Caterpillars and catalysts:
A longitudinal case study of writing development in an early years classroom privileging dramatic pedagogies

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact on children’s development in a preparatory school classroom, when dramatic pedagogies were privileged in the teaching of writing. Using a qualitative case study approach, which included a selection of five illustrative cases, children’s progress from role-play to phonetic users of the alphabet was examined. Data included the artefacts produced by the children, reading records, a journal of the year, and the transcripts of videos made of teaching sessions. A self-study of the researcher as an emerging drama teacher was included in the multi-case study, alongside the literacy stories of Edward, Lucy, James and Martin, all of whom were four years old at the beginning of the school year. The pedagogy included guided drama and puppetry events in which new aspects of literacy understanding and skill were progressively inserted. These events were followed by dramatic play periods where the sets, props, costumes and literate tools were freely available for the children’s use. Children were explicitly taught alphabetic skills with a synthetic, phonetic approach, and were encouraged to employ these skills for authentic and meaningful purposes within the drama events and in subsequent dramatic play.

Two questions guided the study:

What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?

What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?

The findings from the children’s studies were that the students became very motivated, persistent and productive writers, sustaining this enthusiasm and positive disposition toward learning as they continued on into Year One. They had a strong sense of role, audience and narrative. All these findings reinforced earlier studies of drama and writing with older children, but demonstrated the relevance of dramatic pedagogies for early childhood learners as well.
The self-study used the analogy of a recipe to frame the study of the researcher’s emerging competence as a drama teacher, developing from a recipe user to innovator and interrogator of the pedagogy. This process was assisted by her stance as an early childhood educator, already using experiential teaching modes appropriate to the levels of cognition of the children and ready to explore ways to extend her pedagogy. Her stance as a literacy teacher was also important in providing the on-going challenges and scaffolding for children as they changed for role-play to phonetic users of literacy. The powerful dynamic of the mantle of the expert employed in the drama events was found to be significant in mediating to the children not only expertise as characters in role, but expertise in writing, which flowed on into their play. The drama-play connection served as a conduit for both continuing activities and sustained confidence in writing. The strong sense of agency as capable writers, nurtured by a play situation in which children already saw themselves as more powerful and capable that in real life, flowed on into real-life situations as well. The development of the children as dramatists, able to employ tension and fluent dialogue to develop and sustain play worlds, and to identify with roles from the dramatic contexts, assisted the conduit of literate expertise as it developed aspects of narrative comprehension and production alongside visualisation, oral language, audience awareness and perspective-taking.

The unique contribution of this study was its demonstration of an innovative and successful balanced approach which provided children with the discrete skills needed to become proficient writers while at the same time recognising their needs for authentic purposes and contexts for writing. It demonstrated the triune link between drama, literacy and play, as well as that between the three connected teacher roles of early childhood, early literacy and drama educator. It balanced play exploration with direct instruction, implicit with explicit teaching methods and children’s interests with the wider cultural purposes of the adult world. Dramatic pedagogies provided the framework for the purposeful and systematic provision of models of writing which guided children into the construction of words, messages and a variety of other text forms. They did so in ways which were engaging, exciting and memorable.
The implications of these findings for teachers, policy makers and teacher educators are examined at the end of the study. In particular, they explore the implications in terms of a balanced curriculum in early childhood and the importance of maintaining a strong arts focus and dramatic play opportunities in early schooling. The dramatic pedagogies were found to meet the learning needs of a variety of children. Further applications of the pedagogy for the education of young children in wider social and cultural contexts were suggested. The self-study demonstrated the need for teacher education to include opportunities for teachers to learn inductively through experience and reflection as well as attempting to put theory into practice. Finally, continuing research into the discourse of early childhood and drama educators was recommended, in order to understand the features of the “teacher talk” that facilitate engagement and learning.
This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: …………………………………………………..

Date: ……/……/……

Annette Harden (Mrs)
PUBLICATIONS

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS


Differentiation through drama in Preparatory classrooms. May 2011.

“Persuading Mrs. McGinty”: persuasive argument through drama, July, 2011.

Phonics teaching in Prep. February 2012
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enthusiasm and creative outpourings, they daily re-ignite the passion for the dramatic which drives my teaching.
Glossary of Terms

The glossary is arranged alphabetically under the headings (where possible) that reflect the three fields of study explored in the research project: Early Childhood, Drama Education and Literacy

Early Childhood

**Fantasy Play**: play which explores imaginary worlds either alone or in the company of others who share the play world images (Lindqvist, 1995).

**Preparatory year** or prep: the (non-compulsory) class established in Queensland schools in 2007 to provide play-based learning to all Queensland children from ages four years and six months to five years and six months at entry.

**Socio-Dramatic play, or dramatic play**: play of young children which is social, includes make-believe, and role playing (Smilansky, 1968).

Drama Education

**Co-player**: a role of the teacher or researcher which leaves the initiative of the improvisation to the child, but seeks to infuse the drama with aesthetic qualities linked specifically to drama (Dunn, 2003)

**Grab Game**: in this strategy children move around till the signal to freeze is given, then when shown a number of fingers they form groups of that number by “grabbing” other children.

**Hot-seating**: in this strategy a person is questioned in role about their activities and motives.

**Mantle of the expert**: a teacher-in-role position devised by Dorothy Heathcote in which children are enrolled as responsible and ethical experts in a field of knowledge or practice, to solve a human dilemma created by the teacher. The teacher takes a lower status role and the children feel empowered, but are also motivated to explore and extend the knowledge essential for their role.

**Postcard**: children step into a “postcard” scene, one by one, stating their role and positioning themselves around a central focus. Teachers can extend the postcard strategy by “tapping and talking” to characters in the postcard about
their feelings or thoughts in role, or by bringing the postcard to life for a brief moment of action and dialogue.

**Process drama**: activities and approaches within drama pedagogy which include and elaborate on shared improvisation of a scenario in order to deepen understanding (O’Neill, 1995). These include an ever-growing list of activities such as tableaux, freeze frames, interviews in role, hot-seating, postcards, teacher-in-role, co-player, mantle of the expert, narrative and story-telling, games, letter writing, debriefing discussion, mime, play-building, and storyboarding.

**Sleeping lion**: One child lies still, blindfolded in the middle, while children in turn creep in and steal its prey

**Tableaux**: a series of frozen moments brought progressively to life.

**Teacher-in-role**: a drama strategy in which a teacher initiates or facilitates the action within the drama or dramatic play by taking on a role. The teacher has her own purposes in this intervention, which may be related to cultural learning, or may be to enhance the quality, complexity and flow of the drama by focussing the attention, engaging the participants in the action, harnessing feelings and uniting the actors in the play world (O’Neill 1995:126).

**Literacy**

**Pedagogy**: teaching and learning beliefs and practices

**Emergent literacy**: the literacy demonstrated by children from a literate culture before formal schooling. (McNaughton, 1995)

**Phonemic awareness**: refers to the ability to detect phonemes and segment words into phonemes and blend phonemes to make words. (Developing awareness of phonemes program, 2006, p. 6)

Phonemes: sounds identified by a language speaking group as elements of their sound system

**Phonological awareness**: awareness of the way words sound. (Developing awareness of phonemes program, 2006, p. 1)
Chapter 1: Introduction

Prelude

*In the light of the moon, a little egg lay on a leaf. One Sunday morning, the warm sun came up and - pop! - out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar.* (Carle, 1970, pp. 1-3)

A dramatic story began to unfold. The setting was a preparatory classroom. The cast were nineteen four and five-year old school children and their teacher. The plot was a story of transformation as they learnt together in an environment where dramatic pedagogies were privileged.

**Background**

It was 2007, the inaugural year of Preparatory education in public schooling in Queensland, Australia. As the newly appointed Preparatory Years (Prep) teacher, I brought into my situation early childhood experience in a variety of social contexts. I had taught in university villages, inner city migrant communities, indigenous areas of Australia and Papua New Guinea, and a rural school in my home state of Queensland. I had, for eight years, taught in an Early Education Centre which had a class mix of fifteen pre-schoolers and ten year one children. This gave me experience on both sides of an institutional divide where different philosophies of teaching were expressed in very different classroom practices. I brought into the Prep teaching situation an expectation that I could and should create a seamless transition experience for children that would break down these institutional and pedagogical barriers for myself, no less than for the students.

2007 was also significant as a year of personal professional development: I was completing a Master of Drama Education, hoping to infuse my early childhood teaching with fresh understandings from a domain for which I had always been passionate. I hoped to find within drama pedagogy catalysts to trigger learning
responses in children, particularly responses linked to literacy. For the thesis component of the degree (Harden, 2008) I examined the children’s engagement with written literacy across the first six weeks of the 2007 school year, when I used an approach to teaching privileging drama and play. During this time, children were introduced to signs and labels as meaningful symbols within dramatic contexts involving puppetry, drama games and story enactments.

The findings from this action research study were very exciting. A cohort of children that had begun the year displaying very variable reactions to my approach, and equally variable levels of phonemic awareness and use of alphabetic symbols had already become engaged and responsive. Many of the children were interacting with narrative themes, costumes, props and particularly with the literacy tools I had introduced in the daily dramatic event. Many were also showing evidence of retaining, and even using for their own purposes, the explicit alphabetic learning which accompanied the dramatic activity around literacy. I was encouraged by these findings and eager to go on to explore and document the changes in the children across the full school year. I would continue to explore the learning possibilities of balancing a rich array of play and drama opportunities with the explicit and sequential teaching of the mechanics of writing. The master’s study had expanded into a doctoral project.

Few longitudinal studies connecting play, drama and literacy can be found in the research literature. Long-term projects following development through a year or longer are more expensive and difficult to design and execute than shorter studies, and so are done less frequently (Tierney & Sheehy, 2003). As a result, innovative teaching strategies are generally attempted in short-term projects. Potentially, the longitudinal use of a teaching strategy could have more sustained and observable effects on development than a short-term intervention, and I was uniquely situated as a practitioner/researcher in an early childhood classroom where I could address this gap in research. I began to determine my specific goals.
Goals of the project and the research questions

Research may answer questions, but it may also raise them. It may fill gaps in previous research or reveal new vistas for exploration (Merriam, 1988). The gap identified above, in relation to longitudinal studies of classroom practice, was not the only one I located. As others have noted (for example O’Toole, 2006), there is also a considerable gap in research on drama teaching in early childhood settings. I therefore hoped that by tracing young children’s progress as dramatists across a whole school year, observing and participating in their engagement with learning in drama and dramatic play contexts, I could contribute to the research in this educational domain, as well as that of literacy learning.

Within the very broad field of literacy learning, I was particularly keen to focus my attention on how the development of written literacy could be supported. Juzwick, Curcic, Wolbers, Moxley, Dimling and Shankland (2006), in reviewing writing research from 1999 to 2004 found that a focus on the social context dominated the literature at the expense of research examining children’s acquisition of discrete elements of literacy. Tierney and Sheehy (2003) also noted an emphasis on studies designed to determine how literacy is negotiated in different situations. In designing this study, I wanted to include both the social and the developmental perspectives, since both play an important role in understanding the progress into literacy of young children.

I was, however, not interested solely in what was happening to the learners; I was also keen to explore the ongoing issues that teachers face when embracing pedagogical development. The inner world of the teacher in action is seldom shared, but she is a decision-maker driven by many simultaneous needs, passions and goals. I hoped that a case study of personal change might resonate with, or contrast with, the experience of other practitioners and researchers in these fields, especially those attempting to explore or develop innovative pedagogical approaches.

Finally, while the teaching/learning discourse of the classroom has been the focus
of some research studies, research into the discourse of the early childhood classroom is very sparse, as is research into the discourse of drama sessions. One further aim was to enlarge this perspective on the language of teachers and learners and, in doing so, provide a window on the dynamics of drama and dramatic play pedagogy. My goal was to illuminate the “teacher talk” (Christie, 2002) used when engaged in this pedagogical approach and to identify how this talk impacted on student engagement and learning.

In response to these goals, two research questions were developed:

*What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?*

*What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?*

The first question examines children’s longitudinal development as writers, while the second explores the insights gained by adopting the dual roles of teacher and researcher.

**Key terms**

Before moving on, it is useful to explain some important terms that will appear throughout this study, namely dramatic play, drama, written literacy, pedagogy and a balanced approach. “Dramatic play”, as the term is used throughout this research project, is not the exploratory investigation of objects, concepts or areas of knowledge, which an inquiry model of learning would describe, but rather the activity in which “a child creates an imaginary situation” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 93).

“Drama” refers to all the dramatic activities which were included in the “Key drama events” described in the case studies. These included elements of process drama, defined by O’Toole 1992) as “the form of dramatic activity centred on fictional role-taking and improvisation” (p. 2). They also included singing, shared movement and mime, directed story enactments, and in particular puppetry, with the latter
serving as a stepping stone into live dramatic forms and featuring throughout the year in drama events. The “written literacy” examined in the project involves what Kress (1997) describes as the “lettered representation” of alphabetic symbols. Other symbol systems such as numerals and mapping icons were used in the drama sessions, and produced by the children, but the focus in this research project has been on understanding the use of, and development within, the alphabetic code which constitutes the basis of much of our communication.

The term “pedagogy” as employed in this project evolved from its use by Dewey (1956), Bruner (1976), Piaget (1959) and Vygotsky (1978) to describe the amalgam of teaching strategies, and styles of discourse employed by educators to align the curriculum to the needs, dispositions, interests, strengths and learning styles of students. It was teacher action based on theoretical and experiential understandings about children and their development, about learning and about the domains of knowledge and skills being taught. When devising a framework to describe the teaching/learning process, during a longitudinal study of classroom practice, Gore (2001) also used pedagogy to refer to planned and purposeful teaching practice that produced recognisable learning outcomes (p. 127).

I used “balanced approach” to describe the employment of explicit, sequential, phonological teaching of literacy skills alongside the daily dramatic presentation of the social practices of literacy. Both were planned, systematic and responsive to children’s demonstrated learning and their growing insights into literacy. Dombey (2010) describes a balanced approach in relation to reading as one in which the mechanics of literacy are taught alongside the meaningful engagement with a rich diet of literary texts. My goal was to achieve the same balance in writing while I also juggled the issues of the preschool/year one divide.

The Methodology
To explore the research questions framing this study, I adopted a qualitative case study approach. A case study of the whole cohort plus myself as a learner was, however, too vast a project, even though all children in the class were participants.
in the case. I saw the need to direct the focus of my research to a few significant studies which would illustrate the whole. I determined to follow Stake’s model, telling five stories, forming what Stake (2005a) calls a “quintain” of studies within a case, which in this instance was my class of 2007. Stake’s use of a quintain certainly had this purpose, to illustrate the dynamic working of the whole case or “multi-case” as he called it (Stake, 2005b, p. vi), through the strategic telling of five varied stories. These stories would enable me to trace a variety of children’s responses to the pedagogy: boys as well as girls, eager learners as well as those experiencing difficulty, children who easily embrace dramatic approaches, and others who were more reticent. This would provide a broader answer to the first question driving the study: what might happen in the development of literacy when I used a drama and dramatic play across a school year. Furthermore, I could include in the quintain my professional development journey, in order to examine the transformation of my own understanding as I took on new pedagogy in the new situation.

The case study methodology allowed me the flexibility of including quantitative, alongside qualitative measures, which could be analysed to determine the progress of individual students relative to the whole cohort, and to analyse my own approach. My data collection included filming, interviews, written artefact collection, a daily journal of reflection, as well as the tools used regularly by early childhood educators: observation, anecdotes, checklists of reading and writing indicators recorded on a developmental profile. I considered my own progress using a metaphor of a “recipe”, an analogy used by Putnam (1991) in a study of professional development. I also examined my dialogue during drama sessions using a discourse analysis tool from the field of functional linguistics. Again, I took a research model, that of Christie (2002) who examined the discourse of teachers across contexts from early childhood to secondary schooling.

**The participants**
The children within the cohort whose stories seemed to contribute to a broader overview of the progress into writing and reading of the whole “multi-case” (Stake
2005,b) were firstly Edward, a timid child, very hesitant to take on literate tools, but eager to please and responsive to dramatic approaches. The second was James, initially very reluctant to participate in dramatic activity, but showing an early and strong interest in literacy. Lucy could not be ignored; she was vibrant, talkative, active and very dramatic. The final choice was Martin, a child who was uncooperative at first and struggling with expressive language and with learning. This gave a gender imbalance, but a wide variety of disposition and learning style interactions with the teaching approach.

The Research Context
The school where the study was focused is in no way typical for Queensland. Situated on a coastal mountain range, its climate is temperate, with indoor and outdoor experiences often mediated by wet weather, which influenced the time children spent indoors. The position of the school, not far from cities and leisure facilities, made for a distinctive lifestyle and socio-economic experience for children attending the school. Families travelled frequently, for work and leisure, and were somewhat transient in their residency, as they coped with distance to work and limited access to services. The proximity of cities influenced parental work choices and children’s experience of long day-care. Many parents had professional careers. A national ranking scale placed the school in the high socio-economic band (ACARA, 2010). The education level of parents was high, influencing language interactions with children and their support for learning. All of these contextual factors had potential to influence the outcomes of my pedagogical approach, and the match of teacher and students through that year, as McNaughton (2002), Sonnenschein (2002), Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) and Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2003) found in their research.

Finding a metaphor
In searching for a metaphor to illumine the unfolding events of the year, the image that came to mind was that of the caterpillar immortalised by Eric Carle (1970) in his award-winning picture book “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”. Here in my research setting were nineteen tiny but very hungry caterpillars growing and
transforming, eventually soaring from the prep classroom with a new cultural competency: they were becoming, by and large, readers and writers able to interpret the messages encrypted in the alphabetic code of the English language.

As 2007 unfolded, and I found myself in the complex position of being simultaneously a participant in the action occurring in the environment of my classroom, a teacher experimenting with a new pedagogy, and a researcher observing and analysing the emerging learning, a metaphor to clarify this complex role seemed necessary. Another caterpillar, less active but more reflective, presented himself from the pages of the children’s classic: “Alice in Wonderland”. Lewis Carroll created the enigmatic caterpillar perched above the action of Wonderland, pondering Alice’s erratic growth spurts and commenting laconically on her attempts to find meaning in all that was occurring:

Alice stretched herself up on tiptoe and peered over the edge of the mushroom, and her eyes immediately met those of a large blue caterpillar that was sitting on the top with its arms folded... (Carroll, 1985 Hague edition, p. 37)

Unlike this caterpillar, that smoked a hookah and appeared to take no notice of what was happening around him, I was acutely aware of the changes occurring in my classroom. However, the idea of a caterpillar achieving a sense of elevation by perching itself high up on a mushroom was a useful one, for it helped me to understand and appreciate the distance from the action that would be needed in order to reflect upon and examine the “teacherly” discoveries and understandings made while in the action and later as I reviewed the data. I could also, from this elevation, consider the changes occurring in my students as they embraced literacy through the course of the year.

The structure of the research
The thesis is organised into six chapters. This first chapter introduces the research topic, its background, context, questions, aims and structure.
In Chapter Two I review the research relating to the two research questions. The review begins with research into dramatic play, followed by drama and then early childhood literacy. Each term has been described as a field of research in which changing philosophies have produced changing definitions, which in turn have had implications for teaching practice and the focus in research. The review continues with an investigation of research at the interface of drama and dramatic play, dramatic play and literacy, and drama and literacy, then research at the triune interface of the three fields, where the teaching approach for the year was situated.

After the review of literature the third chapter defines and describes the case study methodology chosen as a vehicle for the research investigation. The qualitative/quantitative polarities are explored, multiple case study as a methodology examined, and longitudinal research discussed. A review of research into professional change and self-reflection is included here, describing the tradition of the reflective practitioner developing professionally through reflection in and on her teaching actions. I examine teacher roles and models of effective pedagogy. Studies of classroom discourse are reviewed as well, since the analysis of the discourse of three drama events became a major facet of my self-study. Data collection and analysis tools are outlined, while the research context is further developed and limitations of the study are addressed. Issues of bias, ethics and research authenticity conclude the chapter.

The self-study is the subject of Chapter Four, where key literacy, drama and play events from the year are identified. As each of these key events is outlined, several theoretical lenses are used to support their analysis, including, in relation to some key events, close examination of the discourse. Here Putnam’s (1991) analogy of professional development as a recipe helps to frame this discussion. Pedagogical understandings emerging from reflection on practice are summarised at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five tells the stories of Edward, James, Lucy and Martin’s literacy transformations across the year. Their stories demonstrate development from
emergent to early writers, determined by tracing progress on a developmental profile employed in Queensland schools (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995, used by Education Queensland with copyright approval). The profile pinpoints key indicators of change in children’s reading and writing development. This developmental profile, through its indicators of progress, was used, at the time, by Queensland public school early years teachers as a means of gaining comparability of judgement across schools and districts. As such, it offered this thesis some reliability and local validity as a standard against which to assess the children’s progress. The chapter also includes examination of the children’s written artefacts from a socio-semiotic perspective to enlarge the perspective given by developmental profile indicators, including aspects such as text layout and children’s stance toward literacy and changes in the symbolic repertoire (Kenner, 2000) that they employed. Engagement is also described here. Key findings that draw together and highlight common features identified across the four cases are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Finally, Chapter Six draws the two research questions together to offer an overview of the findings across the entire study. Whilst some of these confirm the outcomes of research outlined in earlier studies, others are unique in their contribution. The significant implications of these findings in the current world of research, policy and classroom practice draw the whole study to a close.

Turning the page, my ruminating caterpillar now inches slowly into the fields and orchards others have planted, to ponder and pontificate on the key fields of literature relevant to this research project.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction
The fields which Alice’s caterpillar surveyed from the vantage point of his mushroom were dramatic play, drama and literacy, as well as key material that intertwined these fields. There was research, for instance, at the interface of dramatic play and emergent literacy, with a particular focus on writing, drama and writing, and drama and dramatic play, and a single study at the juncture of these three fields, where my research project is situated. In this chapter I have addressed each field in turn, before devoting a section to the interfaces between the fields, ending with Miller’s 2007 study of drama, dramatic play and writing.

The material relating to dramatic play, drama and literacy as individual areas has been organised around the key philosophical positions that have influenced teaching and learning in these fields. The impact of these philosophies on research and practice has been a major focus, with the role of the adult in supporting these distinct yet connected areas of learning being significant. Generally, because my focus was the development of four to five year old children, the vast research fields have been narrowed down to those relating to young children in early childhood institutions, with some exceptions. The literacy review in particular has targeted emergent and early literacy as these have been defined in the literature. Most key research in drama has been with older primary school children, providing possible applications to early childhood. Dramatic play research, on the other hand has dealt mostly with young children, though rarely with such play in primary school settings.

Dramatic Play in education
In this section literature relating to the application of dramatic play within early childhood learning contexts is examined. As mentioned in Chapter One the play described throughout this document is the activity Vygotsky described as creating “an imaginary situation” (1978, p. 93) in social contexts. The perspectives on such play considered here include the psychoanalytical, the developmental, the
dialogical, the constructivist, and the aesthetic, commencing with the psychoanalytical.

**The psychoanalytical view of play**
In the early years of my teaching practice, the philosophies of psychoanalysts such as Freud and Erikson were influential in terms of how play was viewed within the context of education. Such philosophies presented play “as a subjective phenomenon where healing takes place through expression and release of emotions” (Kelly-Byrne, 1989, p. 5). At the time, Isaacs and the Macmillan sisters had developed nursery schools in England based around a similar view of play as catharsis (Monighan-Nourot, 1990). Like Montessori and Froebel, they believed that play was intrinsically motivating and self-directing, with play being capable of bringing children to “psychic equilibrium” (Bennet, Wood & Rogers, 1997, p. 3). Research in the psychoanalytic tradition also explored aggression in play, anxiety mastery through play, and ways to use play as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool (Kelly-Byrne, 1989). The social and historical context for this therapeutic model of play was the war and subsequent depression years when children were often dealing with stress and trauma, and needed comfort, security, healthy food and untroubled sleep (Kwon, 2002).

