowings and understandings on their professional practices.

8.3.2 Participatory appropriation and the construction of knowledge.

The links and overlaps that occurred between the ecologies of practices and the sayings doings and relatings of Practice Architectures was also apparent when sociocultural and social-constructivist theories were applied to learning and the construction of knowledge. These theories were briefly introduced in the previous section and are now expanded upon. Appropriation, according to Rogoff (1995), does not rely on individuals being passive recipients of sociocultural knowledge and skills or being active seekers of passive external knowledge and skills. It occurs through individuals’ participation in an activity; their involvement in the activity both contributes to the activity and prepares them for future activities. Thus, through their involvement in collaborative reflections the ECTs were making contributions to the SPSs and were also preparing themselves for their future teaching activities at their preschools. In earlier parts of this chapter, practices of three ECTs (Tamsin, Louise and Melanie) were used to illustrate how participants’ practices have been transformed, or affirmed. Therefore, practices of the two remaining ECTs, Leanne and Gloria, have been chosen to demonstrate how the appropriation and internalisation of knowings led to the transformation of their doings in their own preschools. The degrees of transformation in practice differed between Leanne, the least experienced ECT, and Gloria, the most experienced, but both their practices were impacted on positively. Thus, an insight is provided into the appropriateness of this type of learning for both newly qualified teachers and experienced ones.

The greatest transformation in practice probably occurred in Leanne’s teaching of narrative discourse. At the beginning of the research project she was very unsure, stating that oral language teaching was not one of her strengths and that she had little knowledge about the processes. However, through the collaborative reflections at the SPSs she began to appropriate and internalise new knowings and understandings, which was evident in one of her later video-clips of practice.
When Child AM, who had relatively strong narrative discourse skills, was retelling the story, Leanne used a variety of *language modelling* strategies to extend the recount. She used many open-ended questions including: “What happened…? What did she do…? Then what happens…?”, which extended Child AM’s imagination and encouraged further thinking (Christie et al., 2011; Hill, 2006; Pianta et al. 2008, 2009; Riley, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Clarifying statements, as recommended by Raban (2014) and Riley (2006), were used in a similar way, for example:

**Child AM:** And then Little Red Riding Hood said, “what was that?” and the wolf said, “Just thunder” But it was his tummy.

**Leanne:** It was his tummy. He was hungry.

She also extended AM’s thinking by asking about how the characters might have felt about the wolf and made suggestions to help Child AM link ideas (Riley, 2006).

Leanne used very different *language modelling* strategies with Child B, whose oral language and narrative discourse skills were minimal. Her questioning technique was different to the one she used with Child AM as Child B had limited oral language skills which usually involved communication through single words or short phrases (Level 1 of Brown’s Stages of Syntactic and Morphological Development—Brown, 1973). She often prefaced her questions with a repetition of his last statement (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009; Riley, 2006; Shiel et al., 2012) which acted as a prompt and reminded him of the sequence of events. Picture references were used to enable his participation and she modelled both sentence structure and story structure for him (Shiel et al., 2012). Additionally, she provided Child B with the beginning of sentences to prompt him to complete them (Hill, 2006). In this way she responded to Child B’s needs and scaffolded his learning in such a way that he could succeed in his storytelling (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Not only was she able to apply a variety of *language modelling* strategies to develop the children’s narrative discourse skills, but she was able to adjust these strategies to suit their differing levels of narrative discourse skills. Thus, she ensured they succeeded in their learning and maximised their learning. Leanne’s confidence grew throughout the project as did her skills and capabilities (*doings*) in the teaching of narrative discourse, with a positive impact on her professional practice.

Gloria’s many years of experience (35) were reflected in the confident approach she took to the implementation of her story-pond strategy. Early clips of her practice at Context B showed her strong *understandings and skills* when working with children who had limited storytelling abilities.
She used a variety of language modelling strategies (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009)—open and closed questions, repetition and extension—in order to move children through a simple chronological story sequence according to McCabe’s and Rosenthal Rollins’ Highpoint Continuum (1994). Gloria’s need to transform her practices was not general, like Leanne’s, but directed towards specific areas of concern. Gloria questioned how children, who had mastered chronological narratives, could have their story telling skills extended to create End-at-Highpoint or Classic narratives (McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins, 1994 – see Appendix 8).

This issue was resolved through her participation in the SPSs, where she was able to co-construct meaning and understandings with other group members, both contributing her own knowings and appropriating those of her fellow participants (Rogoff, 1995). Through these processes Gloria actively internalised new knowings and was able to apply them to her own practices. This transformation in her practice was visible when an early transcript of her activity with Child T was compared to those of children in later weeks. Child T told his story confidently without pausing, leaping across the story-pond, giving Gloria little opportunity to extend his ideas:

**Child T:** And then … then went to the library

Then he decided to get a drink

And he ate cupcakes, a apple, a hotdog and…

The end

This story only contained a few story grammar units: several actions, a setting and an unnamed character. In contrast, in later events when Gloria had appropriated Tamsin’s techniques for introducing a storytelling activity (see Chapter 6, p. 163) and internalised them (i.e., she adapted them to fulfil the needs of her children and to suit the activity) children’s story telling showed a marked improvement (Rogoff, 1995). Gloria provided children with greater structure before they started:

…Stand on the green bit. Have a look at all the pictures and have a little think before you start about who you would like to be in the story, and what you think they might do in the story. Before you start, just stop for a minute, look at the pictures and think in your head about what you would like the story to be about, and who you want it to be about. Have a little think. Ready to start? Okay.
By asking the children to think about what they were going to include in their story and giving them time Gloria opened up the event. It developed into a shared experience where conversations could be used to extend thinking and create a fuller narrative (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). She applied her questioning skills, not as a scaffold to create simple narratives as she had done earlier in the project, but to broaden children’s stories. During later events children began to create longer fuller narratives, an example of one such narrative is in Appendix 20. This child included nearly all the story grammar units in his story: characters (all named), setting, actions, feelings, a simple resolution and ending—only a problem was missing. By applying her newly appropriated and internalised knowings, Gloria was able to enhance her children’s learning experiences. Her doings in Context B were enabled and her practice was transformed in a specific way.

Conclusion

This chapter illuminated the key findings of the research and demonstrated how the three Practice Architectures action types, relatings, sayings and doings, impacted on the ECTs’ professional knowledge, understanding and practices. Essentially, professional learning took place through collaborative reflections (relatings), which enabled the ECTs to construct new knowledge and understanding (sayings) that they then applied in their professional preschool practices (doings). As specific aspects of these action types were discussed it became apparent that certain conditions or arrangements needed to be present at each of the practice sites for them to take place. For the relatings of the practice to be enabled, the elements of personal and professional regard, trust, honesty, positivity, safety and collegiality needed to be present in the social-political arrangements of the professional learning site. For new knowledge and understanding to be constructed, cultural-discursive arrangements had to provide common professional languages, both verbal and semiotic, to support professional learning. In addition, the ECTs brought a similar professional habitus, which aided their ability to use the new languages. At the preschools sites, the ECTs’ doings required material-economic arrangements that included time, space and adequate staffing levels to apply their new knowledge and understanding to their professional practice.

The relatings, sayings and doings of this professional learning project and their associated arrangements (social-political, cultural-discursive and material-economic) illustrate how Practice Architectures can be used to understand, interpret and ultimately transform practices (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018). These concepts were analytically reduced and separated so that the complex data, collected throughout the DBR process, could become more intelligible and be related
directly to the research’s key findings and how these impacted on both the professional learning program and the development of the ECTs’ knowledge, understanding and practice (Berkowitz, 1997). However, the entwined nature of all the aspects of Practice Architectures and the ways in which they influence each other and a practice as a whole should be remembered (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). This knowledge is used in the following chapter to ascertain the most important attributes of this project and the implications for other professional learning programs.
9. Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis and begins by outlining the motivation behind the study. An overview of the DBR model which structured the research process follows, before the aims of study are delineated. Then the research questions are specifically addressed, and the strengths and limitations of the research are discussed. The key contributions of the study are explored and future directions considered before concluding comments are made.

The original motivation behind this study was the realisation that large numbers of young children are continuing to enter school with lower than expected levels of oral language skills despite awareness of this issue (DET, 2013; 2015; 2018). In order to address these concerns on an ongoing basis, a context-based, collaborative, professional learning program was devised, which aimed to enhance ECTs’ teaching of one component of oral language, narrative discourse.

9.1 Overview of the Research Process

Easterday’s six phase DBR model (Easterday et al., 2014) provided a systematic, iterative structure for the professional learning program. In the first phase, Focus, collaboration with KMG began and the general problem was delineated, ECTs and parents were consulted, and the scope of the program was considered. In the second phase, Understand, the problem was investigated empirically (through interviews with ECTs and children’s oral language/narrative discourse assessments), and through secondary sources (literature relating to best practice in narrative discourse teaching and professional learning). These were then combined with DBR principles to create a research design structure that was specific to the requirements of all participants. During the Define phase, meetings took place and ECTs agreed goals for their teaching. In the next phase, Conceive, ECTs worked collaboratively to list strategies and then individually chose which they would implement and trial. The implementation of the professional learning program during the Build phase, followed. ECTs used their chosen strategies in their contexts, were filmed and then took part in reflective
discussions, supported by the film clips, as they engaged in VSR. These discussions were recorded and formed the main data source for this phase of the study. Additional data collected at this time included: work programs, from the beginning, middle and end of the research period, scribed stories from the story tile activity, iPad books, and photographs of artefacts. The final phase, Test, included: concluding interviews with the ECTs, final analysis of data through Practice Architectures, evaluation and reporting of the study.

9.2 Study Aims

This research was situated within a transformative paradigm. It aimed to empower ECTs professionally by raising their awareness of a situation of disadvantage, enabling them to address it, and forming a basis for continuing future change (Ling & Ling, 2017). The research was both systematic (Ling, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and collaborative. Collaborations took place on several levels: between ECT participants, between myself and the ECTs and on a wider level between myself, the ECTs and the KMG. Each of these groups was invested in the outcomes of the research and brought a variety of perspectives and experiences to the process, but this subjectivity was balanced by a shared view of the existing social and political context (Ling, 2017; Ling & Ling, 2017). Specifically, through the research, a professional learning program, designed to enhance participating ECTs’ skills in the teaching of narrative discourse, was implemented. A systematic and collaborative approach was taken (DBR) and ongoing data analysis informed each consecutive phase of the research. Each phase of the research was underpinned by the research questions:

- What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?
- How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?
- What were the features of a professional learning program that impacted on teacher practice?