However, the definition of play as catharsis continued to shape the routines and services of the nursery schools, and the role of teacher as nurturer and provider, for decades after the wars and depression years, having a significant impact on teaching practice (Mellor, 1990, Ebbeck, 1991, Ailwood, 2007). In particular, it gave rise to a view of the teacher as a non-interventionist: a facilitator, an environmental stage manager, a child-watcher (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). She was often called a director rather than a teacher, and education of teachers included no guidelines for direct instruction. The child provided all the direction for action once the teacher created the environment appropriate to meeting her current needs.
Developmental views of play

Another influence that was strong during this same period was the developmental tradition. Under the influence of Stanley Hall, the child study movement emerged in the twenties (Monighan-Nourot, 1990). On the American scene, Monighan-Nourot describes the careful observation and recording of behaviour of researchers Mitchell and Johnson, for instance, which might be seen as forerunner to reflective journaling. Play was defined as a mechanism for development, and research studies creating indices of this development, which were correlated with language, race, gender and socioeconomic status, were common in the 1970s.

The most important developmental theorist and researcher in the dramatic play field, influencing teaching practice within this perspective, was Jean Piaget. He focused his research on cognitive development and its expression in stages of human behaviour. According to Piaget (1951, from the Norton 1962, edition), children advanced through the sensorimotor stage (0-2 yrs.) and pre-conceptual stage (2-7 yrs.) to the stages of concrete and abstract operations. Play was the child’s means of active cognitive growth, via a dialogic process of assimilation and accommodation of her mental constructs in reaction to conflicting or puzzling evidence. Within each developmental stage, children used play to consolidate acquired behaviour (Piaget, 1951). The teacher role in early childhood centres that followed Piaget’s theoretical model was to provide settings targeting particular developmental levels, where children could explore and play with materials and processes and build their schemas of understanding about their world.

In ongoing studies of children’s dramatic play, research around “readiness” for new stages of development was a natural sequester of viewing play as occurring in stages. Many studies of “readiness” related to readiness for schooling. Cleave, Jowett and Bate conducted a longitudinal study of preschools and nursery schools in the UK which was published in 1982, exploring the discontinuities between preschool and school provisions, framed within the readiness paradigm, and Katz (1992) and Kagan (1992) conducted similar studies in the USA. The debate in these studies was over whether children needed to be made ready for the
institution or whether schools should “ready” themselves for the children by offering more concrete activities and child-centred programmes.

Defining children by lock-step stages reinforced the static roles of teachers as facilitators and stage managers for children’s activity, as well as the static role of early education as provision of activities within developmental levels, rather than activities where learning leads development. More recent readiness studies (De Lemos, 2008) have explored and unsettled the construct of readiness for schooling across cultures, where very different pedagogies and beliefs about learning have led to different starting ages for school in, for example, Australia, Hong Kong and Sweden. Children have demonstrated very different performance levels at similar ages, as a consequence of their different points of entry.

However, even as early as the 1960s, there were instances of researchers questioning the role of teacher as a passive stage-setter. The dialogical perspective on play was one such focus influencing the way teachers saw their role, and the directions researchers took in their investigations.

The Dialogical definition of play
“Dialogical”, as linked to play, came from Bakhtin’s (1986) perspective on language as situated in, and given meaning to, many social contexts. The play situation, a major social context for young children, came under the research lens as a site for meaningful dialogue. Advocates such as Elkind (1981), Stone (1995) and Zigler (1986) may have proclaimed the benefits of free, undirected play for social, emotional, cognitive and physical development, but the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1976), and the research of Smilansky (1968) and Donaldson (1978) encouraged a more proactive participation for teachers in the learning of their students. For example, the research of Donaldson (1978) confounded many of Piaget’s stage claims (1951, 1959) and indicated that context, motivation and understanding of the language of questioning, were significant in children’s performance on tests of cognition at different developmental levels. Symbolism and abstract ideas were shown to be available to children as young as three years.
old, depending on the context and questioning used in the research. Vygotsky’s recognition of the role of language and social interaction in the learning process brought language into the forefront as a major contributor to learning and development, and therefore to teaching.

Vygotsky (1978) had described cognition in early childhood as a dialogical process within which language and action were intertwined. He believed that learning must always lead development in what he called “the zone of proximal development” (or ZPD) (p. 84). He described the play situation as one such zone of development, where children created their own ZPD in dramatic play while sustaining imaginary, powerful, adult roles. In role, he believed, a child continued to imitate and practise the language, thought and action of the expert. Vygotsky’s definition of play, however, was very different from that of Piaget, 1951), who had viewed the spontaneous assimilation/accommodation behaviours of the child while exploring materials, as play behaviour. Vygotsky, as mentioned earlier when I defined the use of the term dramatic play as applied in this text, described play as “creating an imaginary situation” (p. 95). Play, for him, was a serious business. It always contained rules, was motivated, and led to later development. It was not strictly symbolic in an abstract sense, but was the activity which freed the child from action linked to contingent objective reality, so he or she could begin to engage with imagined action, which in turn would lead to abstract thought. The play objects children used were, for Vygotsky, pivots rather than symbols of other objects, because he believed they must bear some resemblance to the real object in order for the child to accept the substitution, and they helped the child to function without the real object. Perhaps Vygotsky’s most-quoted words, especially by early childhood educators in their advocacy for play, are:

Play creates a zone of proximal development for the child. In play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. …Action in the imaginative sphere, in the creation of voluntary intentions, and the formation of life-like plans and volitional motives - all appear in play and make it the highest level of preschool development. (1978, p.102)
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem, as researchers of play such as Roskos and Christie (2001) have noted, has been that these words have been used to romanticise children’s play as always valid, self-directing and worthwhile, and to justify many activities as play which might otherwise have been excluded. In response, several researchers have observed free play in early childhood settings and found it singularly lacking in cognitive content and quality adult-child interactions. For example, Smilansky (1968) and Sylva, Roy and Painter (1980) saw low-complexity tasks as the norm in the settings they investigated, while Meadows and Cashden (1988) were critical of the scarcity of adult-child interactions including sustained conversations or adult support leading to creative discovery. These researchers began seriously to doubt whether unguided play in the early childhood centres was actually achieving any developmental goals.

Bruner (1962, 1976, 1986) believed, with Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1951), that play was an activity of the mind. However, unlike Vygotsky, Bruner held onto the pleasure principle in his definition of play, even while he recognised the purposeful nature of the activity for the engaged child. “Play is a pleasurable activity… play is an activity that is without frustrating consequences for the child, even though it is a serious activity” (Bruner, 1986, p. 77). He also contradicted Vygotsky by contrasting play and learning. “In play we transform the world according to our desires, while in learning we transform ourselves better to conform to the structure of the world” (p. 78). Despite this dichotomy, he believed that adults could structure children’s play to socialise children into the values of the culture, and that the relaxed world of play was the most comfortable realm in which a child could practise language. It was the dialogue in the play situation that he saw as important in promoting learning, while also noting that perhaps the most important feature of play was the opportunity provided in a play situation for children to experiment, explore and discover, in order to effectively solve problems in a low-risk, low-consequence situation. With this view of “play as discovery”, Bruner positioned himself closer to Piaget than Vygotsky, even though he advocated adult intervention. However, adults had for Bruner the significance in play that they had for Vygotsky. His research convinced him that the presence of an adult and the
stimulation of dialogue with a partner was what produced prolonged concentration and rich elaboration in play: “For human beings need negotiation in dialogue. It will furnish the child with models and with techniques for how to operate on his own.” (Bruner, 1986, p. 83).

Dialogue in social activity was also important in Sawyer's intriguing definition of dramatic play as improvisation, which rose out of his research in 1997. Sawyer (1997) saw children’s play improvisation as “a form of collective contextualised social action” (p. 30). In play children developed narrative through a process he later called “collaborative emergence” (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2007, p. 26). From his own qualitative research into the development of children's improvisations, he identified three strategies children use: “in-character dialogue, out-of-character talk to propose new ideas (sometimes described as “metaplay”) and elaboration or proposals within the character they assume” (p. 28). He called the latter “implicit meta-communication” (2007, p. 28). Sawyer's metaphor of play as improvisation provided a strong link between play and the dialogic activity of drama.

The theories of Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1959, 1962, 1976, 1986) and Sawyer (1997) provided for me, as a teacher in search of active ways to intervene for children’s learning, a legitimacy for an active dialogic and didactic role in all of children’s social spheres, particularly, in early childhood, through the scaffolding of thought with adult language. For researchers such as Smilansky (1968, 1990), and much more recently, McCabe (2012), this perspective justified play-tutoring and adults working in-role alongside children, stimulating language, problem-solving and introducing imaginative themes. McCabe’s contribution, employing process drama techniques as well, has been described in the section connecting drama and dramatic play. Smilansky (1968), dissatisfied with levels of imaginative play, had attempted and documented play tutoring, demonstrating positive results in terms of play complexity and sustained dialogue (Smilansky, 1990). Smith (2007) argued that follow-up studies testing Smilansky’s methods generally skewed their findings by selectively interpreting results, failing to exclude experimenter bias, and the use of control groups which were also deprived of the
verbal stimulation attending the play tutoring. He contended that verbal stimulation of any kind could produce the results attributed to play intervention. Similarly, Roskos and Christie (2001) listed failure to isolate variables, bias that skews interpretation, and correlation interpreted as causality, as factors invalidating much research into literacy intervention in play. Some of this research has been evaluated in the section connecting dramatic play and literacy later in this chapter.

Others who examined the teacher role in play avoided these pitfalls by pursuing descriptive rather than correlative studies. Schrader (1990), for instance, found teacher roles in literacy-linked play to be either extending or redirecting, within the ZPD model of Vygotsky (1978). She noted that teachers were mostly extending play, but cautioned against moving from facilitating learning to direct teaching: “Teachers must exercise self-control when participating in children’s symbolic play. They must refrain from pressuring children to cooperate with the teacher’s own preconceived priorities.” (p. 99).

**The constructivist view of play**

Constructivists, those who believe in the child’s active construction of learning, have generally defined play as a social behaviour through which a child constructs knowledge (Branscombe, Castle, Dorsey, Surbeck & Taylor, 2005, QSA, 2006). Piaget and Vygotsky were both broadly constructivists, in that they recognised children’s active agency in their own learning. They examined play in relation to future development, but constructivist researchers have more recently examined the content of children’s play as active construction of present meaning (Lindqvist 2001, Lofdahl 2005).

Kelly-Byrne (1989) styled herself as an interpretivist researcher, because she sought to observe and interpret children’s activity as intentional and active behaviour. This seemed to position her as an early researcher in the constructivist field. Her descriptive ethnography was a qualitative piece of research into the imaginative play of one young girl interacting with the researcher over a period of months. It yielded data demonstrating vigorous child engagement with issues of
power, intimacy, sexuality, aggression, secrecy, rather similar to the social activities of adults, and not the rather “pallid, asexual, impersonal and idealized accounts of children’s play” (p. 252) which she herself had read in the earlier research and scholarship on play. Kelly-Byrne believed that a focus on play which looked merely at its cognitive dimensions without the aesthetic qualities of excitement, drama, passion, pleasure and power was a focus which trivialised play and linked it too closely to its future role as a lead into productive work. It might be argued, suggests Alice’s caterpillar, that the rather special situation of private play between one adult and one child yielded rather different data than the typical group play situation of an early childhood institution. There was more scope for adult themes to emerge in play with adults than play with other children.

Another example of private play between a researcher and playing children is that of Dunn (2000). In order to observe the dramatic play of a group of 10 to 11 year old girls and identify significant features of that play, Dunn set up what she described as a “cocoon” of privacy (2000) in an old school hall where a play club was established under her supervision. She provided props, costumes and a setting. It was no mean feat to create as naturalistic a situation as possible (Dunn, 2010) whilst still recording and analysing as a researcher, but she was able to take what she described as a co-player role and enter the play at the children’s invitation, being careful not to dominate the emerging narrative or assert her authoritative and ethically responsible adult position. Dunn (2000) identified, as Kelly-Byrne had done, violent and aggressive themes in the play of the girls, but also important features of their play. One of these features was the “playwright function” (p. 195), a characteristic of play and improvisation previously highlighted by O’Neill (1995). Usually controlled, at least to some extent by the teacher within process drama work, Dunn suggested that in play, children spontaneously use a range of these functions to structure their improvised action. She noted that “each time a player offers an action or moment of dialogue, they are using a playwright function, for their contribution is building the dramatic play text” (Dunn, 2000, p. 195). Dunn identified four different functions: narrative, intervening, reinforcing and reviewing (p. 195), and suggested that each has a different impact on the
evolving play. In one play sample, the narrative function carried the play forward along the planned line of action, the intervening playwright tried to change the direction of the play and in so doing gave it innovative action which built tension, the reinforcing function affirmed the new direction an intervening playwright introduced by mimicking or developing her action and a reviewing playwright called the group together to review what had happened so far. The latter was rarely used by the players, while the narrative function was the most common.

“Text creation” was another feature she identified in the play of the older girls in her study, suggesting that it was supported by the presence of props and costumes. She also observed role shifts and the fact that they occurred whenever characters made subtle changes in attitude. Again she noted a similarity with the features of the dramatic genre of theatre, where “playwrights regularly use these subtle role shifts to enhance their character” (p. 202). In the observed dramatic play, children used these role shifts to drive forward the action, change status, and create tension. As a drama educator, Dunn was further able to identify tension, character, symbol, space and contrasting styles as elements from the field of drama present in the children’s play. For my surveying caterpillar, the connections made here between the fields of drama and play were important, intertwining the fields and suggesting that in my teaching approach it might be relatively easy to marry drama and dramatic play together.

Within the early childhood literature, the role of the constructivist teacher in the early childhood setting was first publically defined in Bredekamp’s “Position on Developmentally Appropriate Practice” NAEYC statement for the teaching of young children, which appeared in 1987 in New York. The document advocated teacher practices that were child-centred, holistic and hands-on, in small-group sessions with adult support and social interaction. The teacher role was diverse and flexible: she was a decision-maker, alert to development, interests, learning style, and particular needs (Bredekamp, 1987). Bredekamp’s paper was a reaction to whole-group, unimaginative, drill-and-rote, lecture-like situations that featured in many early schooling settings at the time, reflecting earlier behaviourist philosophies of
teaching and learning. The revised version of the statement (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) broadened its scope to include children to age eight, and defined appropriate activities in schools as well as preschools. Bredekamp vigorously defended her position on the place of balanced and focused, explicit teaching sessions alongside active investigation and self-directed expression, in the face of criticism from Lubeck (1998), for instance.

Viewing children as purposeful and active “meaning makers” is central to a constructivist approach, though the focus of the meaning-making appears to have shifted. Lofdahl (2005), for example, examined the play of children as shared meaning-makers through negotiating dialogue around a funeral theme. Here, children were viewed as purposeful meaning-makers, and dialogue was seen as significant, not necessarily for future development, but for the children’s present purposes of shared meaning. Her perspective on meaning-making, she wrote, was rooted in Bronfenbrenner’s theory, which emphasised the dynamic processes operating in social situations, as sites for investigation in their own right. Bronfenbrenner (1979) saw these dynamic processes as significant in any research investigation because they wove heredity and environment together. He asked what was happening in adult-child interactions which were shaping children as members of their culture. He believed that unless this process was included in the variables researchers attempted to isolate, the findings were fuzzy and confusing. He described the adult as a mediator of learning, a conduit for active socialisation through these interactions. The elevated researcher on the mushroom notes that this concept of mediation of learning was important to Miller (2007) as well. Miller was the one researcher whose work I identified at the juncture of the three fields. Her research has been described at the end of the chapter.

Rogoff (2003) continued the research into the dynamic forces at work within and around the dramatic play context. She broadened the context to include the wider culture. Cultural play, as scripted action to construct culture, was described explicitly in her theory, in which she redefined culture itself as a dynamic process of
mutual learning and change. Rogoff researched outside her own society, observing the play of children of many cultures, looking for correlations and patterns across cultural borders. She saw all human behaviour, including play, as ongoing cultural activity and her research tended to destabilise the Piagetian conception of stages once they were viewed in different cultural settings. She was strongly influenced by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) dynamic conception of evolving and interacting play and culture but criticised him, as well as earlier researchers of culture and human development, for viewing the development of the child within the culture as a one-way process. She preferred a theory of cultural interaction which defined culture as fluid, changeable and all-pervasive. Within her view, human beings “shape practices, traditions and institutions at the same time that they build on what they inherit in their moment in history” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 62). Both adult and child interacted as teacher and learner. Play, for Rogoff, made use of words, gestures and other action to structure social interaction within the culture. “Children work out the scripts of everyday life - adult skills and roles, values and beliefs - as they play” (p. 298).

The ruminations of the elevated caterpillar include, on one side of the mushroom, the suggestion that the dynamic processes Rogoff described may have been instrumental in enlarging the narrow Western perspective on childhood. On the other side of the mushroom is the criticism that Rogoff seems to have a somewhat sanitised and a-moral view of cultural activity. But there are other questions that arise from these ponderings. What, he pontificates, might actually constitute developmentally appropriate practice across cultures? Should not teachers, as conveyers of the culture, have an active part in supporting children’s learning? Moreover, because Rogoff emphasised how cultural activities fit together and are connected, might not her research have supported the building of bridges between play and literacy as mutual cultural activities within different settings? If the child was an active constructor of her learning, then surely every social context could be considered important? Home and family could be seen as sites for learning alongside schools and kindergartens (Martello, 2001, Duke & Purcell, 2003), and inevitably, the place of literacy as another social activity occurring in these settings,
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could be recognised. This construct of emergent literacy and socio-dramatic play as complementary social behaviours of children in various cultural sites, explored later in the chapter, could further intertwine some of the fields of my research and practice.

Constructivist perspectives in theory did not always translate into classroom practice. In 1997, Bennet, Wood and Rogers examined the mismatch of teachers’ theories about play and their actual practice, and used the self-reflection of the teachers to encourage a more proactive pedagogy. This was also constructivism in practice: reflection on action leading to cognitive dissonance, and changes in the practice. Bennet *et al.* (1997) tracked the changes in approach as teachers identified discontinuities between their beliefs about play and their practice, clarified situations for constructive interaction and intervention, and identified issues of choice and freedom. Significantly for me, as I struggled to define my own role in relation to these same issues, the teachers they observed became aware of the tensions around child and adult purposes in the curriculum, and the need to find some kind of balance for effective learning, where play would actually lead and not only follow development. They also began to differentiate contexts where intervention was appropriate and others where it might not be. If the development was dialogue, meta-cognition and shared narrative, as Sawyer (1997) had suggested, intervention by a high status adult might freeze the creative dramatic process. If the development was toward higher-order thinking or problem-solving, adult scaffolding might be important in the process of achieving solutions. If it was the application of social or cultural behaviours which adults had mastered but whose potential was a mystery to children, the role of expert to apprentice seemed the obvious one. Whatever the adult choice, the balance of adult and child purpose, power and voice was an issue. As my observer notes, in my emerging understanding of dramatic pedagogies, these also became issues.

In the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006), the constructivist document used to prepare teachers for their role in the new Prep year, play was defined as “a context for learning through which children organise
and make sense of their social world, as they engage with people, objects and representations.” (p. 103). The teacher role was an enabling, facilitating, supporting one, connecting children with cognitive and cultural tools for thinking, learning and playing, what Ellis (2005) described as mediation of that learning. Reflection was important for leading to action. One facilitating role of the teacher was therefore to provide children with debriefing, reviewing and planning sessions, as in the model of the reflective teacher. Discovery and problem-solving, as active meaning-construction, were encouraged within and alongside the play frame.

The constructivist focus supported an inquiry-based curriculum, but there was a strand which led into the arts, and it was along this tendril that my caterpillar began to inch as he surveyed the fields which influenced the emerging understandings of the teacher-researcher, and the perspectives that shaped the pedagogy of 2007.

**Aesthetic views of play**

In her doctoral study, the Scandinavian educator, Gunilla Lindqvist (1995), first coined the term “an aesthetic pedagogy of play”. She found the roots for her aesthetic theory of play in the writing of Vygotsky (1978), who, she believed, also emphasised the strong relationship of play with drama, because both make use of imagination, dialogue, narrative flow, roles, relationships and emotions. Lindqvist contrasted Vygotsky’s aesthetic position with the views of Leontiev and Elkonin, prominent Russian psychologists who defined play as role-playing the social behaviours of adults, a position emphasising imitation and reality rather than imagination and emotion. Lindqvist’s study has been described in detail in the section connecting play and drama, because she took the didactic step of enhancing children’s dramatic play through drama interventions, but she was also an important researcher in exploring the aesthetic dynamics of children’s play. She first coined the term “play worlds” to describe the sites of shared interaction she observed developing in children’s dramatic play. Researchers such as Hakkarainen (2004, 2008), Baumer, Ferholt and Lecusay (2005), and Baumer and Radsliff (2009), who followed her play world perspective, have strongly supported an aesthetic focus in children’s play. Because of the connection they made
between play world development and narrative building, an important aspect of literacy, I have described this perspective more fully in the section connecting dramatic play and literacy, but Guss (2001, 2005a) is one researcher focused directly on describing aesthetic features in children’s dramatic play. Guss (2001, 2005a, 2005b) defined the teacher as director, narrator, actor, dancer, musician, props person, set designer, costume designer, lighting and sound producer, and in her observations of children playing she identified dramatic elements such as ritual, improvisation and symbolism.

Other researchers such as Lobman (2003) and Sawyer (1997, 2007) focused particularly on aesthetic features of play as improvisation. Lobman noted the role of teachers as co-players with children in the process, while Sawyer linking his conception of children’s play both to musical improvisation and to “theory of mind”, which traced children’s development of meta-cognition. Dramatic tension in children’s play was also identified and described by researchers. Creaser (1989) described the role of “master dramatist” in her observations of four-year-old children at play and Dunn (1996) described the same role as that of the “super-dramatist” in her research with older children. She believed that super-dramatists in the play mix, with their intuitive understanding of dramatic tension in their role-taking and event-driving, could extend the ephemeral activity of dramatic play considerably. All of these features of the dramatic play of young children as aesthetic activity, as Dunn had discovered (2000), connect it strongly with drama, the next field of study. In this field the focus has been on research into drama as pedagogy, and the teacher roles and pedagogical approaches that different perspectives have encouraged.

**Into the Drama Education Field**

The review of research in this section examines the progressive humanist view and then the constructivist position, which supported the development of process drama, used in drama education in schools in the UK and Australia.
The progressive humanist view

Abbs (1987) described the progressive humanist position as a philosophy which drove thought and its expression in arts and education during the twentieth century at least. In America the progressive humanist thrust in education, rooted in Dewey’s (1956) emphasis on learning by doing, discovering and exploring, resulted in the "creative dramatics" movement in schools. Even in Scandinavian countries with their strong theatrical tradition, the creative dramatics movement affected drama teaching. It included a strong reaction against the rigidity of scripted performance (O’Toole, 2005). Instead the techniques of improvisation were often combined with Stanislavsky’s methods to encourage creativity, spontaneity and sheer good fun. As a result a division arose between drama and theatre. As in the field of dramatic play where early childhood educators tended to discourage formal literacy teaching as an imposition of the outside culture, Abbs (1987) noted that drama as personal development could not cohabit with the culture of theatre because theatre was seen as an adult cultural imposition stifling creativity and self-expression.

In the UK, as well as USA, the “drama-in-education” movement was strongly influenced by progressive thought (O’Toole, 2005). For example, Peter Slade (1954, 1958) defined Child Drama as a tool for personal development through self-expression: “Drama is the discovery of life through imaginative play, and the proper use of drama in education is to allow opportunities for the development of personality and the fostering of a deep interest in doing things” (1958, p. 3). Slade encouraged group role-play, often with the teacher in role as a character. Slade also acknowledged his debt to the earlier psychoanalytical school (Viewpoints interview in RIDE, 1996). His paradigm of child-centred education focused attention, as it had in America, on the psychological rather than aesthetic benefits of drama (Havell, 1987)

The constructivist perspective

The constructivist view, in which the child is seen as an active and purposeful constructor of their own learning, has been important in the drama education field.
In examining this research perspective I have included the work of Dorothy Heathcote (1980, 1995) and the establishment of process drama teaching, the defining of role, the concept of engagement, and research into the effects of drama pedagogy on cognition and children’s learning.

Within the constructivist perspective, encouraging active involvement in problem-solving and constructing one’s own learning, it was Dorothy Heathcote (1980) who initiated a form of drama teaching which developed into the process drama model widely used in schools today. Heathcote taught through a series of interwoven activities from all areas of the curriculum. As a constructivist, she believed in active meaning-making, with drama as the making of significant meaning (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Heathcote and Bolton reintroduced the cultural context for learning. Heathcote brought with her a strong bond with her culture - with history, Shakespeare, the Bible and poetry (O’Neill’s foreword to Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). She wanted to empower children to learn, using a “mantle of the expert” strategy, in which she deliberately positioned the children as a group as experts working together to solve an ethical dilemma in some social sphere. She as the teacher took a lower status role. As children saw themselves as competent participants in an activity, with a significant issue at stake, they were motivated to inquire deeply into the knowledge required of “the expert”. Two of her goals for education were “that children shall become able to handle complex social and personal relationships,” and “that they can master various types of depictions….for depictions deal with significance” (Heathcote, 1980, p. 5). Like Lindqvist (1995), she believed that drama operates best when a whole class together shares that meaning-making.

The teacher role in actively supporting children’s learning of many aspects of the curriculum was very important in Heathcote’s model. She seemed to take a facilitating, coaching but enabling role which made use of the aesthetic elements of theatre for its power. Heathcote built the play world from historical, real-world situations which she explored alongside children, bringing them to life through powerful use of tension, ritual, characterisation, plot and dialogue, all dramatic
elements of theatre. Her pedagogical goal was that children should learn history, literature and culture by living it and exploring its issues. The drama-theatre division was still strong, as Burton (2001) noted: “It was common practice for drama teachers in Australia in the 1970s to refuse to be involved in any of their schools’ theatrical productions” (p. 5). Heathcote’s model was developed by Bolton (1995), O’Neill (1995) and the dramatists who followed them, into process drama.

In the research that followed Heathcote, Bolton and O’Neill, other drama theorists have further defined the teacher role within drama. Most significant of these were Morgan and Saxton (1987) who distinguished “stance” from “role”, with “stance” referring to the teacher’s position of power, and “role” more specifically to the type of character that the teacher assumes in the drama. They described the stance of the teacher in process drama as either “manipulator”, “facilitator” or “enabler” (p. 42), where the manipulator has the traditional, high-status, instructive stance, directing the action and learning and making the decisions, while the facilitator coaches the action of students from outside and confers some status and responsibility on them. The enabler works alongside the students within the drama frame, taking a low-status position to confer power on the learners.

Morgan and Saxton (1987) also described nine roles teachers might take, roles that allow them to take up any of these stances. For example, a teacher choosing to take a role as a king may present as a manipulator with an authoritative role, one who knows and makes the decisions. By contrast, a “one of the gang” role, perhaps as a member of the court, allows for an enabler stance, which confers responsibility and decision-making on the children participating in the drama.

Cheyne and Terulli (1999), acknowledging their debt to Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue and voice, similarly described the dialogue of teacher/child interactions in the ZPD of the child. They suggest that the options available to the teacher are Magistral, Socratic or Menippean dialogue. Magistral dialogue is that of authoritarian adult voice and subordinate child voice, with a goal of enculturation
into a shared third voice, the voice represented in the symbols and concepts of the culture. Socratic dialogue assumes a more active and empowered voice for the student and sometimes even a questioning and resistance to the constraints and authority of the voice of the accepted culture. Menippean dialogue is present when the authority of the adult is overthrown, and conflict and deterioration of relationships ensue. Cheyne and Terulli’s descriptors of dialogue seem to have an application to adult-child interaction during process drama improvisation, as they reveal issues of power, voice and status, and the deliberate choice to move toward Socratic dialogue situations, provoking thought and expression. This choice in drama situations moves away from typical classroom dialogue where the Magistral stance dominates, for here, as Christie also observed in her research into discourse, (2002) the teacher explains and questions students about their knowledge. Ellis (2005), Hempenstall (2006), Kauchek and Eggen (2007) and Rowe (2009) all support the Magistral stance in teaching, as each one comes from a background in education of children with special needs and feel that children all need a considerable amount of direct and explicit instruction. As my caterpillar notes from his elevation, the issue of child choice and agency in relation to adult direction is an ongoing tension in my pedagogy, as it was for the teachers observed by Bennet et al. (1997) in the research described in the dramatic play section.

Schrader (1990) however, also mentioned in the play section, cautioned against taking the Magistral stance in directing play because she felt it would freeze the initiative of the children. For this reason, Dunn recommended the role of co-player (1998) an enabling stance in both dramatic play and drama, where children could have equal status with the teacher operating within the frame of the imaginary world with them. Meanwhile, Lindqvist (1995) acknowledged her debt to Heathcote for the development of a didactic yet enabling teacher stance in her own research into enhancing children’s play worlds.

Some researchers shifted their focus from describing the roles and activities of teachers in process drama to investigating the behaviours children were exhibiting,
and ways their behaviours indicated cognition and learning in different spheres. Among these were researchers exploring the imaginative processes expressed in their improvisations, the demonstrations of aesthetic engagement and motivation to learn, and the effects on oral language and performance in specific curriculum areas.

Researchers who looked closely at the imaginative processes involved in drama were Cobb (1977) and Cohen and MacKeith (1991) followed by Cremin (1998). Cremin provided evidence of these cognitive processes in the dialogue of the children. He used a model that detailed various modes of creative activity employed in a fictional world, such as picturing, envisaging and transposing. The modes demonstrated varying levels of imagining and engagement with the fantasy world. The first level was defined as visualising. Children then move on to supposing, hypothesising and finally materialising, the level considered to be the most complex. Cremin (1998) was concerned with the final level in his process drama work with 10-11 year olds, but perhaps, muses Alice's caterpillar, some level of visualising could be accessible even to young children.

Morgan and Saxton (1987) also described levels of engagement within “a taxonomy of personal engagement” (p. 22). These levels they defined as “interest, engaging, committing, internalizing, interpreting and evaluating” (p. 22). They described situations in process drama where students showed evidence in their dialogue that they were operating at these levels of engagement. They noted however that the taxonomy was cumulative and that students would not necessarily be at the same level at the same time and might shift back and forth through the levels. “However the students must always progress through the levels in the correct sequence if they are to recapture the appropriate feeling” (p. 28).

Bundy (2003) identified three major indicators of aesthetic engagement present during a play-building activity with tertiary students: animation, connectedness and heightened awareness. These demonstrated, respectively, the physical excitement experienced by participants, their interaction with the ideas invoked by
the content of the drama and how these resonated with their own prior experience, and their connection with the universals and human values beneath the surface of the narrative. Bundy identified these features in the situation and connected them with other aesthetic experiences such as viewing paintings in an art gallery, seeing a great natural phenomenon or listening to a piece of music. When I began to analyse young children’s engagement with my approach, these facets of aesthetic engagement were important categories guiding my investigations.

Bundy’s research with adult participants built on earlier research by Simpson (1999) and Warner (1997), working with younger participants than those Bundy observed. Warner described the engagement of 10-12 year old children in drama experiences used by teachers as they explored literature. The research made use of observation, audio and video recordings, artefacts, journal entries, interviews and samples of students writing to reveal the mental processes that a participant undergoes in order to engage with a dramatic activity. Warner found that students of this age group presented as three different types of participant in drama activity: they were either “talkers, processors or participant-observers” (p. 27).

After interviews and debriefing she later identified another category “listeners-outsiders” (p. 27). “Talkers” were primarily verbal and immediate participants, while “processors” listened and processed the information that teachers offered before responding with oral and written activity. “Participant-observers”, like “processors”, required time to process information. They rarely engaged verbally, but were very engaged internally and built detailed images from the drama experience, gaining confidence for this engagement from earlier successful experiences. The “listener-outsider” Warner described as one who “never really engages in the drama but simply watches the action in order to get some information to complete a task” (p. 36). Warner used Morgan and Saxton’s (1987) taxonomy of personal engagement to define the level of engagement of her students as she analysed their behaviour and developed her four categories.

Simpson (1999) took Warner’s categories (1997) into an early childhood context. She was “trying to build knowledge about very young children’s (4 to 7 year olds)
engagement with drama” (p. 259) addressing one of the gaps I noted in the area of early childhood research in drama. Simpson’s children “were co-authors of an ongoing narrative” (p. 259) and she made her observations from within the drama. She confirmed her observations with a review of videos later. She found Warner’s categories of talker, processor, participant-observer and listener-outsider to be transferable to young children’s participation, though she did not use written responses, but oral feedback and body language to assess this involvement. She noted, in reviewing her videos, instances where children transferred engagement from one category to another.

An earlier project in Tasmanian schools reported by Parsons, Schaffner, Little and Felton, in 1984, found similar behaviours to be present in children’s responses to drama teaching. These researchers introduced drama specialists and advisors to work closely with teachers of 9-12 year olds, demonstrating process drama techniques to explore other subject areas in the curriculum as Heathcote had done. The focus was on oral language progress, but the findings included: stimulation of children’s language and thinking, awareness and discussion of moral and value issues, and support in connecting learning from other curriculum areas to the everyday world of the children (Schaffner’s report of findings, in Parsons et al. 1984). These results were obtained using a language analysis model devised by Little, which tracked the incidence of expressive, interactional and informational language in regular classrooms and then in the drama interactions. The classrooms where drama was introduced provided far more opportunities for expressive language, which Schaffner believed was important for children when discussing abstract concepts. Opportunities for reflection, created by the dramas, also led to discussion of “the fundamental issues of mankind” (p. 21) in classrooms where very little such discussion had occurred before. The study covered a seven-month period. Drama specialists were available to mentor teachers’ use of drama pedagogy, to support with themes and lesson plans, and to advise along the way.

Two research studies focused on the benefits of drama to student performance across the curriculum have been included in the review. A very thorough
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quantitative study by Fleming, Merrell and Tymms (2004) uncovered a significant improvement in self-concept and in mathematics among children involved in a drama project which had been designed to improve reading, mathematics and general learning attitudes. Reading and writing improved compared to a control group, but not to a significant level. These students had presented with English as a second language. The project group was compared with general performance of similar cohorts not given the drama stimulus. The findings were that process drama methods can both boost confidence and performance in children whose difficulties with oral and written English put them at a disadvantage in schooling. The curious improvement in mathematics rather than literacy could be attributed to the boost in self-confidence or to some cognitive change induced by the drama participation, or perhaps to a combination of both.

Another longitudinal UK study by the National Theatre (Turner, Mayall, Dickinson, Clark, Hood, Samuels & Wiggins, 2004) described programmes run collaboratively between actors and teachers. They found self-confidence, self-esteem and a positive attitude toward school to be the best results of their project, and the researchers expected that these would boost academic performance, though no significant immediate gains were noted in reading or writing. Being a Theatre group, Turner and her fellow researchers were able to demonstrate progress in theatrical skills, including confidence and clarity in speaking. It is refreshing to see that the divide between theatre and drama is crossed in this study, reflecting, as it does, the movement in drama research toward a view of drama, theatre and literacy as mutually supportive cultural activity.

Besides the research literature, I made use of curriculum documents to support my engagement with new practices, both as a drama teacher developing new techniques from process drama and as an early childhood teacher embarking on teaching in a new institution designed to assist students in the transition into primary schooling. Two constructivist curriculum documents have been especially important in supporting my progress through the year. These were the Arts syllabus (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2002) and the Early Years
Curriculum Guidelines (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006). The first provided me with descriptors of drama outcomes children might exhibit at different levels, while the second identified early childhood teacher roles and learning processes within five strands. Role-understanding and the awareness of “other” as audience were key outcomes statements for the Arts syllabus introduced into Queensland schools in 2002. This syllabus document provided some exemplars for different levels which were helpful when developing drama activities. It also supported my understanding of the development of children as dramatists. Because of the gap in research describing the dramatic progress of young children, these outcome statements for the foundation level and Levels one and two helped in tracking changes in children across the research year. The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (or EYCG, 2006) positioned the arts as one of five strands within an active learning component which encompassed thinking processes generally, and investigations in the sciences, technology, and social studies. Literacy came under the strand “Language learning and communication”. With the progressive advent of a National Curriculum across Australia, a draft for a performing arts domain was made available for trials in schools in 2010 and a national Early Years Learning Framework appeared in the same year. But in 2007, when the current study was commenced and the learning from that year recorded for analysis, the earlier Queensland-based Arts syllabus and Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (EYCG) were the curriculum documents relevant to my study.

Literacy is the next field under review, with a particular focus on writing, where possible, though many major theorists discuss the two as interwoven aspects of their theories. This vast field, so well-researched and full of controversy might have intimidated a less pugnacious caterpillar. Fortunately many had gone before to make sense of the perspectives and issues involved in the teaching and learning of reading and writing among young children.

**Review of the Emergent and Early Literacy Field**

Several philosophical perspectives have been important in shaping how literacy has been understood and the roles teachers have had in introducing it to young
children. Research in the field has focused around issues which gained importance within these perspectives (Juzwik et al., 2006). Among these perspectives, the progressive humanist position has been important in influencing early childhood teaching generally and the focus in research, as mentioned in the play section, was on describing children’s development. In relation to emergent literacy in early childhood the constructivist perspective has provided much of the research, while a strong strand of behaviourist views appears to have been in opposition to, rather than balanced with, the constructivist. Within the constructivist position there has been socio-cultural research and also research with a semiotic slant. A fourth important perspective in literacy research impacting on my teaching has been critical theory. This section of the review has narrowed down the focus to research relevant to early learning, from the constructivist, behaviourist and critical perspectives.

**Constructivist views**

As researchers have focused on children’s activity in constructing their own learning, and making meaning of the alphabetic code, some studies such as those of Piaget (1951), Vygotsky (1978), Clay (1975, 1982, 1991, 2000) and Kress (1994) have described the processes occurring, while others (Christie & Misson, 1998, Christie & Enz, 1992, Christie, Enz, & Vukelich, 2007) have examined the teacher’s role in supporting children’s activity during the process. This clarification of the teacher role, notes my pondering observer, has been important for my growing understanding of how I approach the teaching of literacy. The research and theory of early literacy learning, described here, and the application to roles of teachers has included literature with a socio-cultural lens, and that with a socio-semiotic, since both have been influential in the understanding of and analysis of my own data.

**The Socio-Cultural lens**

Vygotsky’s theory of cultural learning (1978), in which the expert initiates the apprentice into language and thought of ever-increasing complexity, within their zone of proximal development, seems to my surveying caterpillar to have
supported the focus in educational practice and theory on social and cultural aspects of learning, particularly through language, and to the child's active construction of meaning in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that higher mental functioning is the result of using the symbol systems of the culture to develop complex forms of thinking. Gredler and Shields (2008) summarised many aspects of Vygotsky's theory. They wrote: “The learner must imitate, invent, and practice the forms of behaviour that originally occurred in interaction with adults” (p. 82) and believed with Vygotsky that writing and reading behaviours made use of the cultural symbol system of the alphabet.

Gredler and Shields (2008) saw many possibilities for pedagogy within Vygotsky's theoretical framework, suggesting that the role of the adult was to discover the ZPD of the child, and within this zone provide the models for language, symbol use and thought which the child imitated until able to demonstrate independent use of the cultural tools. For teachers of young children this meant encouraging language to accompany action, leading them from primitive or elementary functioning demonstrated in motoric activity, toward language-assisted modes of operation. With the emergence of language, Vygotsky (1978) wrote, came the higher mental functioning of the adults of the culture, demonstrated first in memory, and processes of categorisation and generalisation, which eventually result in the forming of what he called “complexes” and finally abstract concepts. Literacy, as a cultural symbol-system, assists memory and thought. Adults become supporters or facilitators alongside children, in literacy, as in other cultural endeavours, scaffolding learning till children are independent at progressively more complex levels.

**Clay and the concept of emergent literacy**

As in drama pedagogy, where Heathcote (1980) was searching for authentic and ethical social contexts for her drama events, and reacting against the individualised personal development model of Slade (1954, 1958), researchers of literacy were beginning to observe the authentic social contexts of children's literacy learning and performance, and eventually to influence these in a variety of ways. The child
was being described as an active agent alongside supportive adults, in the process of building a “construct” of literacy. A key constructivist researcher and theorist in defining the processes children used in this construction, was Marie Clay. Clay began by observing five year olds beginning school in New Zealand in the sixties and seventies (1966, 1975, 1982). She coined the term “emergent literacy” (1966) to describe the child’s early exposure to literacy before entering school and the resultant understanding of literary conventions and written de-contextualised language. Clay found that children made use of their knowledge of oral structures to help them predict words in written sentences, where the structures were familiar. She described her findings in terms of the concepts the children demonstrated (1991) and her descriptors are still used in developmental profiles in Australian schools today. Some of the concepts Clay (2000) described in her research study were the permanence of words in written discourse, the left-to-right sweep and top-to-bottom direction of sentences, concepts of word, letter, sentence and later paragraph and chapter, hierarchical concepts such as collections of letters making a word and collections of words making a sentence, and awareness of spaces and punctuation marks. Children she observed demonstrated “emergent literacy” or “role-play” reading and writing through behaviours such as holding the book the right way, turning the pages, slowing down when scribing, and recognising some symbols from significant words such as the child’s name.

Since her work, others have built on and used Clay’s ideas. For example, Sulzby and Teale (2003) further defined emergent literacy as “the reading and writing behaviours of young children that precede and develop into conventional literacy” (p. 300). They researched both reading and writing behaviours in the home and early childhood settings in USA. McNaughton (1995, 2002) also followed the thread of Clay’s research, exploring types of social interactions around literacy which were occurring in different New Zealand homes. He was interested to examine the notion that reading and writing, like other social behaviours, had developmental roots in the home; they were not just behaviours which appeared when they were taught at school. McNaughton used the term “emergent literacy” to convey several ideas. One was Clay’s (1991) concept of developmental roots to
literate behaviour (McNaughton, 2002, p. 7). Another idea was that literate processes were at work in everyday cultural experiences in the home, and a third was that the term “literacy” signalled the complex interaction of reading and writing, talking, ways of knowing and ways of learning. The use of the term “emergent literacy” supported the shift in literacy definition from an individual cognitive behaviour to a culturally-defined system of communication and knowing. The contribution of parents and their styles of teaching came under the research lens. McNaughton (2002) was interested in the interaction process, as Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995a & b) had been, particularly the interactions around literate practice, which facilitated the introduction and practice of literate social behaviours before schooling. McNaughton gave a place in the process to what he called “significant others” (2002, p.15), the carers who gave the child a purpose for imitation or valuing of literacy.

Home influences were seen as important in other research which followed. Aram and Levin (2001, 2004), for instance, examined the effectiveness of maternal mediation of literacy learning in low socio-economic status (SES) Israeli kindergarteners and found it to be a significant factor in sustained literacy progress. Storybook reading, a common cultural activity of the home, was viewed as a shared activity between parent and child, which supported children’s early exploration of print (Sulzby & Teale, 2003). Brooker (2002) used a case study approach, as I did, to focus on literacy in the transition period of the year children turn five. Landry and Smith (2001) looked at the influence of parenting on emerging oral language and emerging literacy skills and concluded that “responsiveness, emotional support and a rich language model” were important in developing literacy (p. 144). Sonnenschein (2002) likewise surveyed parental reading and teaching beliefs and behaviours and concluded that parents of all social groups often supported reading, but differed in the style of teaching they preferred. Socio-economic status was correlated with preferred teaching style, with lower SES groups preferring direct instruction and high SES preferring supportive roles alongside teachers (Sonnenschein, 2002). Teaching roles from
home which did not match those of the school were seen to provide discontinuities in children’s learning until they adjusted to new models of teaching. Pelligrini (1991) indicated that the new paradigm of emergent literacy redefined terms like “readiness” and “at-risk”. Children might fail or not be ready for the school social context of literacy, because the social and cultural practices of literacy in their homes were very different from those of the schools. Connections needed to be made between these contexts to assist children in applying the literacy understandings they had to new situations. Dyson (2003) also looked closely at the social practices around literacy that children from different cultural situations brought to the learning site. As a result, she encouraged a view of multiple social paths to literacy, rather than linear development, implying for teachers an increasing emphasis on differentiation of teaching and learning within the classroom to support these variable pathways.

McNaughton (2002) extended his study of children’s literacy beyond the early years, and outside the cultural sites he had used in the previous decade. He examined in a longitudinal study of Maori education in New Zealand, the examples of success and failure of students across primary school. He discovered that Maori children made good progress during the early years of their education, but failed to sustain this in the middle years, when issues of English comprehension and vocabulary began to tell against their learning. He reported ways in which these discoveries influenced policy-making for teacher education and ongoing professional development in New Zealand and more widely across the world, as reading comprehension and vocabulary have come into the limelight. His study seems to be significant in illustrating how longitudinal research may reveal aspects of learning not immediately shown in a shorter study.

**The Socio-semiotic lens**

A semiotic (or meaning-making) theory of literacy learning was developed within the constructivist frame, particularly by Halliday (1973, 1978 and 2004) and expanded by Kress (1994, 1997, 2003a) and Christie (2002, 2005). Halliday created functional definitions of literacy, of grammar, and of literate
behaviours. He described children’s language in terms of emerging modes of use or function, rather than Piagetian stages of cognition. Halliday described the child as “a semiotic being who is learning how to mean” (2004, p.26). Halliday tracked the emergence of language in his own son, and analysed and defined the functional processes he used. He outlined a number of functions of language including interactional, informative, expository, instrumental, imaginative, personal-heuristic and regulatory functions, and introduced an array of linguistic terms into the jargon of educators, such as “mode”, “register”, “tenor”, “discourse”, “genre”, and “text”. Halliday also redefined the clause as the functional chunk of speech, as distinct from the sentence (a written form), and compared and contrasted oral and written texts. The functional linguistic research highlighted differences in oral and written clausal structures, connected to the distancing effect of written language.

Kress (1994, 1997) continued the research into children’s functional explorations of language and literacy, in the social site of the home, as McNaughton (1995, 2002) and Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) had done. His theory of language as an evolving social system is reminiscent to the ruminating caterpillar, of Rogoff (2003) and Bronfonbrenner’s (1979) dynamic definitions of culture, in which adult and child interact to build the culture, while the child is apprenticed by the expert into the forms and values of that evolving system. Kress (2003b) saw the child as purposefully interacting with an evolving culture of literacy which included accessing new media such as the computer. He made use of a social semiotic conception of literacy as the making and interpreting of meaning, using signs, symbols and icons: “My approach is to treat children by the time they come to school as competent and practised makers of signs in many semiotic modes. The task is to attempt to understand the problems they encounter in learning to write” (1997, p. 10).

Kress (1994, 1997) traced children’s development in writing as a progression from the creation of signs using a variety of forms, via a growing awareness of the sentence as a written form of utterance which is distinct from the clausal nature of oral utterances, to explicitly written forms of expression making use of more and
more de-contextualised structures and dense language. He built on the studies of linguistics by Chomsky and Halliday, who had already highlighted the differences between oracy and literacy. Kress related these differences to the progress of children toward adoption of adult symbolic forms of expression. He wrote: “The logic of speech is one of sequence, of repetition, restatement, reformulation, of slow development; the logic of writing is one of hierarchy, of compression of meaning, of complex syntactical interrelations” (Kress, 1997, p. 119). Kress went on to explore other semiotic features of children’s writing as they progressed into schooling, particularly the change in orientation from static image, in drawings, to chronological narrative. He saw evidence of these progressions in children’s changing use of tense and text shape. With the advent of computer technology, he observed the changing face of literacy connected to screen viewing. He noted new modes of literate behaviours, often involving a static and visual mode in preference to the chronological and narrative mode employed in the reading of traditional books. Whilst others have styled these new modes “multiliteracies,” Kress resisted this definition. His own definition of literacy (1997) was very specific. He narrowed it down to the visual construction of alphabetic signs, what he described as “lettered representation, and of the products which result, which are fashioned in its use” (p. 116). He went on to say: “Describing skill in other forms of cultural practices as variously “visual literacy” or “dramatic literacy” confuses literacy with competency in a field employing quite different symbols and signs” (p. 116).

Furthermore Kress wrote, like Dyson (2003), of “paths to literacy”, rather than a singular developmental path, in recognition of the multimodal, but functional, experiments with meaning that children make. He saw evidences of these modes in the artefacts they produce at home and at preschool. Kress (2003a) believed that children, once they understand signs, (which, as Vygotsky, 1978, claimed, is around three years of age), use them to realise what they wish to represent. To create their messages they employ whatever is at hand that is apt for the purpose, and, as Vygotsky further noted, not just anything can represent another object. It must have some material features in common to become the pivot for the child’s assigning of meaning. Because children use whatever materials come to
hand, Kress (1997) believed that there was no difference in their focus on three-dimensional objects, drawings or pieces of writing. All had significance as tools in the making of meaning.