The first of these questions, concerning ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts related to one of the earliest stages of DBR, Understand, and informed the Define, Conceive and Build phases that followed. The ECTs’ understandings were revisited in the final Test phase to ascertain changes or deepening of understanding brought about by the professional learning program. The second question related to the Build phase when the program was implemented and the ECTs’ reflections and responsive practices could be observed. The final
question was addressed during the Test phase when data analysis from all the phases was considered and conclusions could be reached about the impact of the program. Summaries of responses to these questions follow.

9.3 Responses to Research Questions

9.3.1 What are ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives in early years’ contexts?

The purposes behind this question were twofold. Firstly, in the early stages of the research it was important to gain an insight into the breadth of ECTs’ understanding of oral narratives to inform later stages of the research. In this way the planning (Define and Conceive phases) and implementation of the professional learning program (Build phase) could be targeted most effectively towards the ECTs’ needs. Secondly, by eliciting the ECTs’ initial understanding of the roles of oral language and narrative discourse in early childhood contexts, comparisons could be made with their understandings after participating in the professional learning program (Test phase). ECTs’ growth in understandings and how these were achieved are now outlined.

ECTs’ growth in understanding.

Prior to the implementation of the professional learning program the ECTs’ initial perceptions of oral language and oral narratives in early years’ contexts were quite narrow and most of the ECTs held very similar perceptions about these two areas. Four out of the five participating ECTs immediately focused on the importance of conversation and communication, whilst two highlighted the issues many children had with articulation. On further reflection, vocabulary development and story-telling were also mentioned. At this stage the ECTs made no connections between conversation, communication and vocabulary development and oral narratives. In their concluding interviews most of the ECTs (four out of five) demonstrated self-reflection skills and increases in knowledge and understanding, as they explicitly discussed how the teaching of narrative discourse skills could extend their children’s conversational skills and expand their vocabularies (Leung & Kember, 2003; Pennanen et al., 2017).

How this was achieved: Prior to the Professional Learning Program.

As the data from the SPSs and the ECTs’ interviews were analysed through the Practice Architectures lens of sayings it became apparent that several factors had influenced the transformation in their understanding of the role of narrative discourse. This transformation of
understanding was highly complex and began prior to the research when the ECTs started to question the lower than expected levels of oral language skills of children in their preschools. Through this questioning they became aware of the limits of their own skills and abilities to change this and therefore chose to participate in the professional learning program (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

*How this was achieved: During the Professional Learning Program.*

During SPSs it was necessary for ECTs to understand and respect each other’s viewpoints and develop positive trusting relationships. Having established these, the ECTs could more effectively co-construct knowledge, internalise it and re-apply it (Fernyhough, 2008; Leach & Scott, 2003). These reflective processes, through which ECTs’ understandings of oral narratives were developed, were aided by the two professional languages which were used during the SPSs, story grammar and CLASS language modelling (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009).

Story grammar increased the ECTs’ knowledge of the components of a classic story and gave them reference points through which the completeness of children’s narratives could be ascertained and expanded on. *Language modelling* provided the ECTs with a common vocabulary to describe the teaching strategies they used to develop the children’s narrative discourse skills. The ECTs developed their knowledge and use of the two professional languages in both their preschool settings and the SPSs. In their preschool practices they showed a heightened awareness of story grammar and intentionally targeted their teaching to include specific components according to the children’s narrative ability. Similarly, their use of a growing variety of *language modelling* strategies became evident throughout the implementation of the project and it was clear that these had been chosen to either provide extra scaffolding for children or to extend and expand their narratives. In SPSs the development of ECTs’ knowledge of the two professional languages was also apparent. Initially during the reflective discussions (SPS1) they used only the terms that they were already familiar with and it was necessary for me, as the meeting facilitator, to model the use of terms. However, over the course of the professional learning program it was evident that they were interactively co-constructing knowledge (SPS2) and then were beginning to internalise and automatically apply the knowledge (SPS3), (Adger et al., 2003).

Moreover, as the ECTs’ awareness of the two professional languages became heightened, through their own use or by observing others using them, they were more easily able to recognise how fully the teaching of narrative discourse could develop wider oral language skills. This was particularly
relevant for them when they reflected on how storytelling activities developed children’s conversational skills (e.g., back and forth exchanges and contingent responding) and advanced language (e.g., variety of words used and connecting words and ideas) (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009).

**9.3.2 How do ECTs reflect on their own practices and children’s learning development, and respond to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse?**

This question is divided into two sections. The first pertains to the ECTs’ ability to reflect on two entwined concepts: their own practices and children’s learning development. The second demonstrates how ECTs applied their reflections in order to differentiate their teaching in response to differing levels of children’s competence in storytelling. The reflective processes which took place were both personal (sayings) and collaborative (relatings) and are summarised sequentially.

**ECTs’ reflective practices.**

ECTs’ reflections on their own practice began prior to this research, complementing and informing their knowledge and understandings (sayings), as mentioned in response to the first research question. These self-reflections continued throughout the research process but also broadened to include collaborative group reflections (relatings) during SPSs. Their reflective practices were based around VSR and began with the ECTs having their practices filmed, viewing their own clips and reflecting on them before sharing them with the other participants for collaborative reflections. Video clips provided a shared reference point for the ECTs whilst prompt sheets directed their focus to key CLASS language modelling skills (Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) and the development in use of story grammar components. The prompt sheets also allowed the ECTs to record pertinent points as they occurred, for example when specific story grammar units were introduced or when language modelling strategies were employed to develop the children’s narrative discourses. This information was then used in the collaborative discussions that followed. During these discussions there was a natural flow between ECTs’ reflections on their own practices and the ways in which they could support and extend children’s learning.

**ECTs’ responses to evidence of children’s competence in narrative discourse.**

During the research process it was necessary for ECTs to reflect on and respond to different sources of information about their children’s narrative discourse abilities. Prior to the implementation of the professional learning program, in the Define phase, the ECTs discussed the results of the children’s oral language assessments. They then had time to reflect upon the data before deciding
which areas of story grammar would be the most suitable focus for their intentional teaching at the start of the professional learning project (in the Build phase). As the project progressed, they adapted their teaching to meet the developing needs of the children in a number of ways. For example, ECTs used different language modelling strategies dependent on the children’s narrative discourse skills; if children needed extra scaffolding in their storytelling, repetition and elaboration were used more frequently, whereas if they needed extending, open-ended questioning and more advanced language were introduced. Similarly, when children had early story telling skills, ECTs focused on limited numbers of story grammar units such as characters and places, while more advanced learners were encouraged to create more complete stories which included actions, problems, consequence/s and endings. ECTs’ reflections on their responses were both personal and collaborative, during SPSs, as they discussed differentiation techniques and shared their problems with others (e.g. Bodone et al., 2004).

In the final phase of DBR, Test, the ECTs’ reflective practices were explored through the Practice Architectures lens of relations and it became evident that these practices developed and were enabled in a number of ways through the social-political arrangements. Factors that were of significance to these reflective practices included: (i) the high levels of relational trust between myself and the participants; and (ii) the supportive relationships that had developed between the ECTs and the KMG, and the ECTs and myself. These factors enabled the group’s collaborative practice leading to effective construction of new knowledge (Fernyhough, 2008; Leach & Scott, 2003).

9.3.3 What were the features of a professional learning program that impacted on teacher practice?

This question addressed the overarching aim of the research: to implement a professional learning program that enhances ECTs’ teaching of narrative discourse skills in early years’ contexts. Therefore, the ways in which ECT learning and practices (doings) were enabled or constrained by the material-economic arrangements are outlined here and will be considered at greater length when the research’s strengths and limitations and key contributions are discussed. When the program was evaluated, during the Test phase of DBR, it became apparent that five key features had a positive impact on teacher learning and practice:

- Collaborative reflective practices. During their collaborative reflections they benefitted from others’ knowledge and experience (Miller, 2011). They also felt validated in their
existing knowledge and through the sharing of problems and co-creation of solutions (Adger et al., 2004; Siraj et al., 2018).

- **Co-construction of knowledge.** The ECTs were able to co-construct new understandings related to their own practices during collaborations at SPSs (Adger et al., 2004; Bodone et al., 2004; Hollingsworth & Clark, 2017; Reitano & Sim, 2010).

- **Trust.** The participating ECTs perceived themselves to be in an environment which was open, safe, honest and trusting (Wenger et al., 2002). This was very important, particularly when using VSR as ECTs were required to expose their actual teaching practice to scrutiny (Borko et al., 2008).

- **Relationships.** ECTs benefitted from a number of supportive relationships. These included those with other participants, with the KMG (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014) and with me as the researcher (Dickinson, Freiberg et al., 2010; Tyren, 2017).

- **Intentionality.** The ECTs had a shared purpose (see for example Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017) in their professional learning to enhance and extend the teaching and learning of narrative discourse skills in their preschools. Similarly, they took ownership by asking their own questions related to their own practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).

However, the effectiveness of these features was tempered by a number of challenges that faced ECTs in their own contexts when implementing strategies (*doings*):

- **Staffing levels.** As all the participants were employed at publicly funded preschools, the staffing levels were mandated by the state government. Ratios were set at one adult for every eleven children attending a preschool (DET, 2016), which meant that preschools with between 22 and 25 children (Context B) were at an advantage compared to preschools with 20–21 children attending (Context M and Context S).

- **Isolation.** In this study three of the ECTs were fortunate in that they worked at a multi-room setting and therefore had contact with more professional colleagues. However, two of the ECTs (at Context M and Context S) worked at single room settings and therefore had daily contact only with their one ECE (assistant). They ate their lunch with the children and did not have formal breaks.

- **Curriculum demands.** The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) created some tensions by advocating two divergent pedagogical approaches, those of intentional teaching and a
play-based curriculum (Leggett & Ford, 2013). These tensions were still apparent at
the three preschools involved in this study as one ECT, Gloria, mentioned that the
project had brought the importance of making time for intentional teaching to her
attention and had highlighted the value of working with just a couple of children at a
time.

- **Time.** Lack of time for implementing individual or small group narrative discourse
  activities was a common problem for all ECTs, particularly Tamsin and Louise, who ran
  *bush-kinder* sessions each week.

- **Space.** Two of the preschools had spaces that were well-designed and included areas
  where children could take part in quieter activities where there were few distractions.
The third preschool was located in a large open structure, which was not subdivided,
where there were fewer opportunities for quiet small group activities such as narrative
discourse (or any other form of SST [Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002]).

- **Finance.** Financial constraints limited ECTs’ abilities to carry out their narrative
discourse strategies in regard to several of the points above. For example, financial
constraints can affect staffing levels and therefore time available for activities, and the
ability to maximise use of space and access other resources.