One of the strengths the observing caterpillar notes in Kress’s theory is its explanatory power in terms of interpreting and analysing children’s early written artefacts. Another is the clarification it gave me as a teacher of the problems or tasks the child faces in coming to grips with symbolic systems. Children must, for example, wrote Kress (1997), move from observing three dimensional objects, to representing them in two dimensions, then to presenting through drawing a static “tableaux of images which prompt the telling of an imagined story” (p. 144). They then move on to drawing sounds as lettered representations, to narrative sequencing of events in time using a conceptual form (the sentence), and ultimately, to the writing of texts. These differences helped to clarify for me the enormous issues facing the young child as he or she comes to writing words, sentences and paragraphs as compared to speaking contextualised utterances. These issues might seem insurmountable without adult support. Teirney and Sheehy (2003) indicated from their research the essential role of adults in the culture in mediating and scaffolding the alphabetic tools and text forms required in developing meaning making: “Meaning making, once seen as a natural entity of the child, is now seen as dependent on a meaningful context where, when help is needed from a more knowledgeable expert, it is made available” (p. 188).

Kress also observed a relationship between a perspective on reading for meaning, and writing for functional purposes, which Halliday also emphasised. The ruminating caterpillar notes that since Halliday (1973, 1978, 2004) and Kress (1994, 1997, 2003a, 2003b) presented their research and theories, there has been a strong thrust for functional grammar in Australian school curricula, accompanied by close analysis of the shape and vocabulary of texts in the “genre” approach to teaching English. In this approach teachers are given prescriptions for a variety of genres, for different social contexts, and teach them explicitly.
Christie also examined children’s language development, teachers’ introduction of texts to students and the discourse of their pedagogy (2002, 2005). She included in her 2002 study both a description of the discourse of an early childhood “show and tell” session, and descriptions of secondary school teachers in action. This study became important to me as a researcher trying to identify and define elements of my own discourse as a teacher of drama working in an early childhood context. She identified elements of teacher/child discourse and compared the approach of early childhood teachers with that of secondary. Early childhood teachers, she claimed “weakly frame learning”, because they use many implicit, oblique forms of speech, with little explanation, in contrast to teachers of older children, who explicitly teach the forms and structures of particular texts and domains of learning. She observed early childhood teachers' use of the inclusive "we" to mask a directive approach and to position children as participants with the teacher’s purposes. She traced, through an examination of thematic progression in classroom dialogue, the dominance of the adult's themes and the passive, submissive responses of students. She also highlighted, as earlier analysis of discourse had done (Coulthard, 1985, Coulthard & Montgomery, 1981), the forms of questions teachers use. Most, in the authoritative stance common in the classroom, use a structure of questioning of knowledge by the teacher (interrogation), response by the child and evaluation by the teacher (the IRE model of questioning). Christie advocated more open-ended questioning, as did Perrott (1988), and Cazden (1988). Christie, however cautions against condemning teachers without looking at where the IRE model of questioning fits into “the overall structuring and negotiation of meaning in curriculum activity” (2002: p. 5). She believes that the long-term regulative purpose of any type of interaction model must be considered, as well as the instructional purpose, in the analysis of classroom discourse. Christie (2005) believed that as children progress into reading and writing, one of the most important linguistic developmental tasks is the control of written language as a distinct mode of expression. Children, she noted further, when they begin to write, use structures familiar from oral language. In their home settings they may be exposed to written genres such as picture books, and bring some knowledge of these text forms with them to school.
Kenner (2000) took Kress’s (1994, 1997) socio-semiotic model and examined the writing play of young children in a nursery school when adults sat and wrote cards and messages alongside the children. Kenner found from analysis of children’s writing behaviour that three descriptors were useful: “symbolic repertoire, stance as a writer, and visual layout of texts”. These nursery school children saw themselves as role-play writers and used the layout of lists and sentences, with left-to-write sweep and top to bottom progression, when these were modelled.

**The Behaviourist view**

In direct contrast to the approach of Kress, Clay, Halliday and Christie, is the behaviourist position. Rather than taking a broad brush approach, researchers using this perspective on learning literacy have examined the learning of discrete skills in literacy, with direct instruction of these skills by teachers. Researchers such as Adams (1990), Frost (2001), Juel, Griffith and Gough (1986), Juel (2001), Diamond, Garde and Powell (2008) all focused on describing children’s learning of these discrete skills and advocated teacher use of very explicit and sequential modes of instruction.

Supporting this research were the investigations into the neurological functioning of the eye and brain. Neurological research produced what Kucer (2005) calls the “dense processing view” of cognition. Neurological research into the rapid eye movements of confident and beginner readers scanning text was a source of new understanding of the processes of word recognition, text comprehension and production. McCutchen (2000) described how readers gradually build a store of orthographic patterns in their memory, providing automaticity. He believed that beginning readers focus on the features of grapho-phonics which advanced readers can filter out, leaving them vulnerable to mechanical reading without comprehension. Readers and writers must commit their emerging skills to short-term and then long-term memory. Beginning writers and readers use what is available in the short term memory, along with vocabulary and background knowledge from their long-term memory (McCutchen, 2000). This researcher
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noted moreover that because young readers and writers have few resources in their long-term memory, they are often restricted to short-term memory in their literacy, so cannot, for some time, make use of aspects such as genre, style, audience and topic. To attempt to do so would cause what these educators style as “cognitive overload” (McCutchen, 2000). At the level of word, the developing child must make sense of decoding and encoding; at the level of text, the same child must master the form, conventions and style of de-contextualised written utterances. His position is reinforced by the research of Ritchey (2007) in describing the process of writing development and Lamme, Fu, Johnson and Savage (2002) who describe the teacher role in supporting that development. McCutchen believed that while the process of encoding and decoding might take one to four years, the second may take a lifetime.

Kucer (2005) described the instruction of teachers within the behaviourist view as direct instruction. Teachers using direct skill instruction initially provide children with practice in grapho-phonic skills and automatic sight word recognition so they could move beyond these to more complex reading and writing tasks. To avoid cognitive overload, literacy teachers may use familiar oral language structures at first, such as instructions, directions, greetings or messages (Clay, 1991). Once children master the alphabetic principles and have some automatic sight vocabulary and spelling knowledge, they may then introduce them to more de-contextualised written text forms.

**Critical literacy**

The term “critical literacy” is a product of the philosophy of critical theory and the focus on the wider political contexts of texts. Christie’s (2005) position on the development of critical literacy was that: “Only when children have developed strong skills in recognising and reading materials can they take the subsequent step of reflecting on what they have read in a critical manner” (p. 91). She believed reflection would follow secure long-term memory in the early tasks of literacy. Ewing (2006) believed, however, that the development of perspective-taking was an aspect of critical literacy which could emerge early in the development of
readers and writers, particularly during explorations in drama. She describes a research project in critical literacy, in which students were able to develop the perspectives of different characters in “The Burnt Stick”, a narrative about an aboriginal child taken from his home and family. Children wrote in role and developed an understanding of history as a story from multiple perspectives.

Winston (1998) also examined the development of perspective-taking, as young children explored literature through drama, particularly as they explored stereotypes of characters in fairy tales. Both researchers viewed drama as a valuable tool in the critical perspective-taking process, an important connection between these fields of drama and literacy. Conceptually, the development of features of critical literacy in young children seemed to me, from my early childhood teaching experience and understanding of cognition from the theory of Vygotsky, to be dependent on an emerging cognition of groups in society and of individual role and characterisation in narrative.

**Toward a synthesis of views**

In Queensland, an attempt has been made to combine the constructivist perspective of meaning-making and the introduction to genre or the use of texts, the behaviourist perspective on direct instruction of cognitive and linguistic skills used to decode and encode words and texts, and the critical perspective deconstructing text, in what is called “the four resources model”. This was developed by Freebody and Luke in 1990 (The State of Queensland, 2003). The model was disseminated through the schools through workshops in literacy, over the next few years (The State of Queensland, 2006). Luke in the report in 2003 defined four roles for the child developing in literacy: the “text maker”, “text user”, “text analyst”, and “critic”.

Kucer (2005) designed a similar model for what he called the “dimensions” of literacy using four descriptors: cognitive, linguistic, socio-cultural and developmental. He placed Luke’s “text user” and “critic” roles from the four resources model within the socio-cultural dimension, and added a role as “scientist and construction worker” to the developmental dimension. He wrote: “Becoming or
being literate means learning to effectively, efficiently and simultaneously control the linguistic, cognitive, socio-cultural, and developmental dimensions of written language in a transactive fashion." (2005, p. 4).

Kucer (2005) believed that the developmental perspective holds all the other literacy aspects together, and that becoming literate is a life-long process. Development is not described in lock-step stages, but always characterised by learning leading development, in the presence of a social interaction with more able peers or adults. Such a synthesis of views and dimensions does not always occur in research, teacher education theory or practice. The fluctuations between views have been styled “The Great Debate”.

The great debate
Jeanne Chall first coined the term the “Great Debate” in 1967. She examined research in the teaching of reading and concluded that the evidence was in favour of systematic and very explicit phonics teaching over methods emphasising holistic, embedded approaches (1967). Goodman (1990), a champion of holistic or “whole language” approaches, believed, however, that holistic approaches modelled on the meaningful exchanges involving oral language learning in the home were the best model for introducing literacy, and that phonics could be assimilated incidentally when embedded in good literature experiences.

Soderman, Gregory and McCarty (2005) supported this approach. Researchers, however, were consistently finding that children needed phonological awareness and direct instruction in phonics in order to succeed in literacy tasks (Adams, 1990, 2004, Juel, 2001, Juel, Griffith & Gough, 1986, Frost, 2001, Mesmer & Griffith, 2005, Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005, Diamond et al. 2008). Barbour (1987) reviewed a vast body of research exploring variables such as age, gender, social background, metalinguistic ability, phonics, comprehension and writing to read. The review provided no conclusive answers to the question of most effective methods or optimal ages for beginning reading. In 1999, Cunningham and Allington came to the same conclusion: that no one single approach will ever teach all children.
A great deal of the heat of the debate seems to the ruminating caterpillar to have come from advocates for children with learning difficulties, who generally found constructivist methods of teaching to assume too much of many children, particularly in terms of making associations across contexts and building constructs. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) gave a damning indictment of constructivist methods of discovery, problem-solving and inquiry-based teaching, citing strong evidence for the effectiveness of direct, guided instruction (which was dubbed “instructivism”) for all students in light of current knowledge of cognitive load, and apprentice-expert differences. Moreover, Coultheart and Prior (2006) provided evidence from reviewing relevant research, that all early years teaching of literacy should include extensive systematic, synthetic phonics instruction. Synthetic, as opposed to analytic phonics, according to Ellis (2007), employs decoding across whole syllables, for example “c-a-t”, blended to “cat”, whereas analytic methods emphasise word patterns and analogies, connecting the “onset” of a word to its “rime”. For example, familiarity with “at”, as a rime, gives children a pattern for sounding out “cat” and “fat” once they know the “onset” consonants.

Yates (1988, 1990, 2005) and Ellis (2005) quoted a body of research in Australia identifying features of effective pedagogy, including classroom management, curriculum knowledge, learner differentiation, and instructional skills such as reviewing, activation of prior knowledge, goal-setting, clear explanation, breakdown of learning into simple steps, demonstration, fast-pacing, and graduated practice sessions. Many of these features characterised instructivist approaches. Hattie (2003) collated fifteen years of meta-analysis of effective pedagogy and supported these findings. He also emphasised feedback and clarity of learning intent. However, he also included more qualitative features such as classroom climate, engagement and passion. Rowe (2009) concluded that, while direct instruction and strategy instruction produce superior results, at least in the short-term, compared to constructivist approaches, the two should not be mutually exclusive or independent: “Both approaches have merit in their own right provided that students have the basic knowledge and skills (best provided by direct instruction) before engaging in ‘rich’ constructivist activities” (p. 105). Kuhn (2007)
addressed this issue of a balance of timing in the use of direct instruction when discussing the teaching of writing. Gore (2001), in defining “productive pedagogies”, from a study of the most effective teachers in the local Queensland scene identified “relevance, recognition of difference, supportive classroom climate and intellectual quality” (p. 127) as recurring features of their practice. These could be arguably be present in classrooms favouring either approach though constructivists might defend the relevance of holistic methods over approaches favouring the teaching of discrete elements of literacy.

Westwood (2008a) differentiated between instructivist and constructivist philosophies which influence the style of teaching chosen, but he believed that the type of knowledge or skill dealt with, and the age and ability of the students, should influence the choice of approach which may be effective or appropriate. Drama pedagogy and early childhood teaching generally came under the banner of domains for constructivist approaches, according to his classification process. He believed there was strong evidence from the research that a balanced approach could be achieved “retaining the motivation and authentic elements of whole language while at the same time ensuring that decoding skills and comprehension strategies are directly taught and thoroughly practised” (Westwood, 2008b, p. 8). Purcell-Gates, Duke and Martineau (2007) and Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall and Tower (2006) also recommended authenticity of purpose in motivating children to write. Westwood (2008a) described Australian research by Yates (2005), which highlighted teacher management styles, expectations, classroom climate, understanding of student learning, a deep knowledge of their subject, scaffolding of content knowledge and presentation skills. Kauchak and Eggen’s descriptors for effective schooling (2007), compiled from a body of research, included: acceptance and caring, a safe and orderly learning environment, differentiation, a high level of engaged learning time, positive attitudes and motivation, effective communication, organisation, and well planned lessons. These lessons included a review, a focus, a development period with clear, connected and sequential steps and questioning to involve students and provide
feedback, a closure and assessment. These descriptors suggest a balance of views, particularly between constructivist and instructivist approaches to pedagogy. Juel, Griffith and Gough (1986), Emmitt (1998), Baumann, Hoffman, Moon and Duffy-Hester (1998), Arthur and Makin (2001), Adams (2004), Justice and Kaderavek (2004), Xue and Meisels (2004), Bickley (2004), Center (2005), Mesmer and Griffith (2005) and even Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) have all advocated balanced approaches where phonics and explorations of whole meaningful texts are both important. Studies of balanced curricula for early childhood (Stahl & Yaden, 2004, Center, 2005, Christie, 2005, Stahl & Murray, 2006, Stahl & McKenna, 2006 and Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2007) in which children receive both context-embedded and explicit instruction, addressed the issue of timing, particularly for the introduction of phonics. Stahl and Murray, for instance, believed that a whole language or constructivist approach was valuable when children were being introduced to the broader context of social uses and functions of literacy, during preschool. On the other hand, they advised that for Year One students, accessing the mechanics of the alphabetic tool, a direct and systematic, synthetic phonic approach such as that described by Ellis (2007) was much more effective than a whole-language approach. By this stage of literacy learning, frequent explicit teaching and practice would be necessary to give children the strong, long-term grasp of grapho-phonics they needed in order to develop automaticity, so that they then could move beyond mechanics to deeper comprehension. This view was supported by Tivnan and Hemphill (2005).

Constructivist researchers such as Gambrell (1996) have identified motivation as an important aspect of holistic or “whole language” teaching approaches, which actively and emotionally involved the student in learning, and which were not necessarily present in instruction focused on breaking learning up into discrete elements with lots of rote practice. Bruning and Horn (2000) indicated two significant factors in any teaching approach which motivate children to write over a sustained period: enthusiasm for literacy modelled by the teacher, and the authenticity of purpose as an expressive tool provided by the writing experience. Motivation and the development of long-term abstract concepts are features of the
constructivist approach which appear to be much more difficult to measure than progress in skills taught by direct instruction, so the effective teaching/learning debate continues to resist resolution.

The great debate provided a backdrop for curriculum choices and pedagogical understanding during the year of the research study. For the ruminating caterpillar on the mushroom, surveying the literature around reading and writing, it provoked the same advice as that given to Alice: "One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter" (Carroll, 1985, p. 42). It seemed to be a continuing question of moderation and balance. The caterpillar now moves on to begin the process of finding vines to intertwine the three fields. The review follows the sequence of interfaces: dramatic play and emergent literacy, drama and literacy, particularly writing, and dramatic play and drama, culminating in the connection of drama, play and writing.

**Connecting dramatic play and emergent literacy**

There are many precedents in the research and theoretical literature of early childhood for play pedagogy linked with literacy. This section includes a review of research on emergent literacy practices embedded in early childhood play situations, research connecting dramatic play and narrative, and research on playful approaches in early schooling contexts.

**Literacy embedded in play**

Socio-dramatic play and emergent literacy are defined by constructivist researchers such as McNaughton (1995) as two socio-cultural activities of the child: at home and in early childhood institutions. Davidson (1996), Einarsdóttir (1996) and Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony (2000) also explored the emergent literacy behaviours of preschool children. Landry and Smith (2001) described a significant, intuitive, progressive mediation of oral language by mothers as teachers in real-world and play situations in which they were involved with their children. These researchers found that parents who provide responsive, emotionally and linguistically rich models of interaction encouraged literacy as well
as oral language. They identified the facilitating and enhancing role of responsive parents coaching their children in many of these interactions. Parents encouraged oral language and emergent literacy practice as two aspects of their home culture in the way McNaughton (1995, 2002), Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) and Rogoff (2003) described.

Some researchers exploring the interface of play and emergent literacy within this perspective observed teachers providing tools for literacy in children’s play environments, as teachers took on the role of stage-setters mimicking the provisions of home and work places within their cultural scene. Others have researched the effects of more proactive interventions, where teachers have facilitated children’s use of these materials. Still others have observed the role of parents providing oral language and literacy experiences within the home environment.

Neuman and Roskos undertook several studies into emergent literacy in dramatic play settings (1990, 1991, 1993 and 1997). In their first study (1990) they found peers to be effective coaches in one another’s literacy, but despite children being situated in the community of literate practitioners, there was no evidence of substantial literate development coming from the play situation, or that all children were able to benefit from the intervention, because the exchanges were incidental and occasional. Bergen and Mauer (2000), in a longitudinal study of literacy-enriched play areas in preschool, reported enhanced levels of reading of environmental print, from exposure in the play environment. The findings were consistent with those of Vukelich in 1994.

Some of the researchers made use of control groups to compare modes of intervention. Christie and Enz (1992) used a control group to compare intervention using literacy materials only, with intervention which included adult involvement, in the form of suggestions and role modelling of use of materials. Because of the perspective on role-play writing and reading as a natural precursor to conventional script use, no analysis was made of the quality of writing responses, or their
development over time. Nor was it noted whether all children spontaneously engaged with the materials. Children who experienced the adult involvement demonstrated much more frequent and appropriate use of the literacy tools. These researchers also found peers to be effective coaches of each other’s literacy practice. Morrow’s (1990) study also made use of a control group to monitor the effects of literacy materials with or without adult intervention and guidance. Her research findings definitely favoured the teacher guidance group, with the effect of treatment continuing after a delayed period of time.

Schrader (1990) explored the interactions of adults and children around literacy in the play environment and defined two types of teaching styles: extending and redirecting. Her analysis was based on a Vygotskian conception of the adult role as scaffolder of the zone of proximal development. She found that all of the four teachers observed used more extending than redirecting styles. There was an assumption among the teachers and the researcher that encouraging children to “role-play” writing would precipitate a flow of progress into use of the alphabetic script. “Natural literacy development can be cultivated within the context of children’s symbolic play” (p. 100). The literacy practice observed among the children was awareness of symbols as meaningful aspects of their cultural environment.

Roskos and Christie (2001) in their analysis of play-literacy research identified three common assumptions in recent studies, including:

- that play serves literacy,
- that play is oral language experience which will ultimately benefit written expression and comprehension,
- that play is an opportunity for teachers and play peers to model literate practice, and for children to read environmental print and develop phonological awareness and print motivation.

They criticised these unquestioned assumptions, pointing out, for instance, that literacy has also been found to serve play. Roskos and Christie further suggested that other settings may be more efficient and effective in encouraging
environmental print awareness and phonological understandings, than the play settings chosen. They challenged the view that all play is beneficial, or that all its language enhances development. Furthermore, they rejected some studies as imprecise in their definition of play, their attempt to read correlation as causality and their lack of consistency in measuring what they claim to be researching.

A recent study, from the socio-cultural dimension of constructivist thought, is that of Wohlwend (2008), which described the meaning-making activities of children in a pre-kindergarten class around play, design and literacy in terms of a “nexus of practice” (p. 333) in which reading assisted play and play assisted reading as culturally-identified activities practising the skills of the culture in different settings. Writing and designing were described in the same terms. The value of the activity was seen both as apprenticeship into cultural identity and as mediated practice, in which peers as well as teachers mediated the culture. Being descriptive, there was no attempt to clarify the progress the children made in alphabetic knowledge through the activities described.

Perhaps the most convincing and engaging example of effectively connecting play and literacy, under a constructivist banner, was Hall’s garage case study (Hall, 2005). Hall and Robinson (2003) strongly believed in play-embedded emergent literacy because of “its holistic and authentic nature, the control children wield over its use and development, the variety of situations and genres available to it, and the opportunities for cooperative learning it provides” (p. 114). They made use of literacy events within a dramatic play context, in this case a garage, which provoked children to write for a variety of purposes. The examples of enthusiastic, purposeful and authentic in-role writing are impressive even to our dour caterpillar puffing on his hookah, especially as the interventions demonstrate elements of tension very reminiscent of drama, and hence intertwine drama, literacy and dramatic play. Hall used a variety of text experiences in his interventions. Year One and Reception children were involved in this study and already wrote fluently. In terms of writing development they would be described as at the early literacy, rather than the emergent or role play, stage (Education Department of
Western Australia, 1995). The literacy events provoked responses involving letter-writing, creation of orders, protests, lists, invitations, newspapers, rules and instructions. Hall and Robinson found that the authentic play situations requiring literate responses were effective in providing a strong sense of audience and purpose for children’s writing (2003). A play world was created which unified children in their focus, and in which literacy was useful and necessary to the children’s purposes. Hall’s research goal was to establish dramatic play as a significant site for authentic literacy practice (Hall, 2005).

Some researchers have demonstrated that children exploring emergent literacy practice as cultural activity only write with what skills they have developed at the time, and then not necessarily or consistently. Isenberg and Jacob (1983), for instance, when they studied four year olds’ use of literacy materials placed in their preschool environment, found that children only used literacy materials appropriately in their play if they had the knowledge and skills to do so. Likewise Mayer observed (2007) that even with access to some alphabet knowledge, children did not always demonstrate what skills they had available.

**Play and narrative**

Studies that have focused on the connections between narrative and socio-dramatic play include those of Rowe (1998, 2003, 2007), Goodman (1990) and Dunn and Stinson (2012). Bruner described narrative competence as a combination of narrative comprehension and narrative production (1986). Narrative production relates particularly to children’s writing productivity, but the two are interwoven, and observed in dramatic play and drama as much as in reading comprehension and writing production, so research discussed here will examine narrative generally. Goodman conducted a longitudinal naturalistic study of children’s socio-dramatic play and its link with literacy. She found that the narrative of picture stories formed the clearest link between literacy and play, as stories read to children provided the play scripts which children took into their imaginative activity, at least until television-viewing and other digital media took over. Power issues associated with the possession of literacy objects such as
maps was also observed in this study, and she suggested that it was the understanding of the texts demonstrated by children as they played which seemed to provide them with this power. Rowe’s qualitative studies of very young children and literacy yielded similar findings to those of Goodman in relation to literacy-linked play scripts (Rowe, 1998, 2003, 2007).

Dunn and Stinson (2011) described a case study of a teacher using a picture book. Here the children read a story with their teacher, but then created through drama an ending quite different from the one suggested by the author. Making effective use of dramatic tension to open up the story to new possibilities, a play centre was established. The result was sustained dramatic play and a considerable amount of literate play behaviour supported by the teacher’s pedagogy that included the conscious use of drama techniques as well as the more usual stage setting and facilitating and enabling behaviour adopted by early childhood teachers. Her interventions could equally well have been described in the next section on drama and literacy. The caterpillar observes more interweaving vines drawing the teacher roles and fields of dramatic play and drama together.

Besides the provision of a rich diet of picture books as a stimulus to narrative production, the role of concrete play materials in the production of narrative has been explored by some researchers. A Turkish study of narrative development in children (Ilgaz & Aksu-Koç, 2005) compared children’s ability to build a narrative when they were given a play time with a set of toys (play-prompted), to their ability to build a narrative without any play-prompt (direct-elicited). The findings were that play-prompting helped the three and four year olds to produce an oral narrative, but was not significant for the five year olds who could create a narrative with or without toys. Broadhead and English (2005) used “story-bags” of model characters and props, with seven year olds, and found that their creative writing was enhanced after the children took these bags home for a play period before they wrote. In both oral and written narrative production, the opportunities adults provided for dramatic play with props was found to be important.
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Dramatic presentation of story narrative alongside children’s play sessions was also the focus of studies following Lindqvist’s (1995) seminal work on the play world concept. A full discussion of Lindqvist’s important work is reserved for the section connecting dramatic play and drama, but here, studies including Hakkarainen’s (2004, 2008) research in Finland, and Baumer et al. (2005) in USA are examined. Hakkarainen (2008) trialled dramatic presentations of social and moral problems around a traditional tale, “Rumpelstiltskin”, in order to aid transition from preschool to primary education, when children were around six years of age, while Baumer et al. (2005) sought to develop narrative competence through dramatic activity based on C. S. Lewis’s “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe”. Children’s dramatic play, supported by and emerging out of the adult input, was a focus of findings in both studies.

Hakkarainen described children’s sustained commitment and involvement with the themes over a period. The language of interaction of children with adults and their cooperative goal-setting, problem-solving and reflection were also important. Hakkarainen believed that these cognitive behaviours would be relevant to children’s later success as learners in the primary school, despite the absence of specific literacy teaching in the project. Hakkarainen (2004) believed that narrative play activity alongside competent adults was a key to children’s cognitive adjustment from perceptually-directed activity to learning involving concepts and generalisations necessary for schooling. He followed Vygotsky’s model of cognitive development in shaping his own theory in relation to this transitional schooling period. Baumer et al. (2005) examined performance of a control group, which were taught comprehension skills, using traditional methods but excluding pretend play. This group were compared with a play world group. The findings were that the play world group performed significantly better at writing tasks in aspects such as narrative length, coherence and comprehension. Both research study groups were of children aged 5 to 7 years.

Playful schooling
Another aspect of the dramatic play/literacy interface is that of playful literacy in
formal school settings, rather than role-play literacy experiences in early childhood free play settings. Researchers and teachers in school settings (Stone, 1995, and Scully & Roberts, 2002) have demonstrated that playful experiences with the alphabetic code provided by teachers in early primary school classrooms can be as motivating for children as literacy experiences embedded in play. Literacy/play dichotomies may be blurred in teaching so that children see literacy as play rather than “schoolwork”. Cooney, Gupton and O’ Laughlin (2000) reported qualitative research in constructivist classrooms where work-play dichotomies ceased to be obvious as teachers negotiated a curriculum in which both teacher and child purposes were included. They deduced that children saw work as play because their choices were included. Spontaneity was also identified as a feature of the constructivist approach present in the classrooms. Playfulness was linked with spontaneity as a disposition necessary to cope with the changing world of the twenty-first century (Cooney et al., 2000). Dutton (1991) also identified motivation as a factor supporting learning in situations where children’s choices were included in the direction of the curriculum. Dutton (1991) advocated the inclusion of play time and facilities in early primary school classrooms.

Dramatic play and emergent literacy, where teachers have taken active roles in supporting children’s use of and access to the literate practices, or where teachers have provided children with opportunities to make choices among literacy activities, have been the focus of this section. The roles and stance of teachers in supporting learning have stood in contrast to the “Magistral” stance often associated with the teaching of literacy (Christie, 2002). To Alice’s caterpillar, searching for the vines to intertwine these research fields, the parallels between drama pedagogy and early literacy in the school setting, and dramatic play intervention and emergent literacy in the home and preschool, begin to appear, clarifying the merging of pedagogies in my own approach.

**Connecting Drama and Literacy**

In this section, research into particular schooling situations where writing and other aspects of literacy has been encouraged through process drama has been
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described first. This is followed by some studies of puppetry as a drama form supporting literacy learning. The section concludes with a survey of more general reviews of studies focused on drama and other aesthetic domains as appropriate pedagogy for literacy.

**Drama as a catalyst for writing**

The social, literary and cognitive benefits of drama have been an important focus of educational research during an era when drama education has had to advocate for a position in the school curriculum alongside such “serious” subjects as maths and science (O’Toole, 2006). In the studies reported below, process drama was used very successfully to stimulate children’s writing and in one case, their initial understanding of letter/sound relationships.

The first study described here (Cremin, Gouuch, Blakemore, Goff & Macdonald, 2006) is significant for my own research because like mine, it was a longitudinal study of a drama teaching approach, even though it was targeted at 10 to 12 year olds and 6 to 7 year olds in two different schools in England. Also, as in my study, picture books were used as pretexts during drama, though the researchers here were much more experienced drama teachers with a clear understanding of the use of story as pretext in drama. Cremin *et al.* (2006) were teacher-researchers who conducted a significant study connecting drama and writing. The study had two aspects, a pilot study comparing two approaches, and a main study employing the approach which had been found to be more effective for writing during the earlier study. The two approaches were styled a “genre specific” and a “seizing the moment” (p. 276) approach. In the “genre specific” approach, the teachers “focussed on a specific genre of writing and planned how to elicit this during a drama” (p. 276). In the “seizing the moment” approach they planned the drama sessions but allowed the literacy events to emerge out of the flow of the improvisation or other drama activity that occurred. Children had the freedom to choose their own form and purpose of writing. The latter approach produced much stronger writing responses than the former, and in the main study, it was the “seize the moment” approach that was used across two terms of drama activity.
Case studies were developed of six children, and the writing production flowing from their drama sessions was assessed using three overarching categories: “text structure and organisation, composition and effect, and sentence structure and punctuation” (p. 278). The researchers found three threads which seemed to be vital in connecting drama with writing: “the presence of tension, emotional engagement and incubation and a strong sense of stance and purpose gained in part through role adoption” (p. 279). Their findings were that in the “seize the moment” writing responses, children were highly motivated and wrote with high concentration. They were deeply engaged in the dramas and in the writing. The dramas provided support for the incubation of ideas which often emerged later in the writing. When children returned to their writing journals later in the day they carried these incubated ideas with them and wrote about the themes and ideas gathered earlier in the drama. Improvisation, an important aspect of process drama, appeared to particularly support the flow of ideas in their narrative production, both during the drama and in their writing.

Writing in role from a particular perspective during a process drama helped children be more consistent with the role assumed in the writing and even with the tense they used. As Hall and Robinson had found in their study of writing infused in the dramatic play of the “garage” situation (2003), the dramatic approach also helped to provide a stronger sense of audience and purpose for children’s writing.

Marino (2012) studied the effects of drama on children’s writing in a New Zealand classroom among 9 to 10 year olds. The children, who had previously disengaged from writing during formulaic genre-based approaches to studying literature, changed considerably when a drama approach was employed. Here the teacher-researcher devised a series of drama events around a narrative text, while the children wrote during and in response to the drama. Role and dramatic tension were found to be important in this study, as tension raised the stakes and gave children a sense of the importance, usefulness and indeed necessity of writing in the drama contexts. All children engaged fully with the text and showed understanding of its purpose as well as commitment to their writing tasks.
Taking on roles as the characters from the text also seemed to support children’s involvement and enhanced their sustained ability to write in role.

Crumpler and Schneider (2002) explored the results of five studies employing drama as a tool for literacy learning. Their focus was on composing in role and complexity of stance. Importantly, the studies were of young children in their first few years of writing. In each study children wrote fluently and imaginatively in role and when responding in writing to the events of the drama. “Drama becomes a conduit that facilitates the flow of imagination between process and product.” (Crumpler & Schneider, 2002, p. 77). As in the studies described above, children wrote with a clear sense of their role and audience, and demonstrated a great deal of reflection about their own and their characters’ actions.

In another study by Dunn and Stinson (2012) the focus was on the role of emotion in drama, and the effects this had on the writing children produced, during a short-term drama intervention. The children were at the end of their first semester of Year one at school. They had a sound understanding of the alphabetic code from six months of sequential teaching of phonic awareness, so they had skills in writing phonetically to support the written responses they gave to the drama. The researchers found that after five consecutive, one-hour sessions spent engaged in a drama entitled “The Wish”, the children wrote with enthusiasm, passion and sustained commitment, suggesting that this commitment was developed because the children’s emotions and empathy with the plight of the characters had been aroused.

These studies have explored drama as a catalyst for writing experiences among children with some alphabetic knowledge. Hertzberg (2000), however, used an action research frame to explore drama used to introduce literacy concepts and phonemic awareness in young children beginning Year One. In a drama about a statue that could only be restored to life with an alliterative spell, she was able to focus children on the beginning sounds in words, necessary for their access to phonetic skills. This is one of the few Australian studies involving process drama.
and literacy positioned at the transition between preschool and primary schooling where my own study was situated.

Common elements of drama that support children’s writing can be drawn out from the research findings of the studies described above. The arousal of emotion building dramatic tension has been important, aesthetic engagement, focus and motivation has been present in children’s commitment to both drama and literacy practice, imagination and creativity has been seen to flow, and children have shown a clearer understanding of their role, purpose and audience. In the puppetry research available some of these features have been identified as well.

**Puppetry and literacy**
The use of puppetry, a theatre form once deprecated by Slade (1954) as a poor brother to drama because of its associations with theatre, and because it might “arrest children in the doll-stage” (p. 316), has been given recognition by some researchers for its contribution to oral language, and opportunities for engagement with both narrative and alphabetic activity. Two such studies are described here. Fisler (2003) reported on a puppetry project with seven year olds, which was designed to encourage reading, and found that children read twice as fluently after rehearsing story scripts for puppet shows, as they had before the intervention. The study relied on teacher perceptions of this progress, but some improvement was definitely demonstrable. The rehearsal process provided children with an authentic purpose for reading and rereading, and peer tutoring was noted among the children. Excitement and interest in reading were observed by researchers and teachers.

Another puppetry project by Bredikyte (2000), with two to seven year olds, explored the children’s response to a puppet presentation of a familiar fairy tale, when they had the opportunity to make their own puppets and produce a version of their own. She found that the children developed their own interpretation of the play which demonstrated an understanding of plot, and which in itself shaped their comprehension of dialogue, characterisation and narrative. The scaffolding
provided by adults in the process was recognised as a key to the success of the re-
enactment.

**General reviews of drama as a pedagogical approach**

Some broad reviews of drama research connected with children’s literacy have yielded general but somewhat variable results for the literacy benefits of drama education.

Mages (2008) reviewed thirty-five studies over forty years of educational drama research linking drama with language development, because of its importance for later literacy development. She criticised many of these studies for lack of clarity on definitions of drama, teacher quality, teacher-child ratios, citation of literature used, details of frequency of exposure to the dramatic and literacy activities, teacher-child interactions around the composition and dramatization of stories, and lack of a clear line of rigorous research which others are able to replicate. Despite this fuzziness in the research field, she did find solid backing for the positive effect of drama experiences in enhancing oral language, particularly in the meta-analyses of Kardash and Wright in 1987 and Podlozny in 2000, both described in her review in 2000. Podlozny’s own meta-analysis (2000) found correlations between drama and comprehension, reading achievement, reading readiness, and writing, but only weak connections with vocabulary. Cornett’s research (2003) also found general correlations.

Another meta-analysis, by Winner and Cooper (2000), examined arts education and academic achievement generally, and found a strong correlation. They cautioned against interpreting correlation as causality, because high achievers might choose to study in the arts and the causality might therefore operate in the opposite direction. Highly motivated students were observed to participate well in academia, the arts and sport, and to achieve in all these areas. A third meta-analysis (Moga, Burger, Hetland & Winner, 2000) looked at research linking the arts and creative thinking, and found correlations rather than causality, concluding also that causality might be working in either direction.
De la Cruz (1995) found drama to be effective as a support for oral language and social skill learning among children with learning difficulties (1995). Mages (2006) proposed a cognitive theory to explain how drama teaching affects language, but in particular, narrative competence. She recognised firstly that drama’s contribution to narrative has been variously described by researchers as practice and motivation by Paley and McCaslin in the 1980s, as the creation of meaningful contexts which help children understand the content of the narrative by Singer and Singer in 1990, as motoric activity which capitalises on action for learning and as verbal negotiation by Marbach and Yawkey in 1980, as schema development by Dansky in 1986, and as verbal negotiation with peers by Pellegrini and Galda in 1982. Mages developed a cognitive model which she believes synthesised these earlier theories. She believes that if literature itself provides children with instructions for the imagination, then drama provides training in how best to follow these instructions. Young children may have difficulty creating images, sounds, sensations and emotional responses, in their imagination. Dramatization, she suggested in her article, provides a tangible context for de-contextualised language and for the sensory world linked to that language. She wrote further “As they enact the story children become better able to project themselves into the make-believe world of the narrative. They improve in ability to simulate the events, characters and nuances of the story and of narrative in general.” (Mages, 2006, p. 5). She saw the adult role as one providing the vocabulary, plot elaborations and other prompts to help hold the story line together. Mages did not test her own theory in this context, but offered several suggestions for research along these lines.

Carger (2004) and Ehrenworth and Labbo (2003) observed the power of arts experiences of different types to motivate and stimulate creative written responses. Johnson (2007) saw learning experiences with the arts and creative writing as the “synergistic relation between expressive communication across modalities” (p. 318). Kress (1997) had suggested that young children cross from mode to mode freely as they express themselves purposefully in activities which include literacy and the arts.
Eisner was an advocate for the arts for arts’ sake, rather than as a tool for other learning. Davis (2005) also indicated from her research that arts experiences in drama, music, visual arts and dance enhance thought, enabling children to do, reflect and revise “in a cycle of teaching and learning which is an important part of all human experience” (p. 3). Carlson (1993), Tarlton (2003) Heath (2004), Davis (2005) and Gallagher (2005) used and advocated arts experiences to engage the interest, build language and creative thought, and capture the imagination of children. Custadero saw the art form of music in particular as a vital agent in the engagement of young children (2005b). All of these researchers were practitioners in the arts who observed benefits in weaving an aesthetic focus into educational experiences, as I sought to do in the year privileging drama and play.

Motivation, and building and supporting the flow of imagination and language have been identified again as important features. Gambrell (1996) and Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2003) described motivation in literacy activity as the most important dynamic in the learning situation. Alice’s observing caterpillar moves on to survey the scene at the third interface of the three fields: connecting drama and dramatic play. Here the common threads in dramatic pedagogies become clearer.

Connecting Drama and Dramatic Play
In this section, the review has focused firstly on research where drama was used with the direct purpose of stimulating the quality of children’s dramatic play in early childhood settings. Elements of the experiences which were important in the process have been identified, and the significance of the teacher role in both drama and play has been discussed. A review of some other types of dramatic intervention used by researchers draws the section to a close, before the final triune connection of drama, dramatic play and writing is discussed.

Dramatic intervention in play
I have already noted that Lindqvist (1995) acknowledged the roots of her aesthetic theory of play in the theory of Vygotsky, who, she believed, also emphasised the strong relationship of play with drama, because both evolve by making use of
imagination, rules and emotions. Lindqvist (1995) believed with Vygotsky that aesthetic form is necessary in order for knowledge to “come alive”, and in this way imagination and emotion shape learning. Her preschool research aimed to answer the question “How can a creative pedagogy of play be created as part of the regular activity?” (p. 68). Her chosen method of intervention was to bring a team of actors into preschool classrooms, introducing dramatizations based around themes such as fear and loneliness, which were meaningful to young children, and around characters from literature such as “Pippi-long-stocking” and the “Moomintroll” creatures, which continue to delight Scandinavian children. She observed and documented the resultant play in three preschool centres. Her purpose was to discover in what ways the aesthetic forms of literature, music and drama can be used to influence play development. She believed that “charging the environment with emotions would fuel the imagination of both children and adults” (p. 72).

Her conclusion was that adult dramatic intervention, in character, introduced fictitious worlds to children and enabled them to develop a shared play world in which sustained and complex play occurred, rich with dialogue. Her actors trained teaching staff to take on dramatic roles and improvisation. They became, to the children, much more interesting play-fellows as a result. There was no attempt in the study to promote alphabetic script writing or reading, but the approach was certainly didactic and interventionist, and as mentioned in the previous section, strong connections with literary narrative were made.

Researchers in Scandinavia, following Lindqvist (1995), explored the adult-scaffolded play world notion and its connection to drama and to narrative competence. Rainio (2008) and Ferholt and Lecusay (2010) connected the adult teaching role in the play worlds with a concept of a children’s shared ZPD. A “play world” created during a didactic drama intervention gave the children involved a shared imagined space where a teacher could step in to support children’s emerging ideas and cognition. She could model language charged with emotion and connected to the characters and plots which the drama made so real to the children. Hayward (in Meadows & Cashden, 1988) made extensive long-term use
of shared literature to weave play environments in which meaningful dialogue developed between teachers and children around the themes of stories such as “Watership Down” and “The Wizard of Oz.” As in Lindqvist’s study and the research of Feldman (2005), Rainio (2008), and Ferholt and Lecusay (2010), shared play worlds and the dialogue they produced, as well as narrative competence, were the most significant findings of her aesthetic intervention, though she also mentions a new interest in abstract topics suggested by the stories.

The play world research studies introduced by Lindquist and developed first in the Scandinavian countries, was a rich orchard for the contemplative caterpillar, but another line of research came from Smilansky’s (1990) focus on play-training as a form of remediation of children’s dramatic play. McCabe’s 2011 doctoral dissertation (presented at the 7th IDIERI conference, 2012) describes research in four classrooms in economically disadvantaged areas of Ireland. The children were from 3 to 6 years old. A control group were provided with objects and settings similar to the group who were given the added stimulation of ten drama sessions. Their play was videoed before, during and after intervention, and she used a rating scale developed by Smilansky (1990) to assess improvements in the quality of dramatic play produced through her interventions. The scale identified taking roles, make believe with objects, make believe with actors and situations, and ultimately persistence in sustaining these situations, as indicators of progressively richer and more productive dramatic play. In her findings, comparing intervention groups with the control groups where props and settings were held constant, older children and girls generally showed greater benefits in relation to the quality of play after the drama interventions, whilst pre-schoolers, and boys generally, demonstrated increased dialogue, role-engagement and narrative building during the drama sessions themselves. Persuasive argument was a feature of some of the dialogue. In this research, as in the play world studies, children sustaining and developing the complexity, length, ideas and language of their play situations as a result of adult input from the aesthetic worlds of drama and literature, can be identified as important.
Other interventions
Martello (2001) explored the possibilities of bridging home-school gaps through the use of drama intervention (2001), rather as researchers in the field of dramatic play had done. Paley, an early childhood teacher and researcher (1981, 1984, and 1988, Cooper, 2005) saw her intervention, on the other hand, as a means of building children’s oral language, self-confidence and creativity. Unlike Lindqvist (1995), Paley did not include her own input from the cultural worlds of literature and theatre, believing that the contributions of the child’s imagination were sufficient. Paley saw her role as facilitator, stage-manager, director and scribe. More recently, some of the researchers whose work is included in Moyle’s (2005) compilation on play research have employed aesthetic forms such as theatre (Broadhead & English, 2005) and storytelling (Whitebread & Jameson, 2005) to augment children’s play in early childhood settings. Unlike Smilansky (1990), who saw play tutoring as developing children’s understanding of real-world social contexts with appropriate language, these researchers focused on fantasy literature and the development of the imagination.

Adult roles and dramatic elements in drama and play pedagogy
Dunn (1998) has described her own role in playing alongside children and entering their worlds at the invitation of the players, as a co-player role. Other researcher-teachers such as Paley (1981) have described their role as facilitator, stage-manager, director and scribe. Still others, such as Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999), Schrader (1990) and Jones and Reynolds (1992) described teacher roles as either extending or redirecting. The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (QSA, 2006) describe the roles of the teacher of young children as “builder of relationships, scaffold of children’s learning, planner for learning and teacher as learner” (p. 12). Within the scaffold role they identify “collaborator, facilitator, modeller, listener, problem solver, prompter, provoker, questioner, researcher and strategist” (p. 12). How many of these roles were activated in the play and drama approach I used in 2007 to support learning, ponders the caterpillar as he blows his smoke rings?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

As noted earlier in this review, Morgan and Saxton (1987) describe the three stances, the Magistral, Facilitatory and Enabling, which are realised by teachers of drama in nine different roles with varying degrees of status and power. Changing teacher status, they believe, changes the balance of power for children and the potential for them to feel comfortable to contribute to a shared dramatic improvisation, as Heathcote (1980, 1995) also contended when she used her “mantle of the expert” strategy and endowed children with “expert” roles.

Morgan and Saxton (1987) also write about the theatrical elements to be achieved in successful drama: “Focus, tension, contrast and symbolization are fundamental to generating, motivating, sustaining and crystallizing the shared significant experience - the means by which the teacher achieves her objectives” (p. 5). Dunn identifies similar elements in children’s dramatic play as does Guss (2005b), whose research is described in the dramatic play section, together with her identification of the playwright function in children’s play.

Of particular interest here is her work relating to the role of the “super-dramatist” (Dunn, 1996), players who have an intuitive grasp of tension and actively make use of the “intervening playwright” (Dunn, 2000) function to build the dramatic elements of the drama and play. She suggested that teachers in role as co-players, and the children themselves, use this function to infuse drama and dramatic play with the elements of tension, symbol, language, movement, time, space and focus. Again, ponders the caterpillar, were these elements and roles present in the approach I used through the year, and did they build the dramatic situations effectively so that they would engage, motivate, and sustain attitudes, dispositions and opportunities to learn, particularly in relation to literacy? To begin to answer these questions, in order to understand the potential of the approach I used and its effect on children’s writing, was the goal of my research. Before describing how this quest was executed however, there is a small research site which is central to my study, the juncture of the three fields of drama, play and literacy where, Dunn (2008b) wrote: “adult-structured drama and child-structured dramatic play can work together in a highly effective manner to generate rich literacy opportunities for
children in the early years” (p.163). The next section describes the research of Miller (2007), who explicitly made the triune connection.

**The tendrils intertwine: Drama, Dramatic play and children’s writing**

As my surveying caterpillar has noticed from his high position above the fields of drama, dramatic play and literacy, there is a significant gap at the juncture of these three fields. Miller’s PhD study (2007) is one that I have found which explicitly brings the three fields of play, drama and literacy together in a study focused, like mine, on children’s writing. She drew on the concept of mediated cultural practice from Rogoff (2003) and Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995a), in children’s shared ZPD in play worlds, which the Scandinavian researchers, Hakkarainen (2004), Rainio (2008) and Ferholt and Lecusay (2010) had developed from Vygotsky’s original model. She encouraged children to write, in the dramatic teaching situations she orchestrated, as the cultural practice being explored together. This was a direct precedent to my own approach, the difference being that she was a visiting researcher, not the children’s own teacher, so may not have known exactly the literacy tasks children were working on at the time, nor how to sequence her interventions responsively across the period of the study. She worked alongside kindergarten/first grade children both in organised dramas and during their dramatic or “pretend” play, over a ten-month period, expanding the possibilities of the writing activities children spontaneously included in their play. Initially she took a co-player role, responding to their cues and invitations in play, but came increasingly to realise that this provided her with few opportunities to orchestrate literacy activity. She did however make suggestions within the play for literate activity, and observe that playing together gave children rich narratives which they could draw on in their writing activity later. When she became more proactive in her thrust for writing by organising drama which led into dramatic play, she was able to provide many more opportunities to mediate and sustain writing activity. In these dramas experiences she took a middle-status stance which positioned them as knowledgeable experts who used literacy as one of their skills in problem-solving.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Miller (2007) employed what she called four mediating moves: “facilitating, assisting, participating and evaluating” (p. 148), reminiscent of Morgan and Saxton’s (1987) teacher stances in process drama. The example she gave of process drama leading into dramatic play where writing was constantly being mediated, is very reminiscent of Hall’s (2005) interventions with the garage and the variety of reading and writing opportunities he was afforded through initiating and sustaining this play world. The difference seems to be that Miller consciously employed strategies and techniques from process drama to focus the writing contexts, whereas Hall, in his study with Robinson (2003, 2005) set the stage for dramatic play and infused the situation with authentic letters, requests for work, complaints and applications which drew play and written responses from the children. Miller’s context was a zoo where initially fairy penguins were missing. In this situation Miller was able to mediate practices of writing letters, researching information, creating and following lists, and writing reports. Children then took up the possibilities as authors presented by the context and created in their play many more writing and reading activities. “The children imagined themselves in a world where they had the power to use literacy as they made choices, took action, and interpreted circumstances as zoo designers” (p. 155).