This suggests that when context-based approaches to professional learning are used, facilitators
need to be aware of potential challenges. A flexible approach is therefore necessary, supported by
preliminary and ongoing collaboration with participants to discover not only their professional
needs (Diamond et al., 2013), but also the contextual circumstances surrounding their practices.
However, these findings must be considered in light of the strengths and limitations of this study,
discussed below.

### 9.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The main focus of this research was the design and implementation of a professional learning
program that would lead to transformations in ECTs teaching of narrative discourse skills.
Therefore, the strengths and limitations that have been observed are closely related to the critical
attributes of effective professional learning (see for example, Darling-Hammond et al., 2017;
Desimone, 2009). The strengths are outlined first, and these are followed by a review of the
limitations.
9.4.1 Strengths

The strengths of the professional learning program can be categorised into two main sections. The first section relates to the practices and characteristics of the ECT participants and the second to organisational and supporting factors.

**ECT practices and characteristics.**

The ECTs participated in active learning—collaboration, reflection, reciprocal observations—and in iterative feedback cycles. This learning was based around the VSR process which enabled them to observe one another in an authentic way. In addition to providing a focus for collaborative reflections VSR enabled and strengthened personal reflections transporting ECTs back to transient moments of practice (Nolan et al., 2018). After viewing and reflecting on the video clips, the ECTs gave and received feedback and collaborated to solve problems of practice. The ECTs’ active learning processes were supported by the collegial trust that had developed and this, in turn, encouraged participation, openness and honesty in their reflective discussions (Edwards-Groves, 2013). The formation of these trusting relationships was also one of the factors that brought about high levels of ECT commitment to this research and motivation to be involved in it. Other factors included: a clear purpose (Bodone et al., 2004; Gray, 2007); a satisfying process (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004); the enablement of observable improvement in practice (Hsieh, Hemmeter, McCollum & Otrosky, 2009); and provision of opportunities for participants to choose problems to be addressed or the directions to be taken (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Additionally, the ECTs were provided with an added incentive by their employer, the KMG, to remain committed to the professional learning program; further details are found in the following section (Knapp, 2003).

**Organisational and other supporting factors.**

Coherence was one of the key enabling factors in an effective professional learning program as suggested by Desimone (2009). In this case the objectives of the program were clearly aligned on both a national and local level. On a national level the ECTs were enhancing their skills of teaching narrative discourse, which aligned with Outcome Five of the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009), “children are effective communicators”. In so doing they were also showing a commitment to the EYLF’s fifth key principle of practice: “ongoing learning and reflective practice” (DEEWR, 2009). Similarly, on a local organisational level the program integrated aspects of the KMG’s newly implemented approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning in all its preschools (CLASS – Pianta et al., 2008, 2009). Specifically, the language modelling dimension of CLASS, was adopted as a
professional language to support reflective practices. The program was further strengthened by the KMG’s recognition of the additional commitment that participating ECTs were making by giving them a full day in lieu to recompense for the time they spent in SPSs outside their normal working hours. This was an additional motivating factor (see previous section) for the ECTs continuing their active participation in the professional learning (Knapp, 2003). On a local level, the group size was relatively small, with five participants and a facilitator (myself). This aided the development of positive trusting relationships, active participation in reflective discussions, and ensured regular and equal opportunities to observe and be observed during the VSR process. These small numbers could however also be seen as a limitation of the research as a whole as discussed in the section that follows.

A final supporting factor was linked to the use of DBR as the structure for the research. In Easterday’s six phase model (2014), the exploration of literature was a vital component of the research; insights from the literature supported practices and approaches and added validity to findings. Thus, this program was strengthened by an analysis of existing approaches to professional learning combined with a clear understanding of the chosen design process. The significant role that DBR together with Practice Architectures played in this research is discussed further later in the chapter.

9.4.2 Limitations

When the professional learning program was evaluated, two main limitations became evident: (i) the duration of the program and (ii) the number of participants and composition of the shared practice group. A discussion of each of these follows.

Duration of the program.

The main implementation phase (Build) of the professional learning program took place over approximately ten weeks in the second term of 2018. This was the maximum period of time available due to a number of constraining factors. Firstly, ECTs were, understandably, unwilling to take part in any context based interventions during their children’s first term at school. During this time, however, they took part in preparatory activities, including reviewing the oral language assessments and setting goals (Define phase of DBR) and planning strategies based on the results of these together with their growing understanding of their children’s other needs—for example, social and emotional needs (Conceive phase). In the final two weeks of Term One, the ECTs were able to test and refine their strategies before the professional learning program was fully
implemented. Moreover, the program needed to be completed by late June 2018 in order to correspond with preschool term dates and the requirements of the PhD program. This meant that the recommended duration of at least one semester (Labone & Long, 2016) was not achieved. Consequently, opportunities for more rigorous and cumulative growth in teacher knowledge and practice were not possible and the probability of sustained changes in teacher practice were reduced (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, attempts were made to mitigate these effects by narrowing the scope of the professional learning (Zaslow et al., 2010) to the teaching of narrative discourse alone rather than oral language in general.

*Number and composition of participants.*

This was a very small scale study involving only five ECT participants. All were qualified to at least Bachelor degree level, one to Master of Education level and one had participated in additional leadership training through Bastow (see p. 99). Two of the participants had 30 or more years’ experience of teaching in the Early Childhood sector, two had 15 or more years of experience while one had 13 years’ experience but only two of these years were with the four year-old, preschool aged group. Thus, the ECTs shared a common professional habitus influenced by their similar education and training. These commonalities could act to delimit or narrow their discussions. However, their diverse personal backgrounds and life experiences offset this and enriched the learning process. Similarly, the small number of participants was considered a strength of this particular research.

Notwithstanding these positive features, when the reliability and probability of effective generalisation are considered these two factors are viewed as limitations. The research findings were specifically related to the five ECTs’ participation in a collaborative, context-based professional learning program which used a VSR approach. However, context-based learning is being widely used with smaller groups of teachers, under 20, (Cunningham, Etter, Platas, Wheeler & Campbell, 2015; Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei & Andree, 2010; Patton et al., 2015) and while individuals’ views and experiences of such programs may differ, the descriptions, interpretations and analysis in this project could inform future professional learning and research. Confidence levels in the reliability of its findings could be achieved by replicating the approaches used (National Early Literacy Panel [NELP], 2008; Scull, 2013). Generalisability is now often regarded as the province of quantitative research approaches (Hatch & Coleman-King, 2015) but when DBR is used the possibility of generalising findings and interventions is a necessary component. As it did with issues of confidence in and reliability of findings NELP (2008) once again recommended
that small scale studies be expanded in order to improve the generalisability of programs and processes.

9.5 Key Contributions

One of the core components of DBR is its potential to make contributions to existing theoretical knowledge, corroborating existing knowledge and understanding or, preferably, extending it. In the final evaluation of this research it was found that contributions to knowledge occurred in two distinct areas: firstly, in research design and research practice, and secondly, in the development of professional learning programs.

9.5.1 Contributions to research design and research practice.

Contributions to knowledge were made in several ways through the use of DBR, Easterday’s six phase model (2014), as the methodological design and Practice Architectures as the conceptual framework and method of analysis. Initially their individual use in the early childhood professional learning sectors is considered. This is followed by a discussion about the benefits of combining the two processes in a way that has previously not been explored.

Innovative use of DBR and Practice Architectures as individual approaches.

DBR is a relatively new research method that had its origins in A. Brown’s (1992) design experiments in the 1990s. Since then it has evolved significantly and has been used to further understand and improve practice in a variety of educational contexts. These include primary schools (e.g., see Morgan, 2013; Widjaja, 2013), secondary schools (e.g., see Crompton, 2015, 2017; Jentikoff, 2015) and in higher education (e.g., see Ozverir, Osam & Herrington, 2017). In some cases, these have involved the research of a specific topic (e.g., Crompton, 2015, 2017) and in others they have acted as the structure for research into professional learning programs (e.g., Widjaja, 2013). There are fewer reported instances of DBR as the methodological design for research in early years contexts (e.g., Benson, 2018). This research then supports the growing body of evidence that DBR can be used effectively in early years contexts. It also demonstrates how DBR can be used to develop teacher professional learning programs that enhance oral language development in the preschool years, an area in which it has been rarely used, given only one example of this was found—another small-scale study by Bradley (2013).
Practice Architectures is also a relatively new conceptual framework, having evolved from the practice theories of the 1970s. It too has been widely used to achieve a deeper understanding of educational practices in a variety of settings. Primary focuses have included: educational leadership (e.g., see Hognestad & Bøe, 2016; Wilkinson et al., 2018) and ecologies of practices models surrounding primary schools (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). None of these projects specifically considered early childhood teacher professional learning, although Rönnerman’s research into leadership practices was based in Swedish preschools (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Further research by Kemmis and his colleagues examined ecologies of practices in New South Wales Primary School where kindergarten is the first year of formal schooling (children are aged between four and a half and six years of age at school entry [Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014], the equivalent of Victorian Foundation Stage classes). While Practice Architectures has been used in Early Childhood Settings (e.g., Menning, 2018; Salamon, 2017; Salamon, Sumsion, Press & Harrison, 2016) this research contributes to extant research exploring aspects of teacher professional learning in Early Childhood contexts and thus it builds on previous knowledge in this field.

**Applying Practice Architectures and DBR: a combined approach.**

Practice Architectures and DBR have shared a common goal—the transformation of practices—as well sharing several other features that are discussed below. However, in the past Practice Architectures has most often been used as the conceptual framework and as a method of analysis in combination with action research approaches. This study introduced the combination of the two approaches for a variety of reasons.

Prior to the instigation of this project, three research approaches were considered, Lewin’s original action research model, Critical Participatory Action Research and DBR (Easterday’s six phase model, 2014). It was found that Easterday’s DBR model combined the most desirable characteristics of the other two models (all of which are characteristics that are shared with Practice Architectures): the aim of investigating and transforming practices, flexibility, collaboration, iterative analysis, a context-based participatory approach and a concern for project generalisation. In addition, Easterday’s model provided a more scientifically structured approach to the study, strengthening the research processes and adding validity to the outcomes. This clearly defined structure enabled flexibility, so that if refinements needed to be made to research or project design, earlier research phases could be returned to. In this way the messiness of complex social practices (Kemmis et al., 2017), such as teaching and learning, could be more effectively explored.
Practice Architectures as the conceptual framework provided a comprehensive means of describing, interpreting and analysing practice at all phases of the research design process. From the very earliest phases of DBR, practices were interpreted through the three Practice Architectures actions, sayings, doings and relationalings, and the ways they were enabled or constrained by their corresponding arrangements, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political were considered (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014). Ongoing interpretation, and analysis using these actions and arrangements had two purposes. Firstly, succeeding phases of DBR were informed by insights from earlier ones, and secondly the reflexive nature of practice development was revealed. The final phase of DBR, Test, involved the evaluation of the project and a more in-depth analysis of practice. At this stage the overall effectiveness of the professional learning intervention was explored through the three Practice Architectures lenses. This broader perspective illuminated the ways in which the participants’ growing understandings and knowings (sayings) influenced their reflective practices (relationalings) and led to transformations in their preschool practices (doings). Additionally, the possibility of generalisation of the professional learning program, including the use of DBR and Practice Architectures, was considered (see the following section, Future Directions).

The combination of Easterday’s (2014) six phase model of DBR and Practice Architectures ensured that both the preparation and implementation of a teacher professional learning program were interrogated for an extended period of time through the three actions of sayings, doings and relationalings. Through these means, the complexities of the developing practices involved were revealed and engaged with in a richer way.

9.5.2 Contributions to knowledge surrounding effective professional learning programs.

The professional learning program at the heart of this research involved a series of SPSs which adopted VSR as a method for stimulating and extending ECTs’ reflective practices. VSR has been used effectively in several small scale studies over the past 20 years and its use in this study therefore corroborates existing knowledge, and in a small way adds to it. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) endorsed VSR as one of the most effective media for supporting reflection as it enables a focus on authentic practices that are personal to the teachers involved. VSR can be used to support both self and collaborative reflections on practice.

In the area of self-reflective practices this research reinforced previous findings which showed the benefits of VSR when: (i) trying to observe and reflect on practice in busy classroom environments;
(ii) questioning effectiveness and comprehensiveness of specific pedagogical strategies (Nolan et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2010) and, more generally, (iii) attempting to address concerns or gain affirmation of effective practice (Hollingsworth & Clarke, 2017). Reitano and Sim (2010) recommended that VSR not only be used for teacher self-reflection but also be used to support collaborative reflections, thereby extending and deepening reflective processes. The present research confirmed this view and demonstrated how VSR provided a common reference point for the participants (Hollingsworth & Clark, 2017; Nind et al., 2015). It broached the issues of participant embarrassment and nervousness (Nind et al., 2015; Reitano & Sim, 2010) about seeing themselves on screen, and confirmed the effectiveness of strategies in mitigating these (e.g., previewing all clips of practice, choosing which to use and what the focus would be, controlling viewing—stopping clips and making comments or asking questions). The social construction of knowledge, aided by VSR, was shown to develop over time through a cyclical process of self-reflection, collaborative reflection, the practical application of knowledge and further reflections (Edwards-Groves, 2013; Nolan et al. 2018). These examples illustrate ways in which existing knowledge was corroborated but minor innovations were also added to the VSR process thereby making useful additions to this knowledge.

During the SPSs, VSR provided the main stimulus for ECTs’ reflective practices, while learning was further mediated through the introduction of two common professional languages and the use of prompt sheets by all participants. Nolan and colleagues (2018), also noted that during reflective discussions teacher participants realised that they did not share common professional discourses. In this case, as their discussion developed, a more in-depth, mutual understanding of each other’s practices also developed. However, this was part of a larger study, and in the case of this much smaller scale project it was important to ensure participants had a common language through which they could express their thoughts and understandings from its onset. In this way reflective conversations had greater clarity (Freeman, 1991; Hargreaves, 2004). The ECTs’ focus was also improved through the professional dialogues and an authentic vehicle for peer collaboration was created (NLTP, 2012).

Similarly, prompts of various kinds have been effectively used in earlier VSR-based research. These included: direct researcher prompting to keep teachers focused and to deepen their reflections (Nolan et al., 2018) and the provision of topic guides to aid the video clip providers in their choice of clip and support their presentation of the clip (Nind et al., 2015). Reviews of the literature did not reveal any studies that had highlighted the significant role that the use of prompt sheets by all participants could play in VSR and teacher reflection. In this research, the prompt sheets referred
both to pedagogical approaches (CLASS language modelling strategies – Pianta et al., 2008, 2009) and content knowledge (the components of a classic story). These sheets mediated the ECTs’ learning processes, providing them with both written and mnemonic prompts. They gave additional focus to reflective conversations and also acted as a concrete reference to inform ECTs’ later planning and practice. It is hoped that knowledge of these small innovations will be beneficial to future VSR projects and that their usefulness will be validated through replication in other studies.

9.6 Future Directions

This study ultimately aimed to support the development of children’s oral language skills. A professional learning program was devised in order to enhance ECTs’ practices in the teaching of one important area of oral language, narrative discourse. It was, however, a small scale study and for its findings to be validated, the program, with participants’ chosen focuses, should be replicated on a wider scale (NELP, 2008). Therefore, before considering the possibilities of generalising the project to other areas of education some preliminary steps should be taken.

- The program should be extended to include larger numbers of ECTs with a variety of levels of experience (although the size of shared practice groups should be limited to ensure maximum participation and learning).
- New programs should be carried out for longer periods of time, at least one semester (approximately 20 teaching weeks) in line with recommendations (Labone & Long, 2016) to promote sustained change in teacher practice. From a specific perspective, during extended programs children could be introduced to a wider variety of narrative discourse forms, develop their appreciation of these and begin to produce them.\(^{21}\)
- During further trials more specific attention should be paid to the role of the researcher. In more extended programs the researcher’s role, as facilitator, in SPSs could be gradually reduced and the effect on ECT learning measured.

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\(^{21}\) During this particular program fairy-tales were chosen by the ECTs themselves, as a method for promoting traditional narrative production, thus honouring their ownership and agency of the project (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al., 2014).
• Formal summative assessments did not take place at the end of the present project due to time constraints (see section 4.5 p.102-104). Hoffman (2010) highlighted the issues the Early Reading First Program faced in showing language development in comparative normed assessments. By trialling the use of story grammar as both an ongoing and summative assessment of children’s individual progress in narrative discourse creation (rather than against others) over the suggested extended period of the program some minimal personal growth could be shown. Results of these assessments, at a preschool level, could then be carried over into primary school and ongoing measurement of these complex unconstrained skills could be more fully monitored.

The program could then be extended across the early childhood sector to include professionals who are not normally able to take part in professional learning activities, such as home-day care workers, long-day care staff or ECTs and ECEs from remote locations. This could be achieved by using remote technologies, such as zoom, to access VSR and SPSs.

Similarly, the program could be extended to different educational contexts (e.g., primary schools and secondary schools) and across organisations including universities, health and welfare organisations. By combining DBR, Practice Architectures and VSR approaches to professional learning in any of these contexts it would be possible to include the key aspects of content specificity, a focus on knowledge and practice, joint participation and collaboration within and between contexts, active learning, and appropriate intensity and duration (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

9.7 Concluding Comments

During this study one method of onsite, collaborative teacher professional learning was explored, VSR and participant reflexivity. By using Easterday’s (2014) six phase model of DBR it was possible gain an overall impression of the processes involved in developing a collaborative, site-based program from its earliest stages. Practice Architectures provided an approach through which actions at each phase could be analysed from three different perspectives, discursive, material and social. Through analytical reduction different aspects of the accumulated data were used to evaluate various aspects of the project and the specific research questions (Berkowitz, 1997). This process was facilitated by Nicolini’s (2017) zooming-in and zooming-out techniques which ensured that not only were the analytically separated actions of sayings, doings and relatings represented but also
the intertwined nature of the strands within each action, the actions themselves and their associated arrangements, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political, (Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. 2014). In this way a deeper, richer picture of the complex social practice of teacher professional learning was painted. As a result of this professional learning program, ECTs instigated new ways of teaching narrative discourse in their preschools and planned to extend these to become a regular, ongoing part of their curricula.

The implementation of the professional learning program with the ECTs not only provided them with an opportunity to enhance their teaching practices, it also reiterated to me the significance of site-based collaborative professional learning, particularly for teachers who traditionally work in very isolated conditions. The DBR approach enabled me to reflect on key features of both the professional learning process and the research designs used. Similarly, over the course of the research, relevant literature was reflected upon, used to support ECT and child learning, and later enabled my interpretation and analysis of the data. As the ECTs implemented their chosen teaching strategies I was able to observe the value of developing children’s narrative discourse skills as an essential part of oral language but also as a method for fostering SST (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). By taking part in this study my appreciation of the complexities involved when implementing professional learning programs has increased but it has also demonstrated how rewarding the process can be.

The study, therefore, contributed to two areas of knowledge, research design and practice, and teacher professional learning. Initially, understandings that were developed about the professional learning program will be shared with the ECT participants, the KMG and DET. Later, it is anticipated, they will be made available to the wider community through journal publications. New knowledge about research design and practice will similarly be shared with the wider community. It is hoped that the combined processes of Practice Architectures, DBR and VSR will be further explored in professional learning programs adding validity to the current study and ultimately leading to more generalised use.
References


https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1129983


Faulkner, J., Kirkby, J., Manley, D. & Perrin, J. (2014). Once there was…: Expanding literacies of storytelling in the early years. He kupu: The word. 3(5), 68–79. Retrieved from https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/article/once-there-was-expanding-literacies-storytelling-early-years

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2007.03.001


https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(91)90040-V


250


260


262


Appendices

Appendix 1: Outline of Halliday’s Seven Functions of Language
Adapted from Chang and Cress (2014), Halliday (1973), Thomas and Rhinehart (1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Used to meet needs and wants</td>
<td>I need … I want…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory</td>
<td>To control behaviour</td>
<td>You do this…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>Forming of relationships/ interacting with others</td>
<td>Using individuals’ names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Assertion of individual’s beliefs or feelings</td>
<td>I like … I don’t like…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic</td>
<td>Questioning and investigating</td>
<td>Who, what, where why, how…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Creative (make-believe)</td>
<td>Stories, rhymes and language play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational or Representational</td>
<td>For communication of knowledge</td>
<td>I have done… I went to…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Halliday (1973)’s continuum defined the seven functions of language listing them according to the order in which they appear in a child’s language repertoire. These functions highlighted the social purpose of language, rather than it’s syntactic and morphological development, and can be used effectively to plan for and assess children’s language learning at a preschool and early primary school level (Chang & Cress, 2014; Fry, Phillips, Lobaugh & Madole, 1996; Thomas & Rhinehart, 1990).
Brown used this metaphorical device, the Original Word Game, to describe the use of linguistic reference in first language learning. One player, the more experienced language user or tutor, will use his/her greater knowledge to name items or make a statement. The other player, the less experienced language user, will then hypothesise about these and attempt to name them. This process is clarified in the figure above, which clearly defines each stage in the game.
Appendix 3: The HighScope Project – A Summary

The HighScope Project (1970–present) had its roots in the earlier Perry Project (1962–67). The Perry Project asked the question “Does quality preschool education have a positive impact on preschool children and the communities that they live in?” Initially a five-year project, it developed into a longitudinal study that followed its participants throughout their lives. It produced startling results:

Results of the Perry Project (HighScope, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Program Group</th>
<th>Non-Program Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrested 5x by age 40</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned $20,000+ by age 40</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated high school</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic achievement at age 14</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework age 15</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ 90+ at age 5</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preschool that the program group attended operated on the principles of active participatory learning and intentional teaching. These principles became the foundation for the HighScope approach used in preschool classroom across the U.S.A. and internationally.