Miller’s goal was to examine and describe processes of mediation of literacy activities and to explore opportunities as an adult to make this mediation possible. The children she interacted with had some literacy already and were being shown, in the context of the drama and play, wider applications of it. Her conclusion was that “adults playing with children in imagined spaces can easily shift children from imagined spaces to imagined authoring spaces while pretending with the children as other people” (2007, p. 190).

My own study in the same role, with a longitudinal perspective, explores similar possibilities in “imagined spaces”. I created many more “imagined spaces” and orchestrated many more text situations than she was able to, by working in the dual role of researcher and literacy teacher. From this position I planned activities designed to respond to the literacy zones which children were displaying in real
world and play contexts. In the next chapter I describe how I organized the study and the analysis of the responses generated by it into five case studies within a “quintain” (Stake, 2005b), in order to address the two research questions:

What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?

What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction
Working from the general to the specific, I begin by defining my position in relation to the qualitative/quantitative research divide, identifying the biases and presuppositions about life generally and learning in particular which permeate and underpin my decision-making and subjectivity as participant/observer in the study. I then examine case study as a methodology, multiple case study as a particular choice, and issues with choosing a longitudinal project. The situation of teacher as researcher and subject, and the advantages and problems attending this position, is also addressed. The chapter proceeds with some information on the context and participants of the study not provided in the introduction. Data sources are described and frameworks for the analysis of the data from the study are outlined. Issues relating to reliability, authenticity, and generalisability of the research are briefly discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations.

Qualitative Research and my own philosophical position
The researcher takes a philosophical perspective on the data, a theoretical lens which signals to the reader the stance which will be taken. As a researcher, in my choice of methodology, data and analysis tools, I employed qualitative, interpretive, constructivist lenses as these were most apt for my project and most consistent with my philosophical position. Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) “is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world.” The observer does not stand back objectively to measure the magnitude and importance of single variables, but is immersed in the subjectivity of particular experience. Qualitative research, continue Denzin and Lincoln, consists of “interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). My research project can be described as interpretive, because it seeks to understand and give meaning to the world of an early childhood classroom made visible in its portrayal of the data. It also explores transformations. However, terms such as “transform”, “interpretive” and
“constructivist” need some definition and qualification in relation to my Christian philosophy, world-view and values. The position I hold has much in common with a humanist perspective. I use the term “transformation” not to describe an evolving or radical systemic revolution but a major shift in personal cognition producing change or innovation in practice. Change, in this context, is change from within, a personal transformation. Doig (2005) would classify this position on transformation as first order change as distinct from much broader second order or institutional change. My pedagogy was transformed by taking on new learning, or new perspectives on the possibilities within early childhood learning. For the young children described in the study, personal transformation involves a major shift in skills and understanding across a year of literacy learning, demonstrated in their play, dialogue and literacy practice.

My use of the term “interpretive” likewise has a qualification. Bassey (1999) states that “the interpretive researcher cannot accept the idea of there being a reality out there which exists irrespective of people, for reality is seen as a construct of the human mind” (p. 43). Bassey differentiates between a positivist research paradigm, which depends on belief in a material reality which can be discovered and observed, and an interpretive paradigm, which he believes to be wholly relativistic. But not all philosophers polarise truth and reality in this way. Most people (positivists and interpretivists) live their day-to-day lives as if they shared a real material existence and certain tacit and logical presuppositions about conceptual, moral and material truth (Kellar, 2008). In a Christian world view, the presence of material reality and conceptual and moral truth is not rejected simply because of the fluidity of conceptual definitions or the elusive nature of human thought and behaviour (Carson, 1996, Keller, 2008). Some aspects of human behaviour are easily observable, quantifiable and empirically verifiable: demographics and physical appearance, for example. Some depend on semantic definitions and cognitive processes. These deserve differential investigation with different tools, the former empirical, the latter logical, analytical, exegetical, hermeneutic, or literary (O’Toole, 2006). My own philosophical position, shared with the theologians Carson and Keller is that both a material and spiritual world
exist outside the constructs of the human mind. Human behaviour and abstract concepts may be viewed, and therefore interpreted, from many perspectives and with a variety of linguistic definitions, without the viewer reducing reality to polarities of the observable and material, or to constructs of the human mind.

A “constructivist” generally believes that the subject constructs reality. Because I believe that a learner constructs a concept which becomes their interpretation of reality rather than constructing the reality, I cannot truly be described as a constructivist. In working within a constructivist frame, I can describe children’s co-construction with me of meaningful concepts about cultural practice, including literacy. At the same time, I give significance to instructivist approaches, which recognise that there are values, skills and knowledge embedded in the culture that require direct instruction though they may have no immediate and present relevance to a child.

With these qualifications, I can embrace a qualitative approach in this research project. Because my project deals with children’s responsive behaviours, a qualitative approach, rich with a sense of individual encounters, is entirely appropriate. According to Stake (2000a), human behaviour, which is directed by the constructs of the mind as well as the material constraints of the body, is best described in terms which “allow for depth and breadth of vision” and which contains this “sense of individual human encounters” (p. 21). This implies a methodology that handles both deep and broad perspectives across groups and individuals. The tools for this literary discourse include description, metaphor, and illustration, which, as Wildy suggests (2003), resonate with the experience of others. These are characteristic of qualitative research writing.

Birnbaum, Emig and Fisher (1997) claim that the particular advantage of qualitative research in the field of education is that it enables the researcher to look closely at the dynamics of the teaching/learning situation in individual cases. This close encounter is important not only for observing the progress of the children, but for shaping my emerging understandings, as teacher and as researcher of the
experiences and data of the year. Birnbaum et al. (1997) claim, moreover, that qualitative research connects the researcher to “tacit knowledge (of other educators), thus providing vicarious experience, because case study presents a holistic and lifelike description” (p. 192). These researchers believe that vicarious experience, provided in any work of literature, connects the reader to the human interactions and events described, giving them validity as they concur with personal experience. It is this sense of encounter and this sense of vicarious experience, which will be made possible within a qualitative approach. Sharing the experiences of the year with other educators with sufficient clarity of detail for the pedagogy to be applied in other early childhood classrooms has been a major goal of the research project.

A qualitative research paradigm, furthermore, aligns well with my philosophical position on research with human subjects. My perception of the child is of a unique, creative, rational, relational, physical, moral, emotional, linguistic, and spiritual being. Such a complex yet integrated human being is not easily or appropriately studied with objective tools. To do so is to reduce each child to a system of quantifiable variables with predictable responses. On the other hand, a qualitative case study of unique children in a unique setting allows me to consider each child’s particular character, style of learning, strengths and weaknesses, and how these interact with my own personality, beliefs and practices. This does not mean, however that the study makes no use of quantitative data, clinical situations or numerical analysis. The use of quantitative data is discussed in the case study section below.

Cresswell (2007) identifies several other common features of qualitative research that are relevant to my choice:

It deals with natural settings; the researcher is a key instrument; it makes use of multiple sources of data, uses inductive methods of data analysis, includes participants’ meanings, has an emergent design, is interpretive inquiry, includes a theoretical lens, and has a holistic view of phenomena (pp. 38-39).
The choice of qualitative research methodology was appropriate for an early childhood study within education, where I as teacher/researcher collected data within my own teaching setting, reflected on teaching practice which often followed an emergent curriculum design, and described young children whose behaviour is multi-faceted and influenced by a confluence of social, cultural and personal factors. Moreover, the choice of qualitative research was appropriate in a field of aesthetic endeavour, such as drama education, a discipline that explores complex human behaviour in its many contexts. “Effective and fruitful research in drama will develop emerging representations of the way in which drama operates in a variety of contexts” (O’Neill, 1996, p. 138). The current study, exploring progress and outcomes in literacy mediated through drama and play, in the context of a year of learning in a preparatory classroom in Queensland, with self as teacher/researcher, certainly fitted within the description of qualitative research paradigm as outlined by O’Neill (1996), Travers (2001), Bassey (1999), Stake (2005b) and Cresswell (2007).

**Case study**

Within the broad parameter of qualitative research, the choice between case study, action research, ethnography and other types of qualitative study became clear as I discovered the possibilities and potential of a longitudinal multiple case study approach.

Stake (2000b) described case study as a decision about what to study rather than a methodological choice. He believed that we can study a case analytically or holistically, hence the possibility of using features from both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigm. He noted that, as a form of research, “case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used” (p. 435). Merriam, (1988), Baumann, Bisplinghoff and Allen (1997), Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000), Travers (2001) and Stake (2000b) believed that case study design can accommodate a variety of perspectives and data. Case study can “test theory or build theory, incorporate random or purposive sampling, and include quantitative and qualitative data” (Merriam, 1988, p. 2).
Chapter 3: Methodology

Winston (2006) recommended case studies as an appropriate approach in drama education research, particularly because it allowed for a qualitative approach, appropriate for investigation in arts education.

Merriam identified four features of case studies: “particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive” (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). My project had these features. I explored the literacy journeys of particular children who were part of the case, which in this instance was my early childhood class of 2007. My study described the children’s activities, the products and behaviours they showed, and my own thoughts and actions. Heuristic aspects included the use of a chronological narrative, the metaphors of the observing and transforming caterpillars, and vignettes illustrating the drama sessions in action, though not fictive representation as Alvermann and Hruby (2003) modelled in their reporting.

Case Study in Early Childhood Education

Case study in the area of early childhood research into literacy and language acquisition has a solid tradition, “from Piaget (1951) through Bissex, Itard, to Wells and Dyson, to name only a few of the notables in the field” (Birnbaum, Emig & Fisher, 1997, p. 192). Many researchers documenting children’s development in reading, writing, and spelling have expressed the need for rich, thick descriptions of these learning processes, such as that provided by a case study approach.

Classroom case study can provide opportunities to examine how individual stories and practices weave together, which is particularly apt when attempting to describe a teaching practice that weaves children’s individual literacy developmental stories with dramatic pedagogy. Dyson (1997) said of case studies in children’s writing development:

They offer through the richness of singular experience, opportunities to consider the complexities of teaching and learning by embedding them within the details of everyday life in school. It is precisely those details which account for the tremendous potential of case studies to both further and stifle professional dialogue. (p. 177)
Dyson described the development of her own research project in the same article, examining the dialogic processes operating in the interactions of the children themselves in the classroom setting: “I had begun by observing one child’s writing but soon was enmeshed in a complex social drama featuring many children and the wider classroom and societal contexts in which their acts, and their writing, gained meaning” (p. 167). My study began with the telling of individual stories, but like Dyson, I quickly discovered that a complex social drama was occurring, in which children constantly interacted to support or even impede each other’s progress. Something of this complexity and connectivity will become apparent as the stories of this study unfold.

Multiple Case Study
A multiple-case design, or “quintain” as Stake calls it (2005b), is “a special effort to examine something having lots of case, parts, or members. The unique life of the case is interesting for what it can reveal about the quintain” (p. vi). Stake believed that each unique case study within the quintain would illuminate aspects of the quintain in different ways and be chosen for its particular significance in enhancing understanding, rather than because it might be described as “typical”. Stake believed that a researcher using a multi-case could focus on the quintain itself and the ways the individual case studies illustrate its working, or focus on the uniqueness of each case study in demonstrating a variety of complex and variable issues. Either way, the research questions would shape the approach. I chose a multiple case study design because of its potential to give multiple perspectives on the pedagogy that shaped the life of my classroom. I chose to show the variable responses and issues for children engaged with my approach to literacy teaching, as well as aspects which were similar in their responses, and which were common to the whole cohort involved. In other words, I was interested in both uniqueness and findings which would have general application. Comparisons and commonalities, Stake noted, are inevitable in studying cases side by side. Moreover, as Dyson (1997) found, the interaction among the children, and the interweaving of their stories, is a significant part of the learning process of each,
and this interaction is an important contribution to a quintain of studies (Stake, 2005b).

I had two questions to pursue, and believed that studying in depth the stories of four very different children as they developed as writers would address the first question, while including my own case might illuminate the study of pedagogy. My quintain was the class of 2007, with myself as a participant, all learning together as an approach privileging drama and dramatic play in the teaching of writing evolved. Following Stake’s advice (2005b), I chose four cases that I believed would describe unique and varied journeys of writing progress. The telling of each story enhanced my own knowing, enriching my understanding of the human condition, particularly the condition of being young, and vulnerable, and a learner, in a world of powerful and knowing others. Each story enhanced my knowing because it brought me closer to another unique person. It is to be hoped that the reading of these stories enriches the knowing of others as they share vicariously in the significant moments in the lives of fellow human beings.

Choosing the children to study within my quintain was quite difficult as every child in the cohort approached and responded to my pedagogy in unique ways. Variety was a factor in my choices: variety of gender, disposition, learning ability, engagement and even in the quantity of responses children gave. In order to limit the size of my project I eventually decided on four children’s cases with my own study as a fifth, giving five studies in all, even though Stake’s model does not confine the researcher to five cases. He felt, however, that the benefits of a multi-case design would be compromised if less than four or more than ten studies were included.

Given the choice of five cases and the length of the project, an additional tension was produced: how much to include and how to limit the studies, when so much had significance. The advantages and disadvantages of such a longitudinal study will be the focus of the next section, after which I describe the four children chosen
to illustrate the quintain, and the perspective on the reflective practitioner that framed my own case study.

**Longitudinal Case Study**

As I noted in the introduction, longitudinal studies are costly and time-consuming for researchers as outsiders coming into a school site. Tierney and Sheehy (2003) suggest that this deters many researchers, who opt for cross-sectional studies that can be completed more quickly. Tierney and Sheehy noted however that a longitudinal study can provide startling and challenging research findings in education which inform our teaching at different stages in children’s learning. An example of such startling and challenging research findings after longitudinal studies in schools were the discoveries of McNaughton in New Zealand (2002), described in the previous chapter, educational gains which were strong in the early years did not continue into middle schooling because the focus in teaching was different.

A longitudinal case study in literacy by a teacher/researcher as participant/observer has its advantages. A teacher of beginning-literacy has a longitudinal perspective on a year of learning anyway, and observes over and over again the journey of many unique children from seemingly little literacy to a great deal of prowess. She is in an ideal situation as teacher/researcher to share this ongoing practitioner experience with educators who may be divorced from the classroom. Burton and Seidl (2003, p. 229) have previously highlighted the value of these dual roles, noting:

> Teacher research, the reflection of teachers on their own action in the field, is highly valuable because it generates insider knowledge useful to other educators in a manner which does not disrupt the classroom nor reduce the complexity of the teaching and learning ecology. (Burton & Seidl, 2003, p. 229)

Others have recognised, however, that the position of teacher/researcher may have its limitations and problems. Baumann, for instance, found the collection and
recording of data, along with dialogue with other teachers in the process, to be somewhat constrained by time pressures, and the ongoing stresses and responsibilities of the teaching task. Baumann describes his journey back into teaching in the form of a self-study (Baumann et al., 1997). Like Baumann, I found that the primary responsibility of the teaching position constrained the quantity of filming, and recording of observations that were possible through the year, but like Baumann, I continued journaling daily and collecting children’s writing samples, because these activities had on-going value to my practice, as well as providing important data for the case studies. With him I can say: “I have no doubt that the year would have failed to be as rich and significant had I not systematically reflected on and acted upon my teaching” (Baumann et al., 1997 p. 130). Keeping a journal of the year, filming drama and play, and holding interviews, were activities designed not just to provide data of the children’s progress, but to encourage me to be self-critical, reflective and open to change, through the course of the year.

Dyson (1997), quoted earlier in the chapter, cautioned that rigid preconceptions and subjectivities in qualitative research can “stifle professional dialogue” as researchers selectively observe what contributes to their particular theoretical lens. One possible disadvantage of being both teacher and researcher is that this subjective position might overly shape data collection and also lead to the selective analysis of it. To overcome this, awareness of personal bias is essential, while attempting to include as many other voices as possible helps to balance this subjectivity. The choice of the enigmatic caterpillar on the mushroom as my metaphor helped provide some distance from the subjectivity of my dual position as researcher and teacher. On the other hand, subjectivity provides a unique view of the thought world underlying the observable world of teacher decision-making and action, a conceptual world generally not available to the observer. Opening this world up to a reading audience may support educational dialogue.

**Participants in the quintain**
The quintain was limited to the cohort of students in one class in one state or public school institution in Queensland, Australia. This was the class in which I was a
participant/observer in my role as teacher/researcher. This inaugural cohort of Prep children in 2007 was a remarkably homogenous social group. Not only had most attended kindergarten or child care, and had literary experiences at home provided by their white, middle-class parents, but chronologically, the cohort were all born between October and June, an age range of only eight months. None were Torres Strait Islanders or of Aboriginal descent, none were first generation immigrants. None had English as a second language, though two had access to a second language through their parents. Most had some computer access and all had television viewing. Consequently they had many common interests and shared play worlds.

In the introduction I provided a brief sketch of the four children whose case studies were chosen to illuminate the whole case, either by contrast or comparison. I have included here more detail on each child, and why the choice of their literacy journey was important for the quintain. The four children, whose names are protected with pseudonyms, were Edward, Lucy, James and Martin.

Edward was a small, gentle, quiet child, whose disposition was somewhat tentative and cautious, but who was very confident in an imaginary world context. He had very little alphabetic knowledge when he arrived, and had previously been reluctant to handle tools such as pencils and markers. He was one of the youngest in a young cohort and had the distinction of being also the smallest child in the school. In his literacy journey, he showed perhaps the most outstanding transformation in attitudes and productivity of written artefacts, and certainly emerged as a very enthusiastic dramatist. Lucy, the next child studied, was also young in the year, but had a very confident, dynamic, verbal and outgoing personality. She lived dramatically in every pore of her being, and responded immediately to every cue for drama and writing. Her home life involved a tremendous amount of dramatic play with her three siblings, all of whom were older, and she spent much of her time in play worlds jointly devised by them. She had already been in my classroom when she accompanied her mother the previous year to home reading, and knew that this classroom setting included drama and play. She had also experienced
some of the introduction to phonics teaching in this context and had some awareness of the alphabet and the sounds of the letters. Her productivity as a writer was also very high throughout the year. James was a little older and had been in classrooms with his mother the previous year, though not in my own. He began school with a considerable amount of literacy knowledge, and was very keen to begin reading, if somewhat more tentative about shaping letters in writing. His case was distinct in that he was very much an outsider when it came to drama, and very, very tentative about being involved. Also significant in his story was his friendship with some of the other students, and the interweaving of their stories illustrated some of the key findings of the project.

All three of these children had rich backgrounds in reading with their parents, though James preferred factual texts and Lucy preferred imaginative tales. Edward seems to have enjoyed both. Martin’s case was quite distinct from the others I chose. He was delayed in speech and other developmental areas connected to learning, had some level of visual impairment, periods of very poor health, and showed little knowledge of or interest in writing, though he responded well to music. He had had no exposure to kindergarten before, or to school, though he had older siblings who had attended. He was quite resistant to school expectations for behaviour at first and had very little language to contribute to the dialogue of drama and dramatic play.

My teacher-aide, principal and the parents were, to varying extents, also participants in the study. My aide was a support player in many of the drama and puppetry experiences. She was essentially a partner in the whole enterprise of the year, and a critical friend. My principal cared deeply that the first year of Prep be a successful one for all families and teachers. He provided aide-time well above the departmental quota, to support the program, and trusted my professionalism enough to give full rein to the privileging of drama and play in my pedagogy. Parents as participants were also very supportive of the whole Prep programme, giving their time to assist in a variety of learning experiences. They all agreed to be interviewed and for their children to be a part of the research project. The link
between home and school was strong and positive, and parents often saved samples of children’s writing and drawing, or gave me anecdotes of literacy behaviours from home which supplemented what I gathered at school. Many also assisted children in home writing experiences such as letters and cards, building up motivation to write for real-life purposes.

**The Research Context**

The context of a case study, according to Stake (2000a) includes the parameters of time, physical and social environment, research traditions, historical and political situation, and participants. In Chapter One I briefly introduced the physical, social, historical and political situation of the research in relation to early schooling in Queensland in 2007. Chapter Two gave the research traditions which were relevant to my fields of study. The participants have also been described. The next paragraph provides a little more detail in relation to time.

A chronological boundary for the case study became, effectively, the school year of 2007. However there were some overlapping events which are included as well. The introduction of the children to the classroom in the previous year’s Orientation Day experience is mentioned, because of its impact on the establishment of the social environment of the classroom as one which featured drama and story-telling. The other preparatory event, the exchange of letters of welcome and greeting at the end of the summer holidays, is described in two of the case studies where the children provided a response. Like the earlier event, it was designed to further develop the classroom climate as one in which empathetic literary exchange was practised. Data from an interview held in March 2008 is included, as well, to explore children’s perceptions of the transition into Year one.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative research is characterised by collection of artefacts, documents, photographs and videos, interview transcripts, participant-observations and direct observations by the researcher (Yin, 1989, Cresswell, 2007, Bassey, 1999, Merriam, 1988). Case studies may also make use of quantitative data, where it is
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illustrative of the case (Stake, 2005a). In Stake’s definition of a multi-case design, data which is collected and the tools for analysis may be different for different cases in the quintain. My sources of data for the studies of the four children are described in the following paragraphs. I used some of the same data for the self-study, but my analysis was based on a different tradition, that of the reflective practitioner. These traditions and processes of analysis are expanded in the data analysis section which follows the one below that focuses on data collection.

**Collected artefacts**

My research project made use of collected written artefacts, many of which were produced spontaneously in the context of play. Others were teacher-scaffolded and solicited written responses to dramas. Numerous researchers mentioned in the review chapter have made use of writing samples as indicators of children’s writing progress and of the tasks they are exploring in print (Clay, 1975, 1982, 1991, 2000, McNaughton, 1995, Baumann et al., 1997, Kress, 1997, and Hall and Robinson, 2003). Responses in writing both within role and after drama experiences have been analysed by researchers of writing and drama whose work I have described earlier, including Parson et al. (1984), Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Hall and Robinson (2003), Hall (2005), Cremin et al. (2006), Dunn and Stinson (2011, 2012), Marino (2012). The significance of collecting spontaneous writing, as data with qualitative significance, is the assumption that spontaneous writing emerges from the enthusiasm, sense of purpose and agency of the children. When children wrote responsively at my direction, I could be less sure of their identification with my purposes. In these cases I depended on observations of their behaviours during writing. The enthusiasm and persistence with which they wrote, in these instances, along with comments and body language, gave me indications of their disposition toward the task. My task in analysing artefacts was to look for correlates between modelled and responsive writing, as well as aspects of children’s motivation to write and read. The quantity as well as quality of artefacts was tracked across the year as an indicator of children’s motivation to write, and of their skill and confidence to do so.
Journaling

I kept a running journal that included my daily drama plan and other general planning, annotated with observations written reflectively each evening after I had reviewed videos of the drama sessions in action. Keeping a running journal has already been affirmed by Baumann (Baumann et al., 1997) as a reflective tool of value. O’Mara (1999) wrote her whole PhD dissertation as a self-reflective case study on her professional development as a process drama teacher. Burton and Seidl (2003) explored the journaling of one elementary teacher (Burton himself) and differentiated between general narrative notes and “reflective observations”. In my own self-reflective case study, the observations from each day (general narrative notes) were subjected to further reflection each weekend (reflective observations), in a section of the journal entitled “Discussion”. Observations were important as well as sources of data on children’s attitudes to literacy, and followed their progressive acquisition of the alphabetic principles and genre understanding. Daily writing in the journal often merged into reflection. It is impossible to retell an event without interpreting and analysing the significance of the event, and most case study theorists recommend analysing some of the field notes as the study progresses. Stake (2000b) wrote that data was “continuously interpreted, on first encounter and again and again” (p. 450). The document of the whole year is too long to include in the body of the research. The complete plans of twelve key selected drama events from the document form Appendix D. These particular events were chosen from among the many drama events I directed through the course of the school year because of their significant correlations with artefacts produced, with my personal progress in drama pedagogy or other signs of development. A sample of observations and discussion is included in Appendix C.