HighScope is also a research institution devoted to the development of: Early Childhood Education, professional development and professional learning, Early Childhood Education evaluation and policies, family and community engagement and support, and racial equity, diversity and inclusion (HighScope, 2020).

Ann S Epstein began working with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation in 1975, publishing many books and papers, and rose to the position of Senior Director of Curriculum Development (childcareexchange.com, 2015).
Appendix 4: Overview of the Oral Language Assessments that Were Used to Inform Teaching Practice within the Build Phase of the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of the different narrative assessments employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can Assess According to</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Based On</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardised Scoring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age range</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument (ENNI)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Mentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling a story from a series of pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fictional narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highpoint Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Sequencing (Leapfrogging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resolution (highpoint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequenced, climax, resolution (classic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing (chronological)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Elicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Personal experiences /narratives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No – narrative samples classified into 1 of 5 levels according to characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate chronological age for style of narrative, from 3.5 years (2 event narratives) to 6 years (classic narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell Me (part of SEA – School Entry Assessment)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fictional narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimed at children of five years and therefore can only be used as a guide to show areas of need (formative) and should not be used for normative comparisons with three and four year-old preschool children. (General scoring states that overall score of 15 or more deemed to be very competent whilst an overall score of 9 or below will need extra support in regard to five year-old children).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Initial Interview Questions (Understand Phase of DBR)

1) *(Background Info)* How long have you been teaching for?
   What are your qualifications?
   *

2) What sort of things have you noticed about children’s oral language?
   *(probable response – technology based)*

3) What do you think are the children’s strengths?

4) Which areas do you feel they are not as advanced in?

5) What areas of oral language do you feel are important?
   *(conversations, narrative discourse and storytelling, imaginative play, language and word play, problem-solving SST)*
   *

6) What are your concerns?

7) How are you addressing these at present?
   *(intentional teaching)*

8) How do you monitor the children’s progress?

9) How do you decide what to teach?
   *

10) What do you feel are your strengths?
    Which areas of oral language do you feel you know more about?
### Appendix 6: Schedule for Videoing and SPS dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preschool Visits To Video Practice</th>
<th>SPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>26.4.18</strong></td>
<td>Louise 10 a.m. (Context S)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leanne 12 noon (Context M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamsin 10 a.m. (Context B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.5.18</strong></td>
<td>Melissa 10 a.m. (Context B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leanne 10 a.m. (Context M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamsin &amp; Gloria 10 a.m. onwards (Context B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.6.18</strong></td>
<td>Gloria 10 a.m. (Context B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melissa 1p.m. (Context B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louise 9 a.m. (Context S)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Blank Prompt Sheet for Use at SPSs

Prompt Sheet for YSR Discussions
Please fill out the sections as you are watching each recording, think about the provider's intention and aims for the children and herself.
Write notes about provider’s use of Language Modelling Strategies, these will act as prompts for your discussion.

**CLASS Language Modelling Strategies (Indicators):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Teacher Actions:</th>
<th>Child responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition &amp; Extension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Parallel Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Story Grammar Units Highlighted:**
Please tick the boxes as the teacher encourages, praises or extends the use of story grammar units. The final box is for you to add any additional notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>character</th>
<th>consequential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem</td>
<td>ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>action</td>
<td>feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional notes:

Suggestions for next time:
Appendix 8: Highpoint Analysis showing a Continuum for Narrative Development

High-Point Analysis (based on McCabe & Rosenthal Rollins 1994):

The Five Developmental Stages of Narrative Discourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Point Analysis Levels</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Achieved at approximate Chronological Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Event Narratives</td>
<td>A maximum of two events even in longest narratives</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leapfrog Narratives</td>
<td>More than two events included but poorly sequenced. Some events may be omitted and some unrelated events included.</td>
<td>4–5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-At-High-Point Narratives</td>
<td>Usually appropriately sequenced, builds to a climax and has a resolution.</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Narratives</td>
<td>Appropriately sequenced, builds to a climax and has a resolution.</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chronological Narratives)</td>
<td>(Underdeveloped story that resembles a list e.g. travel itinerary)</td>
<td>(All ages to adult)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9: Work Programs Showing Planned Teaching of Narrative Discourse

**Week beginning: 28/05/2018**

**Context B (ECT M)**

**Routines:**
- Weekdays are supported by a visual timetable and discussion with children throughout the day. The children are active participants in setting up and maintaining the visual timetable.
  - Lunch: children are seated with a small group of peers. Educators position themselves to encourage conversation. Name cards will sometimes be used to indicate where children are to sit.
  - A five-minute verbal warming and the sound of the drum indicate to the children that it is time to come to the mat.
  - CD story and book for the children who finish their lunch early to listen to.
  - Modification: Monday and Wednesday. The children are learning to calm their bodies and minds. This takes lots of practice.

**Transitions:**
- Consolidation of classification understanding using picture cards.
- Development of number recognition using monster cards.

**Group Times:**

**Morning group session**
- Greeting
- Morning song
- Introduction of the 'Environment Box'

**Midday group session**
- New songs like Dinosaurs, Skinnam饩tes, Mrs Bunny, Going on a Bush Walk Singing in the Rain, Massage song
- 'Every day the 'Tina's' puppet and song
- Hokey Pokey
- Seeking the children's ideas about what they would like to cook so that we can plan cooking experiences on a regular basis (not done previously)
- Emergent / evacuation practice

**Reflection time (end of session)**
- Introduction of 'Book in a Bag' as a follow on from the Mornington Library visit
- Discussion / reflection on the day's learning
- Birthday celebration (when applicable)
- Goodbye song

**Group: Board**

**Goals for children's learning that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based:**

- For children to:
  - Show plans for groups needing support to identify and write their name on their art work to enable it to be found when it is dry.
  - Show plans for groups needing support to identify and write their name on their art work to enable it to be found when it is dry.
  - Show plans for groups needing support to identify and write their name on their art work to enable it to be found when it is dry.

**Manipulative:**
- New range of puzzles; establish expectations of completing a puzzle once started and learning to ask an educator or peer for help if having difficulty.
- Selection of floor puzzles for small group teamwork.

**Construction:**
- 'Build two design cards.'

**Communication and Literacy:**
- Casel painting - continue to help the children to identify and write their name on their art work to enable it to be found when it is dry.
- Drawing / writing space - provision of a variety of paper, pencils, crayons, taste, ruler, stick et al. numbers and letters for the children to choose from. Add children's name cards. Library / reception space - a cozy place for nurturing relationships and / or having some 'down' time as stories are shared together; indoors and outdoors.
- Collage - choice of materials from the trolley, glue and scissors; boxes and sticky tape; modelling and teaching the children to tidy up their space when finished by returning unused materials to the trolley; silhouette skill development; teaching about marking tape being a stronger tape for connecting boxes and how to do this correctly and safely.

**Discipline / management:**
- 'Avoidance and play with teacher' to play, talk with book story, etc.
- 'The book is a gift and the way we use the book is good to use. We can talk about the book and how we can use it to help us understand the story. We can talk about what we like in the book and how we can use it to help us understand the story.'

**Dance studio:**
- Children to assist in decision making about what could be included.
Swing and monkey bar swing – children to practice using legs to push themselves/ some children wanting to get themselves up or hang upside down on the bar.

Trolleys and large blocks – turn taking, sharing.

Cognitive:
- Various construction sets available to choose from
- Puzzles – various encourage children to complete a puzzle or ask a friend or adult for help – Adult helped needed at this table
- Board games – stopping trolley game/mouse game
- Book corner – sofa, cushions with a variety of books a cozy place for establishing relationships and getting to know one another as stories are shared

Health and Wellbeing:
- Discussions about every day and sometimes foods – choosing fruit first over chips and sweet things and why we should be choosing these first.
- Begin regular cooking on a Thursday, children to help decide what to cook
- Calm area – timer and felt puppets

Science and Nature
- Clearing veggie garden ready for new planting – as a group deciding what we should grow next – Callum Chloe’s Dad coming in to help and offer advice – ongoing from last term
- Ongoing discussions about composting and recycling – Empty the compost into the veggie garden as it is full and start again.

Literacy
- Name recognition – continued with name cards, have in bucket at craft table for children to copy their friends names
- Story baskets – books with props – adult role modelling of language, asking questions, encouraging children to have ago themselves

Maths
- Measuring children’s heights – display on wall
- Duplo blocks
- Cooking – measuring, weighing, dividing food so that there is enough for everyone

Relationships:
- Meet and greet children and families at the start and end of each session
- Welcome back Jenny
- Monday 16th April – Sue away on leave for the whole week, Sophie, Lisa and Susie to cover sessions
- Monday 30th April – Leigh Away to attend the 2nd “let’s count” PD, Rebecca Ackerman to cover the session
- Thursday 10th May – Mother’s Day afternoon tea
- Monday 14th May – Mornington Library Session 10:30am
- Thursday 17th May – Dr Jeremy Gale (Harrys Dad)

Routines:
Becoming familiar with the routines which provide structure and a sense of security and predictability for the children. They are supported in learning these by their educators and before long, their peers!
- Drink bottles on trolley and available to children at all times
- Breakfast available until 9:45am
- Progressive snack and lunch all together
- Washing hands before breakfast, snack and lunch
- 3yrs olds arrive 10:15am
- Indoor/outdoor program working as a team to pack away
- Applying sunscreen before outdoor play (until end of April) wearing hats outdoors
- Visual timetable and group time expectations; legs crossed, look, listen, quiet, hands up to speak
- At the end of the session remaining on the mat until their names are called at the end
- Introducing our daily helps chart

/int/goals/projects from the past and going into the future...
Forward from a range of sources – observations, families, meetings, community, conversations, events...
Goals for Wed 21/3/2018 Specific: Measurable Achievable Relevant Time based:

For the children to:

(On-going)
- Develop an understanding of ways of disposing of items we no longer require – ie recycling, reusing, rubbish
- Continue to learn and understand the concept of a lifecycle, and how all living things have life cycles
- Continue to use and develop strategies associated with dealing with challenging situations eg saying Stop and using associated hand signals, moving away, playing with someone else etc. Also introduce ‘Restorative Justice’
- Use a tripod grip when using writing implements, and also practise using scissors
- To recognise their own names
- Begin to make connections with the elders at Bentsons Lodge and also to use the opportunity of the walk there to understand road safety concepts – holding hands, being aware of looking both ways at roads etc
- Use simple opportunities to understand making and developing patterns
- Participate in smaller group activities
- To understand changing in weather related to Autumn
- Understand families – their different dynamics, what constitutes a family, who is in each child’s own family
- Take a lead role in the kindergarten environment through Book in a Bag Family Pages Helper

(News)
- Begin practising writing own names
- Begin using props to tell stories
- Participate in individual maths assessments

We will support these goals through:

Consider strategies, equipment, suggested language, intentional teaching, indoor and outdoor and other pedagogical practices

- Language play
  - Home corner - playdough and kitchen
  - Blocks area: a range of other materials for use with the blocks - wooden people, animals etc
  - Drawing: Who is in my family
  - Puzzles - introduce floor puzzles
  - Library / reading space: reinforce expectations of books to be treated with respect
  - Sandpit - natural materials to be available
  - Dirt patch - kitchen and cooking utensils
  - Swings - use Room 2 playground exclusively when butterflies are at bush kinder
  - Trikes - introduction of longer and more varied bike track
  - Partnering - to be included in all aspects of play whenever possible
  - Role play and discussions about use of Stop and the expectation that others will listen (see notes in group time section)
  - Small box game table to always be available – snakes pace race, shopping list etc to lead to children making their own choices
  - Science – children to have choice of cutting on a straight, zig-zag or wavy line. Cut, colour and paste back together on black paper
  - Name cards available for copying at drawing table
  - Laminated name pages with whiteboard markers for children to attempt writing their own names
  - Name and photo cards to be put on ‘Who is here today’ board
  - Individual drawing books with child’s name and photo on front
  - Family food to be available for all children to look at and to encourage others to return their pages

- Use of prompts to tell stories in adult led activities. Story mat and story stones to be used with small groups and individual children to use picture prompts to tell own story. Educator to use leading questions and choice of ideas to support children’s understanding
- Use of costumes to re-enact and role out familiar stories
- Line making stones
- Light box on the table with changing materials
- Indoor sand tray

Group times:
- Continue with ‘Helper’ system to children
- Use patterns as a way to seat children on the mat – eg give each child a coloured bead – make a pattern using the beads
- Week 6 – in large groups - discussion and role play about Being a good listener, Stop – I don’t like... (refer to strong voice), and Restorative Justice (ideas – say sorry, go away, stay with me but stop doing,)
- Book in a Bag
- Relaxation – introduce deep breathing using fingers and hand visuals

Planned small groups to be run concurrently with either half or third group:

Use children and staff photos on boards to identify who will be in each group as they rotate

Week 5 – Story stones & Story mat

Week 6 & 7 – Read and act out stories – Caps For Sale, Three Billy Goats Gruff and Goldilocks

Week 7 & 8 – Reinforce discussions and do smaller role plays about listening, saying Stop and restorative justice
Goals for children’s learning that are Specific, Measurable Achievable Relevant Time based:

- For the children to follow through activities that involve planning steps before they can achieve their goals.
- For the children to help each other in areas they recognise as strengths.
- For the children to discuss what is ‘kindness’ and how can we make our interactions (even those challenging ones) happen with kindness.
- For the children to work in small groups towards a common goal each session.
- For the children to create their own stories – characters, story lines and details.
- For the children to take home learning from Kinder and share with their families.
- For the children to further learn about hours and minutes in the day following their “What’s the Time Mr. Wolf?” games.

We will support these goals through:

Consider strategies, equipment, suggested language, intentional teaching, indoor and outdoor and other pedagogical practices

Planning – planned activities that require children to reflect upon their knowledge and intentions, using this to plan how they will approach the experience – making cubbies, box constructions, action-races, mask making, puppet craft.

Discussions about strengths – Using our ‘experts’ circle’ discussion with the children around what they can do without any assistance has started the conversation about what each child feels are their areas of strength, as well as those areas they can achieve success when given a little bit of support. We will follow this by children offering help in areas they are feeling confident in via pictures on the walls in key areas of play – puzzles, books, craft, blocks, construction.

‘Have you filled a bucket today?’ – We will introduce this book after a conversation about what words the children think of when we ask them to be ‘kind’. Then we will encourage them to fill their buckets, and those of others each day at Kinder. We will also share this ‘bucket-filling’ idea with parents.

April Parent Info Session – ‘Emotional regulation’ – We will talk about what to do when your child has emotional outbursts, how do we help them remain calm at Kinder, why do children act in such a way? We will share our ‘Bucket-filling’ concept with families to follow on with at home.

Group collaborations – Each session we will have an activity (or maybe even a few) designed at collaboration of ideas and interests. So far we have planned the following – group art works, tower building using cardboard boxes, bridge-making, cubby building, treasure hunts, story circles to create stories.

Creating our own stories – Using our story pebbles mat to create stories with a beginning, middle and end, and encouraging the children to create details in their stories with questioning from adults – ‘what was their name?’, ‘what happened next?’ ‘Why did they do that?’ ‘How did they feel when that happened?’ ‘What might they do next time?’

Home & Kinder links being strengthened – Holiday activities being sent home at the end of Term 1 has been the start of these types of activities, and the feedback has been really positive from parents that they can see how their children are learning at Kinder and enjoy being involved in this way. We will continue to send home activities for families to do together – science experiments, collecting information and resources to be used in the Kinder program, follow up discussions after particular stories, etc.

Learning about the time – Having clock faces included in our visual schedules at specific times when activities occur, clock faces used in story telling from Lauren at group times, looking at the clock after transitions to see if it is the same or different from our predicted times, stories with times of the day, discussions about the day having 24 hours, an hour having 60 minutes, a minute having 60 seconds. Using the timers and a stop watch to demonstrate this.

Indigenous Education – Everyday conversations about caring for Country, and teaching. We will also introduce other dreamtime stories into the program for the children to hear, re-enact, reflect upon the messages in these stories, and further learn about culture.

Mother’s Day celebration – We will be asking the Mums if they would prefer a day or night-time event with their children at Kinder. This will be an opportunity for the children to reflect upon how special their Mum is and think about how they would like to spoil her for Mother’s Day.
Goals for children's learning that are Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time based:

For the children to:

ONGOING:
- Learn to appreciate that being part of a group can mean having to wait for a turn to use equipment, at an experience, or to contribute at group time.
- Demonstrate an increasing understanding of the role worms play in a sustainable world and participate in caring for them, i.e., feeding them our food scraps at the end of each session and harvesting the worm for use as a liquid fertilizer.
- Practice various gross motor skills such as balancing on one leg, climbing over a frame, walking along a raised board and jumping off, walking upstairs using alternating legs, throwing, catching and kicking a ball.
- Hold a pair of scissors correctly to snip and then to cut along a straight line, progressing to cutting a picture from a magazine.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, history, and culture.
- Work on skills to complete an 8-12 piece puzzle, working with a more experienced peer or teacher when needed.
- For the children to begin to see themselves as learners and in control of their learning.
- For the children to communicate verbally during small and large group discussions.
- To further develop pencil grip and control enabling the children to draw recognisable pictures.
- Understand that we all have the right to play with many different people.
- Further develop name writing skills.

NEW:
- Learn to resolve problems and conflict with peers verbally.
- Further developing their understanding of number 1-20, including counting 1:1, recognising in print and simple addition and subtraction.
- Understand and use 'medium' in relation to describing and comparing the size of things.
- Recognise and use the names of the following shapes in their play: square, rectangle, triangle, crescent, diamond and hexagon.
- Follow on from a two part pattern and/or create their own.
- Develop understanding of guns in our culture both in modern day and historically.
- For the children to plan our bush Tucker garden at our nature site.

We will support these goals through:

Consider strategies, equipment, suggested language, intentional teaching, indoor and outdoor and other pedagogical practice

Manipulative:
- New range of puzzles; establish expectation of completing a puzzle once started and learning to ask an educator or peer for help if having difficulty.
- Selection of floor puzzles for small group team work.

Construction:
- 'Kid Kine' and design cards. *build a picture

Communication and Literacy
- Easel Painting: continue to help the children to identify and write their name on their art work to enable to be found when it is dry.
- Drawing/writing space: provision of a variety of paper, pencils, crayons, textas, rulers, sticker letters and numbers for the children to choose from. Add children's name cards.
- Leaf man picture creation by leaves collected from nature site or the preschool garden encourage children to create a picture using the leaves 21/6/2018)
- Library reading space: a cozy place for nurturing relationships and/or having some 'down' time as stories are shared together, indoors and outdoors.
- Collage: choice of materials from the trolley, glue and scissors; boxes and sticky tape; modelling and teaching the children to tidy up their space when finished. Reusing disused materials to the trolley, scissors skill development; teaching about masking tape being a stronger tape for connecting boxes and how to do this successfully, teaching how to use a tape dispenser.
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears imaginative play space with book; story recite. 21/6 change to eASY Goals Craft

Dramatic / Imaginative Play
- Dance studio: children to assist in decision making about what could be included. 21/6 change to large puzzles

Numeracy
- Maths knowledge data collection, collecting information about the children's knowledge and understanding of counting, patterns, colour and shape, positions!

Routines:
Routines are supported by use of a visual timetable and discussion with children throughout the day. The children are active participants in setting up and maintaining the visual timetable.
- Lunch: children are seated with a small group of peers. Educators position themselves to encourage conversation. Name cards will sometimes be used to indicate where children are to sit.
- A five minute verbal warning and the sound of the drum indicate to the children that it is time to come to the mat.
- CD story and book for the children who finish their lunch early to listen to.
- Meditation: Monday and Wednesday. The children are learning to calm their bodies and minds. This takes lots of practice!

Transitions:
- Consolidation of classification understanding using picture cards.
- Development of number recognition using monster cards.