Filming

Daily drama sessions were occasionally photographed, following the practice of Helm, Beneke and Steinheimer (1998), but were usually videoed, and significant play moments were sometimes captured on film, though the video camera was not set up permanently in the room during play-time, as in some studies. When episodes were recorded, the video evidence for the day was reviewed that evening.
to support my memory of significant events. It provided another perspective from my participant/observer position, as my aide typically videoed while I was involved in the action. I could review my own and the children’s behaviour after the action. I could observe body language and facial expression to interpret attitudes and suggestions of motivation and sustained interest in literacy from the utterances and actions of the children. Transcriptions from three of the films were used for my discourse analysis in the self-study as well, following Baker (1997). With this analysis and the observations of the dialogue and action occurring, I could examine the dynamics of particular sessions. This was very important for my emerging understanding of my own roles in drama and play and the distinctive relationships of the three intertwining fields, while also enabling me to address the second question steering the research project. The discourse analysis came from the field of functional linguistics research. It was new to me as a teacher and drama student, and relied on the theory and literature of Halliday (1973, 1978, 2004), Phillips and Hardy (2002), Christie (2002), MacLure (2003) and Macartney, Ord and Robinson (2008). It was enlightening to uncover and analyse what characterised the discourse I was using as an early childhood drama teacher. Christie’s observations of teachers and students at different ages and stages were particularly helpful.

I was aware that videoing might affect children’s performance, making them more self-conscious. I therefore relied on familiarity with the instrument to reduce this effect over time. Where children were aware of its presence, eye contact makes this obvious, and I could then expect them to be more or less inhibited in performance, depending on their disposition toward showmanship, as a result. I followed Dunn (2010) and O’Toole’s practice (2006) of turning some of the videoing into interviews about action, as if I were a news reporter in role, and this helped with familiarity and acceptance of the camera as a play tool.

**Interviews**

I interviewed parents and children for a variety of reasons. I was keen to elicit the perception of both parents and children, on the events of the year, but also to
obtain information about children’s background experiences of literacy in the home, and the skills children brought to the Prep classroom setting.

*Parent interviews*

Parent interviews gave a window into the secret world of home. What happened to the literacy practice when children went back to the familiar zone of the family? How were children reacting to the climate of school? What attitudes to literacy were sustained across the two environments? What had the home environment given them initially to bring into the Prep learning setting that would provide a context for their learning through the year? These were questions I hoped the interviews would address.

I interviewed each parent three times in the course of the year: at the beginning (in week two), in the middle (around July), and at the end of the school year (through November). Sample interviews are included in Appendix B. The first interview was fairly open-ended, designed to elicit information about literacy practices in the home and children’s attitudes to literacy. To some extent the interview structure was constrained by state education expectations, about the purposes of conducting interviews with parents. The Education Queensland focus is on developing partnerships and on continuity of learning. The inclusion of questions about literacy practice in the home, and about children’s responses to this emphasis in my programme, reflected my research focus. The second, also open-ended, interview, included my own and the parents’ perceptions of progress and children’s emerging attitude to learning and literacy. The third interview provided me with an opportunity to offer a prediction of preparedness for Year One, and for parents to share any concerns or aspirations for the transition ahead. Either the parent or I would initiate the conversation at this interview, with question or comment.

*Child interviews*

Dockett and Perry (2007) suggest that as researchers move away from positivist to more constructivist approaches to childhood, they realise that “we have much to
learn about children and children’s experiences from the children themselves” (p. 48). Dockett and Perry do, however, recognise that children may vary their responses over time, or in different contexts of power and status. Einarsdóttir (2005) also acknowledged children’s variable and sometimes contradictory opinions and responses in her Icelandic study of playschool children’s views of their institution. Einarsdóttir claims that children’s variability from context to context is only an issue for those with a positivist perspective who expect one reliable interpretation of data and one clear pathway to generalisability of results.

Einarsdóttir (2005) sought to develop authenticity of data in her research with children by responding to their age and maturity with novel and varied data collection tools. She used a game with embedded questions, casual questioning while children guided her (the newcomer) around the centre, and the gift of disposable cameras which children could use to record their setting and its event, for collaborative viewing and discussion later. She, like Dockett and Perry, recognised the vulnerability of children in direct interview situations, where issues of power and status were involved. Young children, as both she and Farrell (2004) noted, find questioning from unfamiliar adults in clinical situations very confronting. Einarsdóttir conducted small group interviews with the five year olds at the centre, to balance the power of the adult position, and, when interviewing younger children, used the photographs from the day as prompts. She also elicited children’s consent for each activity.

I attempted to attend to the issue of power and status in my interview situations with the children. I sought to establish a climate of more equitable status for the children and myself as co-players during the puppetry sessions in week one. Children seemed to be comfortable in a question/answer situation with me, when I embarked on the interviews in week two. My initial interviews were held individually at a table on the veranda outside my classroom, whilst the rest of the cohort was engaged in guided activities and free play indoors under the supervision of my aide. The veranda was part of the hub of activity for the children,
not a withdrawal space like the office where I met with parents. Responses in that setting were relaxed, cooperative and comfortable, though brief.

I hoped from responses to questions about attitudes to reading and writing to note continuity or change across the year, which might correlate with observations of children’s spontaneous behaviours during drama sessions and play. In that first interview I was seeking some baseline data on their literacy knowledge as well, against which I could measure progress through the year. Some of this knowledge was available from observations of name recognition, children’s general comments, individual responses to my letter of welcome, and writing and reading behaviours around books. The consultation questions enlarged on these observations.

I used a standard set of questions for each child at the first interview, which is included in the appendices. The interview questions and other qualitative assessment measures used to checklist children’s reading and alphabet knowledge are based on the assumption that the knowledge children have of literacy will be demonstrated in observable, measurable ways and that the environment is conducive to allowing such demonstrations to occur (Murphy, 2003). The descriptors for concepts of print I obtained from this data are the legacy of Clay’s research model (1991, 2000), and other emergent literacy researchers who have followed and developed her theories. Moreover, researchers of early literacy have checked children’s alphabet recognition and phonological awareness on entry to schooling (as indicated by letter/sound knowledge), because these indicators have been found to be the best predictors of first grade reading and writing success (Juel, 2001, and Frost, 2001). Adams (1990) and Molfese, Beswick, Molnar and Jacobi-Vessels (2006) provide evidence that alphabet knowledge on its own, at school entry, is an important correlate with later success in literacy. I used alphabet knowledge in my interview questions because I assumed that recognition of the symbols would precede links between letters and their sounds, as Frost (2001) had affirmed in his stage theory of children’s writing.
When I interviewed the children a year later, they were returning to the classroom as outsiders looking in, and I was using the video camera, rather than hand-written recording, so there was much more evidence of self-consciousness, and a degree of reticence from some, which was not observed in the initial interviews. I did not provide visual prompts such as photographs or videos, to remind them of events, as Einarsdóttir had done. I believed that these might cue children to give significance to events and activities that mattered to me rather than them. Seeing the room and its features quite obviously provided the prompts for some of the children, while others made unique, unsolicited comments about memorable moments, which I found more valuable as data. Again I asked a standard set of questions for the year one interview, soliciting their most striking memories, their attitudes to literacy and the smoothness of their transition. How they viewed the drama sessions was important, but not easy to elicit from the children, possibly because, in keeping with my early childhood practice at that time, I had not often made the pedagogy explicit as “drama” to that cohort of children. The questions from these interviews are also included in Appendix B.

In early 2008 I sought incidental, but not formal, feedback from the year one teacher, wondering how she viewed the new cohort compared to her earlier preconception of an incoming year one class. This discussion was never recorded as an interview but provided me with further anecdotal evidence of the transition. Her chief comment was “These children just want to write and write!”

Observations
As noted earlier, I observed children’s behaviour and dialogue during drama sessions and free play, and recorded segments of this, where significant, in my daily journal. Collecting observations of children’s play as a source of evidence was used by Smith (2007) to support other forms of data collection. Owocki and Goodman (2002) used observational data of children’s spontaneous literacy activity to plot children’s development, using a model they styled “kidwatching”. Including observations of children’s behaviour in the reflective journal sometimes muddied my focus on self-analysis, hence the need for an observing caterpillar to...
separate the two foci. Some behaviours were accompanied by photographs or incidental filming.

**Codes for referencing the data sources**
Across the remaining chapters, I have used codes to refer to the data. A summary of these codes is included here for immediate reference.

*Table One: Codes used in the data references*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td><em>weekly discussion, term one, week one</em></td>
<td>Dis, t1: w1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>daily observation, 15th March</em></td>
<td>Obs, 3:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td><em>Parent Interview, term 1: page six</em></td>
<td>Pl, t1:p.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Child Interview, 2007: page six</em></td>
<td>Cl, 07:p.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film transcripts</td>
<td><em>film transcript, 31st Jan</em></td>
<td>FT, 1:31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Analysis**
In order to analyse the many different forms of data collected within this study and more importantly, in order to address the foci of the two research questions that shape it, a number of approaches to data analysis have been used.

The first research question (*What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?*) probes the quality and quantity of the written products children were able to create through the course of the year, but has broader scope than this. It also explores possible correlations between the drama and play pedagogy, together with prospective changes in the children’s attitude and disposition as well. For this reason, analysis of the children’s writing outcomes is organised first within a developmental (including a semiotic) framework, then in terms of their engagement.
In relation to the second research question (*What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?*) several aspects can again be identified, requiring a range of analysis approaches. The first of these is Putnam’s (1991) stages of professional development, used here to organise my experiences across the year into segments according to my personal pedagogical progress. Another critical framework used is Christie’s (2002) approach to analysing teacher discourse. Here it is applied to extend understanding of the role language plays in shaping both literacy and drama pedagogy.

In the sections that follow, the various approaches to analysis used across the study are outlined.

**Plotting written literacy progress: the continua**

In order to plot the written literacy progress made by the four case study children and indeed the class more generally, a standard developmental continuum used by State School teachers in Queensland (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995), was used. By applying this tool, I was able to collate whole class progress on tables of initial and final literacy behaviour, as well as a table of ongoing literacy activity in relation to drama activity. The continua show general class trends that help position, comparatively, the progress of the children described in the case studies. The tables are included in Appendix C.

In the specific area of writing, the continuum includes indicators for judging the children’s ability to make meaning at text and word level, together with indicators of attitudes toward writing. It tracks the progress of children from role play to experimental and early writing, labelling these as phases A, B, C and D. The continua are benchmarked at each level and during the data analysis period, (2007-2010), were well moderated across schools for consistency. The writing development continuum gives indicators at different stages or phases, which enable teachers to analyse writing samples, establishing, through the process of
moderation, common levels of performance. The areas addressed include content, organisation, concepts, strategies and attitudes. There is also a miscue or spelling analysis tool. By examining spelling errors teachers can determine whether children are at the logographic, alphabetic or orthographic stage (Frost, 2001). At the logographic stage they write letters and other symbols in no particular order, often including the letters from their names. At the alphabetic stage they write phonetically, and at the orthographic stage they make use of the more unusual spelling conventions often derived from Greek and Latin roots. Within a writing continuum level, awareness of text layout and purpose, grammatical conventions, vocabulary choices from different contexts, attitudes and stance toward audience are tracked and recorded at different levels, alongside use of the alphabetic repertoire. Consequently, this tool provided a reliable way of describing and comparing children’s progress. Because I was examining the cross-over from role-play to phonetic writing, the indicators for phase A (“role play” writing) and B (“experimental” writing) were most useful for my analysis of children’s progress through the year, though several children exhibited indicators from Phase C as well.

**Additional Analysis relating to the Children’s Responses**

In addition to the continua, other analysis tools were also used to support exploration of the children’s responses in terms of both written work and engagement. For example, by using Kress’s semiotic model to analyse children’s drawn and written artefacts (1994, 1997), I could determine the possible developmental significance of layout features, use of tense and literary structures. Details of these and his sequence of writing development have been included in the literature review. The sequence of development is briefly summarised here. Kress (1994, 1997) noted children’s progress from representing three-dimensional form, to static two-dimensional representation which is used to prompt oral description and narrative, moving on to the making of signs and labels using some logographic and phonetic forms, then short written messages similar to oral utterances, until finally children record sentences which gradually take on the
shape, layout and linguistic structure of third-person chronological and decontextualized narrative or other written text forms.

The Education Queensland Arts syllabus document (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2002) was also helpful when I attempted to track development of role and stance toward audience. Even though the syllabus was not designed as a developmental profile, it describes broad changes in children’s dramatic behaviour as outcome statements, with these varying between levels. At level one, the syllabus suggests that “children create and accept roles” and “begin to develop a sense of audience” (p. 24), while at level two they “make choices about and develop roles to build dramatic action” and “use voice and movement so that they can be seen, heard and understood” (p. 25), implying a recognition of audience needs. The foundation level, targeted at learning outcomes for children with disabilities, but helpful as an indicator for early childhood levels of participation, indicates “students take on familiar or life-like roles facilitated by the teacher” (p. 24). Drama is described as dramatic play at this level.

Further data on attitudes and motivation, obtained from the interviews across the year, both with children and parents, and from the spontaneous comments of the year one teacher as the children progressed to the next level of schooling, was used to confirm the observational data from the film transcriptions, observational anecdotes on responses to prescribed tasks, and analysis of collected artefacts, which shaped my findings about children’s ongoing dispositions toward literacy. To analyse this data I developed a table collating the timing and nature of children’s play and written responses in relation to the key drama events described in my self-study. This table is included in Appendix C.

Finally, Bundy’s (2003) categories of engagement, and Cremin’s (1998) categories of cognitive involvement, together with frameworks developed by Simpson (1999) and Warner (1997) were used to describe children’s on-going connection with the various drama experiences.
For a previous research project (Harden, 2008), I had assessed children’s initial engagement with the dramas, using an adaptation of Simpson’s (1999) categories of participation for young children, which were based on categories used by Warner (1997) for the participation of older children in drama. I continued to describe the children in the case studies of the year as non-participants, participant-observers or full participants using anecdotal observations and reviews of the videos of many of the sessions for my assessment. I modified the categories to include one for “non-participant” to describe someone who did not join in action or song or dialogue or who moved away from the group, “participant/observer” for the child who sometimes showed signs of following along with group responses from the sidelines (giving evidence that they were listening) and “full participant” for those who joined in everything, including speech, song and action. The category of non-participant was not used by Simpson or Warner, (1997) who used instead a category of observer/outsider. Full participant combines Warner’s “talkers” and “processors”, because young children who are fully involved in an experience may not always signal this with oral language. They cannot necessarily demonstrate silent involvement, either, through their writing, as Warner’s older students could.

I further categorised children’s aesthetic engagement using the descriptors Bundy (2003) had identified as indicators: animation, connectedness and heightened awareness. These demonstrate, respectively, children’s physical excitement, their verbal interaction with the content of the drama, and their connection with the universals and values beneath the surface of the narrative. Bundy’s aesthetic engagement study was described more fully in Chapter two as was Cremin’s (1998) study of categories of imagining which I made some use of in my analysis.

Cremin (1998) identified four levels of imagining that children might demonstrate during process drama improvisations. These were visualising, supposing, hypothesising, and materialising. I expected that young children connecting with the language of the teacher and operating in a shared play world could begin to imagine at the level of visualising, assisted by visual cues such as props, picture stories and teacher prompts in vocabulary and narrative. I looked for examples of these levels
of imaginative activity as I revisited the data from the film transcriptions. All of the tools described above inform my analysis within the four children’s case studies. The tools for analysis in the self-study are somewhat different.

**Data Analysis in the self-study**

The self-study examines my emerging understanding of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies to support written literacy by examining my progress as a drama teacher during a year when I was merging early childhood, early primary and drama teaching experience. To support this process I defined my progress using Putnam’s (1991) three stages of professional development, described below, and chose twelve key drama events in the year to shape a chronology of that progress, and to focus the analysis further. I have relied on the tradition of research known as “the reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983), and included within this investigation my reflections on and in my teaching practice, including my growing understanding of stance and role, and the awareness of linguistic and dramatic elements in dramatic discourse. The reflective practitioner approach to research, Putnam’s stage model (1991), the choice of the twelve key drama events, and a description of stance, role, linguistic and dramatic elements, are explained further in the paragraphs that follow.

**The reflective practitioner**

The stance of the reflective practitioner is rooted in the theory of Dewey (1956), “the first educational theorist in the United States to view teachers as reflective practitioners, as professionals who could play a role in curriculum development and reform” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 8). Schön (1983) built on Dewey’s work and wrote extensively on the reflective practitioner. He made use of the dual time frame concept of “reflector-on-action” and “reflector-in-action” (1983). He described practitioners’ attempts, on the one hand, to solve problems on the spot: “thinking on their feet”, or “using the teachable moment”. On the other hand, suggests Schön, practitioners reflect after the action, on successes and failures in practice. They attempt to change and improve over time by handling a similar problem differently during the next experience with the clientele, or developing a
new plan to trial. Schön (1983) situates both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action within a constructivist framework. The traditional position, as he viewed it, within Western educational pedagogy, placed the creation of theory within the university or other research centre, and practice as the province of the teacher, whose job was to implement theory. Schön felt that little recognition was given in this traditional perspective, to the knowledge-in-action embedded in the practice of teachers. He believed that all forms of informal and formal qualitative educational research by teachers in the field, including action research, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative research, can employ the stance of the reflective practitioner and that teachers should reflect on their practice even if not formally involved in a research project. The tradition of the reflective practitioner was employed by constructivists such as Henderson (1996) and Putnam (1991) and drama researchers and practitioners such as O’Mara (1999).

**Putnam’s stages**

Putnam (1991) explored the development of the professional throughout the reflective process. His investigation of professional development uses the analogy of the “recipe” to frame the changes in thought and language. “Well-intentioned learners do search for rules and recipes especially early in the learning process.” (Putnam, 1991, p. 145). “By reflecting on the use or misuse of recipes in particular situations the learner develops understanding and skill in acting more consistently with the theory of practice from which the recipes were drawn” (p. 146).

He describes a workshop which he conducted with an organisational development consultant, and analysed stages in the professional development of his client. He defined three stages in professional growth. In the first the novice follows the wording of the recipe precisely, saying and doing what “I’m supposed to say and do”, what they believe an expert might have done. The second stage is “marked by a shift of attention to using the recipe to implement broader strategies from the new theory of practice” (p. 160). During the third stage he noted that the professional learner may “reframe the data” and even “call into question their own use of recipes” (p. 161). They may become flexible and innovative in their use of
the recipe, to “step out of the frame” of the theory and practice which the professional student is seeking to adopt into their current schema (Putnam, p. 156). These descriptors seemed apt to describe and define my reflections in and on actions described in the journal, as my progress as a novice teacher of drama gradually occurred, and I began to adapt and even question theory and practice through the year. I labelled my stages “Recipe-user”, “Developing Novice”, and “Innovator and Interrogator”, to capture the essence of Putnam’s descriptors.

The twelve key events
Given the longitudinal nature of this study, together with my direct involvement in the data collection process across every school day, I determined that the most effective means of reporting on and understanding my learning development was to identify a series of key drama events from the many that occurred. In choosing these events, a set of criteria was applied. To be included, the event needed to have one or more of the following qualities: it demonstrated specific aspects of the teaching approach I applied throughout the year; it generated significant writing and/or dramatic play responses from the children; it demonstrated the progress of participants (including myself); or finally, it illustrated roles, stances, linguistic and/or dramatic elements which might be important for my investigations as they contributed to the effectiveness of the approach as a “productive pedagogy” (Gore, 2001).

To help clarify these aspects, I created a “table of key events” with the headings Event, Focus, and Responses to describe the purpose of each event and the products that showed some correlation with it. This table is included in the introduction to chapter four. In the main body of that chapter, the selected events are positioned within one or other of Putnam’s three stages of professional development: recipe-user, developing novice; and innovator and interrogator. Each event includes paragraphs on teaching focus, description and responses, and analysis. To analyse each key event I asked:
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- What understanding does this event provide about drama as a pedagogy for writing?
- What understanding does this event provide about dramatic play as a pedagogy for writing? and
- What understanding, if any, does this event provide about the connections between drama and dramatic play?

Ultimately, these merging understandings would provide me with the key findings about the pedagogies and young children’s writing. As I analysed each event, stance, role and dramatic elements emerged as important features of the dynamic of the pedagogy. In the section below I examine these features and the analytic frameworks used to understand them.

**Stance, role, and dramatic elements**

To support my understanding of the importance of stance and role, I draw on the work of a number of theorists and practitioners. Morgan and Saxton’s (1987) work is one example. They use “stance” to refer to the position of power of the teacher, and “role” more specifically for the type of character that is assumed in drama situations. The review in Chapter Two gives much fuller descriptions of these, but a brief summary is included here. I employed their descriptors of “manipulator”, “facilitator” or “enabler” (p. 42), and their role descriptors, such as “authority against the group”, “one who knows”, “the helpless” or “one of the gang” to support analysis of my use of role.

I occasionally supplemented Morgan and Saxton’s descriptors with reference to those of Cheyne and Terulli (1999) also described in Chapter Two. These researchers described the dialogue of teacher/child interactions in the ZPD of the child in the general classroom as potentially Magistral (the managing director), Socratic (mutually reciprocal dialogue) and Menippean (where the child defies the teacher position and goals). Teaching stances in early childhood institutions are described in The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines or EYCG (2006) as “responsive” and “facilitatory”, and include “modelling, prompting, questioning,
researching, interpreting, negotiating, observing and documenting” (p. 13). Dunn (1996) and Creaser (1989) also defined a “super- or master dramatist role” which adults or children may take on in a dramatic context, steering and building the tension of the event. Dunn (2000) further defined functions such as “playwright”, and “creator of text” as aspects of the narrative building behaviours of participants in drama and dramatic play improvisational situations. All of these descriptors informed my investigations of key events, and were also important in describing the behaviour of individual children as discussed in Chapter Five.

Dramatic elements also have a keen impact on drama and play and as such, analysis of my management of them was critical. I was therefore searching for evidence relating to my use of dramatic elements such as focus, tension, contrast and symbolism (Morgan & Saxton, 1987). Dunn (2000) and Haseman and O’Toole (1987) add language, movement, time, and space as elements to be considered. These elements, especially those that had an effect on the learning which took place, are mentioned in the analysis, where relevant.

**Classroom Discourse**

The final area of analysis employed within the self-study relates to my use of language and the impact it had on all other areas of focus explored in this thesis. To understand this impact, I used some of Christie’s (2002) descriptors of classroom discourse from her study of early childhood and other classroom “teacher talk”. Of particular relevance to the analysis and understanding of my pedagogy as being productive in terms of intellectual quality, is her understanding of “weak and strong framing” of learning. When describing the early childhood pedagogical position, she notes the “weak framing discourse”, evident in the lack of explanatory clauses and explicit declaratives to express instruction. This absence, she believes, is rooted in the ideological focus on self-expression and general competency, as compared to the explicit framing of learning in a secondary school discipline, where very particular conventions of speaking and writing may be discerned, and knowledge and style of presentation are explicitly taught. Christie is critical of the early childhood position, believing it leaves children without clear
language direction which they need to access learning effectively. Again, the debate about direct instruction versus experiential, holistic constructivist methods comes to the fore.

She claims that in early childhood contexts teachers often use: implicit, oblique forms of speech, with little explanation; metaphors to mask directives; inclusive “we” to encourage group solidarity with teacher purpose; and teacher-directed thematic progressions (a feature explained below). On the other hand the relationships demonstrated in their dialogue may be reciprocal (a highly desirable feature of effective early years pedagogy, according to the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, 2006) and they may use tentative, conciliatory, affirmative, argumentative, questioning or informative modes of address (Christie, 2002). These features would appear to reflect the framework Gore (2001) defined for “productive pedagogy”, demonstrating, in balance, a supportive classroom environment which also has intellectual quality.

Christie noted different interrogation or questioning modes used in classrooms, which may be closed (labelled the “interrogation-response-evaluation” or IRE by linguists mentioned earlier in relation to descriptions of discourse in the classroom) or open-ended. The former modes would encourage children to respond with information while the latter would develop higher order thinking skills. Christie describes another typical feature within the textual, as distinct from the interpersonal, function of teacher discourse. Written sentences and oral utterances, in the terminology of functional linguistics, have a “theme” and a “rheme” (Halliday, 1973, Christie, 2002): these are loosely connected to the terms “subject” and “predicate” of a simple sentence, familiar to many from the traditional grammar, but used much more broadly in functional linguistics to express initial and final position in a sentence. “In classroom talk, thematic progression is often expressed primarily in teacher talk.” (Christie, 2002, p. 18). The teacher controls the development of the theme, and assumes responsibility and authority. Again, the students are fairly passive recipients of the information. “Regulative register”, the language controlling behaviour and long-term teacher goals, is distinguished
from “instructional register” (Christie, 2002) in teacher discourse. The former describes the language used to regulate behaviour but also includes the long-term *teaching goals* of the teachers which should be shown or “realised” in the instructional register of the segment of discourse being described. Teachers regulate behaviour in early childhood classrooms rather obliquely (Christie, 2002), masking imperatives in “grammatical metaphors” which soften an order to a “Would you like to…” or “Let’s…”, again making the climate of the classroom less abrupt and more supportive.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

**Size of cohort**
The study dealt with a particular and unique cohort. Firstly, it was a half-cohort, the younger half. Perhaps in the cohorts spanning twelve months, such as those in Queensland schools since 2007, scaffolding with visual and enactive modes would not be so important. Secondly, it was a small cohort that was relatively homogenous in culture, background experiences with literacy, age, language, socio-economic status and parental levels of education, and matched in many ways the culture of the teacher.