Group Times:
Morning group session
- Greeting
- Morning song
- Introduction of the 'Environment Box'

Midday group session
- New songs: Drum rap, Freeze, Do Do Do, Highway number one, Going on a Bush Walk, Singing in the Rain.
- To for tiffs
- Hokey Pokey
- Seeing the children's ideas about what they would like to cook so that we can plan cooking experiences on a regular basis (not done previously)
- Emergency evacuation practice

Reflection time (end of session)
- Introduction of 'Book in a Bag' as a follow on from the Mornington Library visit
- Discussion / reflection on the day's learning
- Birthday celebration (when applicable)
- Good bye song
Appendix 10: Concluding Interview Questions (Test Phase of DBR)

Practice Architectures

1) During our first interview you talked about the importance of:

(Gloria) *conversation skills and understanding instructions*

(Melanie) *conversation skills- deepening and extending, storytelling and vocabulary development.*

(Tamsin) *deeper conversations SST*

(Leanne) *ALL good communication, articulation, getting their speech out*

(Louise) *physical production of speech, retelling stories, emotional language*

…as part of oral language development. What are your feelings about the role of storytelling (narrative discourse/oral narratives) in connection with these skills and oral language overall since taking part in this project?

How do you feel storytelling can support these skills?

Sayings: (Class Language Modelling [Pianta et al., 2008, 2009] & Story Grammar)

2) I would like you to cast your mind back to earlier in the year when I came in and gave you feedback on the children’s language assessments – one of the main areas of assessment was the children’s use of story grammar elements. Can you explain to me how you used this and ongoing information to inform your teaching?

3) When we have been discussing the video clips we have been using various prompts to help us focus on the language development process and the development of children’s narratives. Please explain how this has helped you understand the processes taking place?

How do you feel the CLASS language modelling prompts informed the discussion and strengthened your understanding of processes?

We highlighted the story grammar units during our discussions in what ways was this useful to your thinking during the discussion itself and later in your classroom practice?

Doings:

4) During our VSR meetings we have been watching clips of practice, in what ways do you feel that this process has been helpful to you?
How has the viewing of video clips informed your teaching practice?

Which specific areas of the video clips have been most useful to you?

Relatings: (collegiate support)

5) During our discussions everybody was encouraged to participate as both a provider of video clips and as viewer, acting as a critical friend. What aspects of this collaborative process did you find most useful?

As a group we brought different levels and types of experiences to our discussions. How do you think this impacted on the process itself?

After hearing these different perspectives on the/your teaching activities, were you able to make positive changes to your practice and what were they?
Appendix 11: Tell Me Record Sheet for *Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative Reading</th>
<th>COMPREHENSION</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question One</strong></td>
<td>How did Bernard's tooth come out? e.g. by toothbrush; brushing loose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question Two</strong></td>
<td>How was Kane going to get the tooth out? e.g. with string; the door pulling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question Three</strong></td>
<td>Why did Bernard say “stop” to everyone? e.g. too rough; not nice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retelling</th>
<th>SENTENCE STRUCTURE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 2</td>
<td>Bernard O'Brien had a very wiggly tooth. He twirled it this way, he twirled it that way – but it wouldn't come out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 4</td>
<td>&quot;Let me try,&quot; said Mum, taking out her tweezers. She pulled the tooth this way, she pulled the tooth that way. &quot;It's no good,&quot; she said. &quot;It won't come out.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOCABULARY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 6</td>
<td>&quot;There's only one way to pull out a wiggly tooth,&quot; said Bernard's big brother, Kane. &quot;Use a string.&quot; He tied one end of the string to the tooth. He tied the other end to the door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 7</td>
<td>&quot;I'll make it come out,&quot; said Dad, grabbing Bernard and holding him up by his feet. He shook him this way, he shook him that way – but the tooth wouldn't come out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 8</td>
<td>&quot;Now I'll close the door. Ready?&quot; he asked. &quot;One... Two... Three...&quot; &quot;Stop!&quot; said Bernard, taking off the string. &quot;You're all too rough with my wiggly tooth! My wiggly tooth can stay right where it is!&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Page 10   | But that right, when Bernard went to brush his teeth... He brushed them this way, he brushed them that way – and suddenly, the wiggly tooth fell out – plop! – into the basin. |       |
| Page 11   | "Yay!" shouted Bernard. "Everyone come and look! That's the way to get out a wiggly tooth!" |       |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLOBAL JUDGEMENTS</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes: unlinked picture by picture or page by page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plain: labelling, or retold page by page or picture by picture with repetition of linkage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed: detailed, explicit storyline and sense of climax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION / EXPRESSION</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes: unlinked picture by picture or page by page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plain: labelling, or retold page by page or picture by picture with repetition of linkage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed: detailed, explicit storyline and sense of climax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notes: unlinked picture by picture or page by page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plain: labelling, or retold page by page or picture by picture with repetition of linkage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed: detailed, explicit storyline and sense of climax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 12: Example of Summary of Observational Assessment Results

Summary of Observational Assessment Results

A total of eight children took part in these narrative discourse observational assessments although not all the children participated in all of them. Their ages ranged from 3;09 to 4;11 years of age when these observations took place.

There were four observational assessments: a story book narrative retell - Bernard O’Brian's Tooth a Personal Narrative, two ENNI (Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument) narratives – the practice story (a visit to a supermarket) and Story 1A (at the pool).

These were analysed in a variety of ways, according to: story grammar units, the High-Point Analysis, ENNI First Mentions and in the case of Bernard O’Brian’s Tooth (Retell) according to the Tell Me Records Scoring System. A micro-analysis using the SALT software analysis system also took place; data from this has been used to show children’s narrative fluency (ability to speak without long pauses, errors etc. for growing periods of time with high levels of intelligibility). Further information on Story Grammar, High-Point, Tell Me Records System and First Mentions is available at the end of the report.

Story Grammar Units

Characters
In all text types the children referred to characters but had a tendency to only use pronouns (these were not always attributed correctly). Noun labels were used occasionally but speakers were not consistent in their use of these across the text types. Similarly, the different speakers did not all use or miss the same noun labels.

Setting
The children were more likely to include the settings in their Personal Narratives and in the ENNI Practice Story where the setting (a supermarket) would have been extremely familiar to them. In the ENNI 1A story only one child mentioned the setting (a swimming pool) and this was at a very late stage of the story whilst in the Retell no children mentioned the setting.

Problem
In the Personal Narrative all children mentioned the problem, in the Retell nearly all the children mentioned the problem, in the ENNI Practice Story less than half the children identified the problem whilst in ENNI 1A more than half identified the problem.

Actions
The children showed an awareness of actions in all the stories although these did not always relate to the problem (Personal Narrative and ENNI 1A) whilst in the Retell no one mentioned all the actions.

Consequences and Endings
In the ENNI Practice Story most children included the consequence but did not add an ending whilst in ENNI 1A only about half included a consequence or ending. In the Retell all but one child retold the consequence of the action, but no one added an ending. In the Personal Narrative not all children included consequences and only one included an ending.

Feelings
Characters feelings were only mentioned in the ENNI practice story in which most children mentioned that the shopkeeper (not always labeled as such) was angry at the end.

High-Point Analysis
In the personal narrative most children produced narratives that fell into the Leapfrog bracket (one was slightly weaker producing a two-event narrative). In both ENNI narratives children produced a combination of Leapfrog and End-at-High-Point oral texts whilst in the Retell they all produced End-at-High-Point oral texts. This shows the children produced fuller narratives when they had extra scaffolding through pictures or pictures and adult reading.
First Mentions
When first referring to a character in any of their oral texts (personal narratives were not analysed in this way) the children very rarely referred to the characters by a noun label and usually used pronouns. Only in ENNI 1A and the Retell children were noun labels used at first mention and this was very inconsistent.

Tell Me Records (see Additional info that follows – appropriate skills levels have been highlighted)
Children produced narratives that fell into the basic or plain categories in all areas (sentence structure, vocabulary, organisation, description/expression and content).
The children were showing a higher level of skills in the area of simple sentence formation and the basic retelling of content.

Micro-Analysis
The micro-analysis of the narrative samples showed that the children's oral texts were generally quite short. The following table shows the average duration of three of the texts produced at the kinder and compares it to those in the SALT AUS/NZ data base (Personal Narrative only):

Micro-Analysis showing narrative fluency, averages have been calculated using the median average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency Measures</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>ENNI Practice</th>
<th>ENNI 1A</th>
<th>Retell</th>
<th>SALT DATABASE: 6 examples averages not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of narrative sample</td>
<td>1m 48 s</td>
<td>1m 27 s</td>
<td>1 m 46 s</td>
<td>1 m 48 s</td>
<td>Min: 1m 43s Max: 5m 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words spoken by child</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Min: 83 Max: 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of words per minute spoken by child</td>
<td>42.76</td>
<td>56.75</td>
<td>42.26</td>
<td>47.47</td>
<td>Min: 47.27 Max: 135.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligibility (utterances)</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>78.49%</td>
<td>84.44%</td>
<td>Min: 83.64% Max: 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>13.39%</td>
<td>25.54%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>Min: 5.08% Max: 26.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>Max: 3.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazes (repetitions etc.)</td>
<td>14.36%</td>
<td>15.62%</td>
<td>15.50%</td>
<td>5.51%</td>
<td>Min: 17.39% Max: 28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps
The results of these assessments/observations show that the children are beginning to create short oral texts and these can be equated to their chronological age in most cases according to the Highpoint analysis. These texts are generally quite short and when they are looked at more closely through a story grammar analysis, areas for development can be observed. The children are beginning to include some of story grammar units but they are not using them consistently and so it is important that they are able to practice their narrative skills regularly and be encouraged to:

- Refer to characters by a noun label especially at first mention;
- Provide a setting for the story near the beginning of their narrative;
- Include the problem, action and consequence;
- Add the characters feelings and an ending to the story.

The intentional teaching of these skills and practice of them will help to develop the children’s ability to create narrative texts, improve their fluency and enable them to create longer texts. This practice should also lead to increased periods of sustained shared thinking between peers and between adults and children.
Additional Information about Assessments:

Story grammar units are: characters, setting, problem, action, consequence, ending, feelings.

High-Point Analysis (based on McCabe and Rosenthal 1994):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Point Analysis Levels</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Achieved at approximate Chronological Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Event Narratives</td>
<td>A maximum of two events even in longest narratives</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leap Frog Narratives</td>
<td>More than two events included but poorly sequenced. Some events may be omitted and some unrelated events included.</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-At-High-Point Narratives</td>
<td>Usually appropriately sequenced, builds to a climax and has a resolution.</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Narratives</td>
<td>Appropriately sequenced, builds to a climax and has a resolution.</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chronological Narratives)</td>
<td>(Underdeveloped story that resembles a list e.g. travel itinerary)</td>
<td>(All ages to adult)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell me Records system:
Retelling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description/Expression</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>No words</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Unconnected</td>
<td>Labels = nouns, pronouns, verbs</td>
<td>Unlinked picture by picture</td>
<td>Limited description of events or characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>Short simple</td>
<td>Some descriptive words</td>
<td>Retold picture by picture with repetition of linkages</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place described. Some expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Sentences have several ideas, clearly related clauses &amp; phrases</td>
<td>Wide range of description and mood setting</td>
<td>Detailed explicit story line and sense of climax.</td>
<td>Events, characters, time, place, reason explained with expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Mentions:
First mentions refers to the first time a character is mentioned in a narrative and considers the adequacy of this reference, e.g. using a pronoun the first time a character is mentioned would not give sufficient meaning to a listener. If two characters are together they should be introduced separately rather than as a pair, e.g. the giraffe and the elephant not the two animals to give additional understanding.
Appendix 13: Researcher/Facilitator Role in SPS

**Researcher Role During VSR**

Bold Text are examples taken from the role of facilitators in Fleet & Patterson (2009), Sheridan, Pope Edwards, Marvin & Knoche (2014) and Thornton & Cherrington (2014)

*Italic text denotes possible question starters.*

Black text denotes strategies that might be used to fulfill a role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Ask questions and encourage reflection</th>
<th>Use open ended questioning: (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you think that could be achieved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which language modelling strategies could have been used to...?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could (teacher) advance (child’s) learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When do you think...?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be a good next step?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did (teacher) achieve her aims?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other strategies could be used to...?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2) Connect and build ideas</th>
<th>Which strategies do you think could be best used to encourage children to include ... in their stories?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Teacher) suggested that ... could that work in your setting – how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3) Scaffold experiences</th>
<th>Could (teacher) have introduced...?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How could she have done this...?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...worked really well which strategies could move learning on?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are starting to include ... in their stories what do you think would be the next step?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4) Keep participants on task</th>
<th>Provide a short time at the beginning of the meeting to enable social chat/ catch up time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the beginning of the meeting have an agenda with timings – use a timing device and give warnings when a discussion period is about to elapse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include one or more short breaks to allow refocusing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close meeting room door.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage as much active participation as possible – splitting the group in half should help with this (one or two people to act as a critical friend and one to present).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 5) Non-judgemental listening | Display active listening skills: eye contact, smile, posture, mirroring, remembering, paraphrase to show understanding, brief verbal affirmations. |

| 6) Provide resources | This would be dependent on needs of participants – some resources have already been provided, at meeting any requirements will be noted and distributed in a timely manner. |

| 7) Knowledge sharer | Involves points 1, 2 and 3. |

| 8) People supporter | Involves points 5 and 3. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9) Provide history? (supporting literature or history of learning relating to CoP?)</th>
<th>Provision of supporting literature on previous research.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History of learning within the CoP would be more relevant if one of the kinder teacher’s was taking on the role of facilitator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14: Prompt Sheets completed by Tamsin in SPS 1 and 2

SPS1 – Tamsin

### Prompt Sheet for VSR Discussions

Please fill out the sections as you are watching each recording, think about the provider’s intention and aims for the children and herself. Write notes about provider’s use of Language Modelling Strategies, these will act as prompts for your discussion.

#### CLASS Language Modelling Strategies (Indicators):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Teacher Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Questions</td>
<td>listed open ended questions to encourage ma child to make stories from one picture to the next or tell a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition &amp; Extension</td>
<td>role play happens and repeated to encourage the child to retell what happened first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Parallel Talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Story Grammar Units Highlighted:

Please tick the boxes as the teacher encourages, praises or extends the use of story grammar units. The final box is for you to add any additional notes:

- **Character**
  - Beach
- **Setting**
  - Dog, cat, and a dog fighting
- **Problem**
  - Cat & dog fighting
- **Action**
  - Went to the doctor

Additional notes:

Suggestions for next time:
Prompt Sheet for VSR Discussions

Please fill out the sections as you are watching each recording, think about the provider’s intention and aims for the children and herself.

Write notes about provider’s use of Language Modelling Strategies, these will act as prompts for your discussion.

**CLASS Language Modelling Strategies (Indicators):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Teacher Actions</th>
<th>Child responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Tactfully probe with the child her thoughts. Ask questions to encourage fluent conversation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Ask what the child can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>Repeate phrases, derive ideas, rep. to remind child what had been written.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Parallel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Self &amp; parallel talk when lying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help with story telling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amazing/interesting, Last ending.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Story Grammar Units Highlighted:**

Please tick the boxes as the teacher encourages, praises or extends the use of story grammar units. The final box is for you to add any additional notes:

- **Character:**
  - [ ]

- **Setting:**
  - Home:
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]

- **Problem:**
  - [ ]
  - [ ]

- **Action:**
  - Walking:
  - [ ]
  - Eating:
  - [ ]

**Additional notes:**

**Suggestions for next time:**

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Appendix 15: Prompt Sheets Completed by Leanne in SPS 1 and 2

SPS1-Leanne

Prompt Sheet for VSR Discussions

Please fill out the sections as you are watching each recording, think about the provider’s intention and aims for the children and herself. Write notes about provider’s use of Language Modelling Strategies, these will act as prompts for your discussion.

**CLASS Language Modelling Strategies (Indicators):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Teacher Actions</th>
<th>Child responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Questions</td>
<td>lots of leading &amp; open ended questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition &amp; Extension</td>
<td>repeating what child has said</td>
<td>repeating questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Parallel Talk</td>
<td>repeating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Story Grammar Units Highlighted:**

Please tick the boxes as the teacher encourages, praises or extends the use of story grammar units. The final box is for you to add any additional notes:

- [ ] character
- [ ] setting
- [ ] problem
- [ ] action
- [ ] consequence
- [ ] ending
- [ ] feeling

Additional notes:

Suggestions for next time:
Prompt Sheet for VSR Discussions

Please fill out the sections as you are watching each recording, think about the provider’s intention and aims for the children and herself.

Write notes about provider’s use of Language Modelling Strategies, these will act as prompts for your discussion.

CLASS Language Modelling Strategies (Indicators):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Teacher Actions:</th>
<th>Child responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Conversation</td>
<td>Suggestion. Once upon a time</td>
<td>Some can get hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why is the bishop eating?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wondered what you were thinking</td>
<td>Who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>what, why, who</td>
<td>What do you think you would say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Ended Questions</td>
<td>Sian colour, round apple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition &amp; Extension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; Parallel Talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Language</td>
<td>Can you notice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movie, purple colour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Story Grammar Units Highlighted:

Please tick the boxes as the teacher encourages, praises or extends the use of story grammar units. The final box is for you to add any additional notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>character</th>
<th>consequence/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>setting</td>
<td>ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem</td>
<td>feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional notes:

Suggestions for next time:
Appendix 16: Child LT’s Story Created from Spin a Yarn Story Tiles

It was morning time and the sun was up and so was the moon. The tree was flying with leaf wings on the Moon. The people woke up and were trying to get some kangaroo meat, they were hunting. The kangaroo and the koala where hiding behind the grass. The hunters knock down the grass and used a doom to kill the kangaroo.

Two people run looking for all the animals that they could find. They found all the animals that they could find. They found all the animal behind the bush. They sliced off all the fur off the animals. Then they used fire to cook all the animals. The butterflies were strong and they took the animals away.

Appendix 17: Child H’s Story Created from Spin a Yarn Story Tiles

The possum is getting leaves and throwing it. He threw the leaves at the people. The possum ran away. He went to my house. They possum jumped in the door and ran into bed up the stairs. He went under the blanket and then threw it at the possum. The possum threw the blanket at bed and there was a wizard under it. The wizard was eating my food, apples. The mouse was drinking water from my drink bottle. The mouse says “the possum has gone away”. I ran upstairs and saw the mouse staring at the possum. I jumped and ran downstairs was there and me go up there, got the mouse and threw it at the road, a car drove over it. The possum ran away.

The end

Key:

**Bold Text** Practices present in educational complexes/ecologies of practices

*Italic Text* Practices specific to this research’s practice sites

The reciprocal flow of knowledge, understanding, influences etc. through ecologies of practices.

**Educational Leadership/Admin. (Leading)**
Role of KMG in facilitating professional learning opportunities and practice within preschools.

**Educational Research**
PhD project considering how to enhance ECTs practice and children’s learning – taking place at preschool sites and meeting room for SPSs.

**Student Learning**
Pre-schoolers development of oral narratives.

**Teacher’s Classroom/Educational Practice**
ECTs teaching, narrative discourse to children, video clips of practice used in professional learning.

**Professional Learning**
Practices at SPS meeting room and preschools were part of ECT professional learning & linked to PhD research.
Appendix 19: Child D’s iPad story

Once upon a time there was a girl picking the apples so she can get fruit.

The little squirrel was looking at the rainbow.

The girl was out at the sunset and the squirrel climbed up the tree.

The girl was in her bedroom and the squirrel still followed her. He was outside climbing on the tree.
The girl was out walking on the footpath to the gardens.

The girl was walking up the steps, the squirrel didn’t follow her.
Appendix 20: Child LG’s story with Gloria

After reminding LG to look at the pictures and think, Gloria and LG worked together to create a longer fuller narrative demonstrating SST (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Gloria had appropriated knowledge from SPSs, internalized it and applied it in her own preschool (Rogoff, 1995).

Gloria: So, who’s in the story?

Child LG: Me.

Gloria: Ah. So, one day what did you do? Did you go somewhere?

Child LG: Went to the popcorn place.

Gloria: Oh okay. What did you do at the popcorn place I wonder?

Child LG: Get popcorn.

Gloria: Did you eat the popcorn, or did you take it somewhere? What did you do?

Child LG: Take it to a party.

Gloria: Who’s party?

Child LG: Child P’s

Gloria: Oh, Child P’s party. So, you’ve got the popcorn from the popcorn shop and you’ve taken it to Felix’s party. What happened there?

Child LG: I told Child P, I told Child P to hop inside my car with me.

Gloria: Oh, where did you drive to?

Child LG: To the pet store.

Gloria: Oh, the pet store. What happened at the pet store?

Child LG: We bought a cat and a dog and a birdie.

Gloria: Great. Did you give them names?
Child LG: Yep. So, the birdie was named Bingo, cat named Cece and a dog named BeBe.

Gloria: Ah nice. And then what happened?

Child LG: We went to the party again and ate cupcakes … Found a ball in the garden and played with it.

Gloria: Right, uh huh. And is this still you and P doing this?

Child LG: Yes. We went to the park and played on two swings.

Gloria: Oh nice, that sounds like fun.

Child LG: I went on one and Child P went on the other.

Gloria: Right

Child LG: We went shopping … and we ate a hotdog. We went home and got very tired and went to bed. The end.