**Teaching methods**
No attempt was made in the research to differentiate the impact of implicit drama modelling from the explicit teaching of literacy skills, to consider the relative importance of each in the children’s outcomes through the year. Clearly, children would not have become literate without direct alphabetic teaching and practice, though this on its own could not have given children the motivation and confidence as readers and writer that the cohort displayed.

**Subjectivity**
A limitation of the study was the participant/observer position of self as researcher/teacher. This prevented distancing from the study in a truly dispassionate way, but enhanced the insights available from self-reflection. Some level of objectivity was obtained by adopting the elevated caterpillar as a metaphor,
but since subjectivity made available a window into the mind of the teacher, the advantages and disadvantages seemed well-weighted.

**Issues of Generalisability, Validity and Reliability**

Stake (2000b) contends that “the author has some responsibility for the validity of the reader's interpretations” (p. 453) and believes that various measures should be used to ensure this, including “redundancy” of data gathering (the term “redundancy” is used to suggest variety and multiplicity rather than superfluity). He describes triangulation in qualitative research as “the process of gathering multiple perceptions to clarify meaning” (Stake, 2000b, p. 454). To achieve triangulation qualitative researchers make use of observation, interview, video, artefacts and the perspectives of insiders and outsiders.

Triangulation of this sort enhances the readers’ perspectives on the complexities of practice in the field, and the realities of theory intersecting with practice. A reader is then able to make some generalisations about the credibility of the reported practices and the application of the strategy or practice to her own situation. Reliability of the description is thereby attested by its resonance with an individual’s lived experience. This concept of vicarious generalisation is used by qualitative researchers to develop authenticity and credibility in reporting. Stake (2005a) defines generalisations from case study as "naturalistic generalisations …arrived at by …vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85).

Building vicarious experience requires literary narrative techniques to illuminate the events, rather than codes and patterns to reduce their complexity. Donmoyer (2000) argues that “stories can often serve as a half-way house between tacit knowledge and formal propositional thought" (p. 55), and that “the symbolic form we call narrative allows us to symbolise and hence think and communicate about certain aspects of experience… better than does propositional language" (p. 61). Furthermore, he would argue that through vicarious experience we learn without defensiveness and resistance to change, that we see things through the eyes of
another that we might otherwise miss, and that we access situations which might otherwise be outside our scope in time and space.

Dyson would suggest that these strengths of the narrative power of case study reporting can also be its weakness as we may “distort what we see and miss what another might notice” (1997, p. 196). My studies were composed as chronological narratives of the year of schooling, illustrated with vignettes from practice, and woven together with metaphor and other literary and dramatic devices, but they included framing stages, descriptors, categories and standards from earlier research. The delicate balance of literary and analytical features within each case study was a challenge in the writing of the case studies.

In relation to validity of presentation, it is easy to romanticise when using narrative and metaphorical styles of presentation. Awareness of bias and presuppositions helped to encourage self-reflective integrity. Providing triangulation through interviews which gave the perspectives, views and attitudes of other participants has also helped balance my portrayal of the events of the year.

**Ethical considerations**

The final, but nonetheless important methodological issue to be discussed is ethical considerations in the research project. Some of these have been introduced in the relation to interviewing with children and of validity and reliability in qualitative research.

Creswell (2007) mentions another ethical consideration in the search for veracity: the equitable treatment of diverse voices (p. 205), particularly in this instance, the voices of children. “By voice we refer to that cluster of intentions, hopes, grievances, and expectation that children guard as their own” (Pufall & Unsworth, 2004, p. 4). Woodhouse (2004) wrote: “Treating children with dignity ... calls on us to approach issues from the child’s perspective even if the child is too young to express that perspective in words.” (p. 236). Dealing with children, as less powerful participants, it was important in my research reporting to find the
perspectives and voice of the children, and to respect their dignity as subjects, not objects, of research. Finding their voice required more than sensitive interviewing. The dialogue in the film transcriptions of the dramas provided an opportunity for children’s contributions to be heard, especially in the vignettes presented within the studies. Written and drawn artefacts provided a voice for others. Relations with children always involve an inequality of power, which may affect children’s readiness to communicate, so the voice of the child is often more readily heard during incidental moments, not during direct questioning. Dyson (1997) captured some of her most revealing data sitting among a group of children working on a writing task. She noted that their view of the task often presented a serious mismatch with the perspective of the teacher. Incidental comments were captured and recorded in my daily observations, and included where they seemed significant and relevant.

Time and distance affect children’s power to reflect and respond. When I interviewed children after they progressed to Year One, my questions about their memories of the previous year, and their attitudes and feelings about it, elicited very brief responses, even though the children came back to the room where the previous year’s events had occurred. I attempted to avoid leading questions, particularly during this interview, in my quest for authenticity of reporting on attitudes toward writing as children progressed to year one. As mentioned in the discussion of interviewing methods, videos or photographs of earlier events shown to children before the interview, may have assisted their memories, but might have influenced response choices.

Confidentiality was important, hence the use of pseudonyms, and suppression of data identifying the particular school. The confidentiality of identity issue influenced the choice of illustrative writing examples from the first part of the year when children were exploring the significance of their names as words. Data was securely and safely held and stored. The nature of the project - the description of normal teacher practice and children’s responses within the context of regular schooling – meant that I could avoid access issues. Even though my approach
was, I believe, innovative, it was well within the scope of appropriate practice with young school children, and the expectations for ethical teaching practice.

Parental written permission was obtained for participation in the project. School permission protocol was also provided. I did not attempt to ask children for informed consent for my research, except for the use of their artefacts. Some researchers (e.g. Einarsson, 2005, and Murphy, 2010) have done this. While valuing the voice of the child, I question whether four-year olds understand the content of the consent question. I employed standard parental permission as I would for school-based activity, trusting parents to act in the best interests of their children.

Summary
This chapter has situated my research project as a qualitative, longitudinal quintain. I have defined as honestly as possible the stance I took, the lenses I employed and the biases and background which influenced my teaching practice and my perceptions of it. The participants in the study have been described, and the context briefly revisited. The data collection and analysis processes used have been outlined and where relevant described in some detail. The ethics of this research project particularly in relation to research with young children conclude the chapter. The next two chapters present the selected case studies.
Chapter 4
The Self Study

Introduction

Alice’s caterpillar, who has been puffing away silently throughout the methodology chapter, yawns from his elevation, and begins to contribute to the discussion again. In this chapter the perspective of the reviewer of self-in-action is important, providing the “reflection after the action” (Schön, 1983) which supports professional growth. The research project has been driven by two questions:

- What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?

- What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?

This chapter attempts, in the topsy-turvy manner of Alice’s Wonderland, to address the second question in order to contextualise the first, by placing the self-study first. Significantly, it also offers data relating to the whole cohort of students and my engagement with them, whilst the one that follows zooms in to offer a very specific and detailed examination of how my approach impacted on the written literacy development of just four students.

The division of the self-study into Putnam’s (1991) stages of “recipe-user”, “developing novice” and “innovator and interrogator”, as mentioned in the previous chapter, defines my progress as a teacher taking on new pedagogical approaches whilst refining and adapting others. Within that framework the use of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for literacy is examined through the analysis of twelve key events.

A table below summarizes these events. The headings: Key Event and Month, Learning Focus for the quintain and Responses of the children, reflect my pedagogical and research purposes. Because of the systematic nature of my interventions, the timing of each within the parameters of the school year was
important. The month when the event occurred gives an indication of this timing. My instructional literacy purpose and my goals as a developing drama teacher directed the focus in each event, while the responses of the children, either through writing, drawing or establishing play worlds, were a major justification for the inclusion of the event in the twelve chosen for my study. The order of focus-response does not, however, imply a one-way process. Rogoff (2003) has described cultural transactions as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship transforming culture. This two-way process was occurring for all the participants in the quintain, as the description of events will demonstrate. In the table, I have used “play context” to distinguish the environments which I introduced and which children continued, from the “play world” term used by Lindqvist (1995), since my use of drama and play contexts was somewhat different from the approach which she and her followers have used, particularly in relation to adult input.

**Table Two: The Twelve Key Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key event and month</th>
<th>Learning focus for the quintain</th>
<th>Responses of the children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wombat finds a home (January)</td>
<td>Name as sign, engagement through puppetry</td>
<td>Puppetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The alliterative spell for the statue (February)</td>
<td>Phonemic awareness, entry into live drama</td>
<td>Creation of a shared play context, signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wolf and the three little pigs (March)</td>
<td>Letter of apology, interviewing</td>
<td>Reciprocal discussion, letter-writing, puppet play context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldilocks makes restitution (March)</td>
<td>Reinforce letter-writing, extend narration</td>
<td>Bears’ play context, writing in role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bear hunt (April)</td>
<td>Innovation on narrative, extending improvisation</td>
<td>Individual roles in improvisation, extension of narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table Two: The Twelve Key Events cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key event and month</th>
<th>Learning focus for the quintain</th>
<th>Responses of the children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The monkey and the crocodile (April)</td>
<td>Signs as warnings, games as pretext</td>
<td>Signs as warnings, understandings about pretext, jungle play context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The forester (May)</td>
<td>Signs, petitions and posters in role, ‘authority against the group’</td>
<td>Australian bush play context individual roles, signs, shared letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The palaeontologist investigation (May)</td>
<td>Recording data with names, notes, labels, discourse of investigator</td>
<td>Labels, museum play context, discourse of investigators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The three billy goats Gruff (May)</td>
<td>Warning sign, building narrative, building improvisation skills, speech bubbles</td>
<td>Speech bubbles, farm play context, signs, maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollie the octopus (June)</td>
<td>Reading and composing message in a bottle</td>
<td>Reading and composing, building tension through creating hurdles to resolution, sea play context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoë the Zoo-catcher (August)</td>
<td>Labels, warnings, feeding times, mantle of the expert</td>
<td>Zoo play context, tickets, name and warning signs, labels, feeding times, expert roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The elves and the shoemaker (Oct-Dec)</td>
<td>Posters, signs, invitations, lists, letters, “Who am I?” description, unit development, creation of a theatrical performance from a drama</td>
<td>Fairy tale play context, writing in role, signs, letters, poetry, narrative, designs for costumes and sets, shows, tickets, programmes, performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: The Self Study

Eleven of the twelve dramatic events selected for analysis were of one to three days’ duration. The last was quite different, being an eight week unit which integrated the learning of the children through most of the final term of the year (October to December). This unit enabled me to introduce a variety of genres in the context of one play world, the fairytale world of “The Elves and the Shoemaker”. The unit contained daily drama sessions, dramatic play periods and literacy activities. Its commonality with the preceding key events is the development of a shared play world context where the learning, particularly the literacy learning, was embedded, and where significant responses could be observed among the children.

Peery (2004) suggests that “professional development that enhances teacher effectiveness must contain a prudent combination of inner and outer work” (p. 14), in a flow of planning, practising, observing, interpreting, and reviewing. As such, the journal illuminates this inner work as it occurred during my teaching while illustrative vignettes from the film transcriptions, written artefacts demonstrating children’s responses, and personal reflections from my journal are also used to support my analysis.

Setting goals and setting the stage
At the outset of this research project, I established a set of goals for the year and identified two innovative directions for my pedagogy that I hoped would help me achieve these goals. The goal I formulated for all the children, for writing, was that they be able (and willing) to compose and write an independent sentence. The goals I formulated for myself were to become comfortable enough with the roles and strategies of the drama teacher to integrate them into my practice spontaneously and effectively, and to integrate primary and preschool teaching. The researcher-caterpillar coughs a little irritably. What about my goal as a researcher? To find out more about drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for literacy, particularly writing, I reply.

My expectation was that children would enter Prep with some emergent literacy
Chapter 4: The Self Study

from middle-class home life rich in experiences with print, and that I should build on that. As McNaughton wrote (2002), I was “setting a scene for the meeting of minds” (p. 12). I wanted to meet the minds of the children as learners, to enter their zones of proximal development, to fit my purposes with theirs, to match their past experiences as writers to learning which would move them forward into new insights. I set the stage for dramatic play in ways I expected would be familiar from home and kindergarten. The caterpillar on the mushroom observes self-as-teacher beginning the year in the familiar early childhood teacher role, attempting to stage-manage the environment to support children’s development. This included, in keeping with the practice of Morrow (1990), Christie and Enz (1992) and other early childhood teachers and researchers from that decade, providing materials for reading and writing in a home corner “office”, more tools for writing and drawing in the collage area, a computer area with interactive literacy and early childhood maths games, and a book area contained an inviting display of picture books, factual texts which included picture alphabets and number matching texts.

What differentiated this intervention from exemplars referred to in the existing research literature, was the deliberate efforts to model literacy practice within daily drama teaching sessions, supported by the systematic introduction of a synthetic phonics program (Ellis, 2007), where letter/sounds relationships were examined in a variety of ways and contexts. I was following a sequence of frequency of use of each sound in the English language, which made each letter and its sound immediately available as a tool for word-building and decoding.

Would this approach, which I refer to as one that is ‘balanced’, prove to be effective as a productive pedagogy for young children learning written literacy? What challenges would I face as I attempted this balancing act? What would I learn about drama and play pedagogy?

To address these questions, this chapter is divided into three sections relating to Putnam’s recipe analogy for professional learning. Within these sections, the key events relating to these stages are dealt with using a common format. They begin
with a description of the event, followed by an outlining of the children’s responses, before moving on to offer analysis from a range of perspectives. In analysing each event I was looking for what it revealed about drama’s role in supporting literacy, what it revealed about dramatic play’s role, and what it might indicate about the interweaving of the three. The first of these sections examines the key events that sit within the “Recipe User” category.

STAGE ONE: “RECIPE-USER”
Putnam’s “recipe” analogy (1991) for identifying the stages of professional development situates the professional learner, during the first stage, as a recipe user. As such, I began 2007 very much in this mode, drawing upon process drama strategies, lesson plans and games I had seen modelled or had read about, and building on my existing early childhood experience of techniques such as story-telling, song, movement and mime, shared enactments of narrated stories, and puppetry. As my observing caterpillar notes, from the choice of songs, movement and puppetry, as well as my comments in the journal discussion at the end of the first fortnight, I was working well within my comfort zone. I knew from previous experience, supported by the research of Slade (1954), Bredikyte (2000) and Fisler (2003), that puppets would engage young children. I knew how to use the puppets interactively, so that children would be encouraged to participate in dialogue and action. I knew that I could model social interactions in puppetry contexts. By the end of the first fortnight however I wrote: “puppetry works so well…but I want to enlarge my own pedagogy of early childhood by incorporating strategies (from process drama) into the repertoire I use” (Dis, t1: w2).

KEY EVENT ONE: Wombat finds a home
Names as signs

Focus
This event, occurring across the first two days of the school year, was my first attempt to include a clear model for literacy practice in a drama situation, and for this reason it has been identified as key event one. My instructional goal for writing was to demonstrate how members of our literate culture use name signs to assert
ownership. I chose names because Clay (1975), Kress (1994, 1997), Welsch et al. (2003), and Molfese et al. (2006), had shown that these are the first words that children generally relate to and use. Their first writing attempts with the alphabet often include the familiar symbols from their names. Moreover, through the drama I was attempting to address dispositional differences in the children as they approached the new environment, to strike a chord with their own initial emotions in the Prep classroom, as well as creating a climate that was playful, happy, secure, active, engaging and yet challenging and exciting. These are aspects of early childhood practice that encourage learning (EYCG, 2006).

Description and responses
The session began with animal puppets introducing themselves through greetings and singing personalised action songs. The characters I introduced were Wombat, Emu, Platypus and Cocky. Wombat was slow and sleepy, Emu energetic, Platypus very shy, and Cocky excitable and bossy. As the event unfolded, some of the puppets put signs on the homes they were constructing. The dramatic complication, which came on day two of the event, was Wombat accidentally bumbling into Platypus’s home, almost destroying it. I had planned to resolve the ensuing conflict by recommending signs for Platypus and Wombat’s homes, to avoid further confusion, but the voices of the children emerged, when Edward suggested that Wombat and Platypus make friends. I included his suggestion in the puppet action, before opening up the time and space for children’s free play. A few segments illustrating features of the dialogue are included here, while a longer section of the transcript is located within Appendix B.

At first the dialogue was chiefly between the puppet Wombat and myself, modelling interaction possibilities:

Self to Wombat: Do you like a big, high place, Mr. Wombat?
I choose a large block from the stack arranged at the back of the carpet area, and hold it ready.
Self as Wombat, sleepily: No, low down.
Self to Wombat: Okay, what if I put it here like that? Is that good, Wombat?
A child voice murmurs: Yes.

Lucy’s was the first child voice contributing suggestions:

Self, calling down into his burrow: Is that all right Wombat, if I cover it with a dress?
Self as Wombat: No!
I stand up, looking toward home corner.
Lucy: A blanket.
I hurry back to home corner, collecting one from a doll bed. I stand in front of the burrow holding it ready (FT, 1:30)

Soon other individual children began contributing responses in suggestion, action and incredulous laughter, responses that demonstrated, too, their background knowledge about the Australian bush.

Self: Do you want a tree or something?
Self as Cocky: Yes.
I put another block on top.
Michael in peremptory tone: High.
Self as Cocky: Want a nest!
Self, slowly and thoughtfully: A nest…
I look around again as if finding something to represent a nest, and Edward puts his arms out and shrugs dramatically.

When I modelled the writing of Wombat’s name after he knocked down Platypus burrow, some children demonstrated their knowledge of letter names and sounds. Others, like Edward and Candice, showed some awareness, but confused letters with words, or offered a familiar letter with no connection to the sound. These contributions offered me important baseline data on the children’s existing literacy knowledge, which Haney (2002), Welsch, Sullivan & Justice (2003), and Treiman et al. (2007) also found in their research studies.
Self: Ready? Now everyone look on their name tag. Can everyone read their name? Right... Now, ‘Wombat.’ What’s Wombat’s letter going to be?
Candice: C.
Simon: W.
Self: Good on you, Simon. Hey, haven’t we got someone with "W"? (name protected)... can W...stand up ‘cos we need you to write his letter. Do you know how to do it?
*The child does so.*
Edward: And what’s his last name?

**ANALYSIS**

*The role of drama in supporting writing*

This first event clearly indicated that most of the children were engaged by the literacy embedded in the event, and were able to contribute actively to the construction of words, building on prior knowledge connected with their own names. Only five of the nineteen were partially engaged. At the fringe, James resisted participation, and Peter mimicked his withdrawal. Raymond resisted membership altogether by denying the puppet “food” when Cocky came round “eating” from the children’s hands, a “Menippean” response according to Cheyne and Terulli (1999). Within Warner’s (1997) categories, these three might also be referred to as “listener-/outsiders”. They were “non-participants” in my own preferred categories. Nellie and Martin were very engaged during the puppetry until we began making the name signs, but at that point they began to lose interest. The responses of the children generally, however demonstrated full participation, responsive contributions and engagement, indicating that the drama event was inclusive, and at the same time differentiated and responded to children’s individual needs.

This key event was the first of three with which I attempted an in-depth discourse analysis. The choice of the first drama event of the year, despite the lack of immediate written responses was based on the detail and clarity of the film transcription available, and the possibility of comparing my pedagogical language...
at the onset of the year with that of a later period. I used descriptors from Christie’s linguistic model to probe my teacher talk. These investigations revealed further insights. I discovered support for some of Christie’s findings in relation to the pedagogical model of early childhood discourse, for my interactions with the children suggest that regulation and instruction in the drama were implicit. No explicit invitation to imagine or to step into a pretend world was offered, because I believed that few young children needed this invitation; I doubted the presence of boundaries between reality and fiction in their thinking.

Analysis also revealed that I used frequent movement in and out of role, signalled by the presence of the puppet on my hand, by sitting down on the teacher chair, by changes in voice and the direction of my eye gaze. Intuitively I was blurring the boundaries between drama and dramatic play in order to maintain the flow of themes to lead into children’s own play. Possibilities for on-going dramatic play were modelled and the equipment from the puppetry event was also left ready for use in the space. I used “think-aloud” comments as I built Platypus’s home from nearby play materials, to demonstrate play possibilities with the materials I found and used. The responses of children in adopting the puppets into their play and using their own puppets at home suggest that connections were gradually being built between my directed drama and their continuing self-directed dramatic play.

My “teacher talk” demonstrated other linguistic features which Christie would describe as typical of early childhood address. For example, in the dialogue of the first key event, few declarative modes of address were used to build general knowledge of animal habitats in the Australian bush, or literacy knowledge about how to encode the alphabet in order to create names as meaningful and functional signs in the play. Instead, explanations were masked in the questions to the cohort about a particular puppet character’s needs, and name-writing was modelled for a particular puppet’s ownership requirements. Using a “think-aloud” approach, I built a puppet home with a fence. This roused Michael’s curiosity, so my next statements provided a general explanation. The particular had led into the more general, and cognitively more complex, language, exemplified in the transcript.
below in which I described Shy the platypus’s particular needs before generalising about the needs for bush animals to be protected from predators. I was acting on the intuitive premise that children would understand and empathise with a particular character’s needs rather than general informative statements about bush animals. Here is the example:

Self: But she doesn’t want dingoes to get in it, so we’ll have to build a fence around it or cover it up.

_I talk as I arrange the ‘water’ in the space beside the children. Several are on their feet now._

Michael, softly with a rising intonation: Dingoes?!

Self: Yes, well, some animals get attacked by dingoes, so what if we put a roof over it?

In addition, the inclusive pronoun “we” was used occasionally to encourage an inclusive identity for the group, which Christie had identified as a typical early childhood strategy for regulation of behaviour. Lucy supported my implicit behaviour regulation by telling another child to sit down, which I affirmed with a general inclusive comment. Tracing the flow of thematic contributions in the dialogue, I could discern a confident stance among the children which enabled them to begin to contribute their ideas and opinions. They contributed action, shared singing, and verbal affirmations and suggestions.

Throughout the drama the themes which I, as puppeteer, used in the dialogue were supported by puppet action. Within a Vygotskian theoretical perspective on cognition, the expert apprentices the students through _language accompanying action_, as they move toward a stage of cognition which will eventually isolate language from action (Gredler & Shields, 2008). In line with this view, the language I modelled here was then imitated by the talkers in the group during the dialogue. This imitation, along with the body language and visual attention of the participants, demonstrated the accessibility of this learning to the children. This approach was consistent with an early childhood approach connecting the concrete with the symbolic, in particular with language, and scaffolding children’s emerging
understanding of general categories blending specific examples from real-life and life-like contexts.

The data from the film transcription also suggests that interaction was enhanced through the use of dramatic devices: scene-setting with the blocks and props from home corner, the creation of a fairly light-hearted but still conflict-arousing mood, some tension of surprise and humour in the climax when Wombat knocked over the platypus family’s home, fast pacing of each new puppet’s appearances in order to keep children engaged, and some characterisation, with the shy but protective platypuses, the slow, somewhat vague, bumbling wombat and the screeching cockatoos. Emotions of shock and humour were aroused. As a result, master dramatists (Creaser, 1989) began to emerge, firstly Lucy and Michael contributing suggestions for the props and setting, and then Edward responding dramatically to the climax and contributing themes for resolution and retribution.

Furthermore, by taking a responsive stance to the needs and demands of the puppets, I implicitly conveyed a message that I was available to the children as well as the puppets, as a resource-finder. When I helped the puppets solve problems and responded to Edward’s suggestion that the puppets make friends, I further implied that children’s voices would be heard when they had suggestions to offer in our teacher-child interactions.

The role of dramatic play in supporting writing

Literary responses in dramatic play were not immediate. The tables of drama/dramatic play/writing connections located in Appendix C3 track the timing of responses to particular literacy input in the dramas. They shows that the writing of signs asserting ownership modelled in the drama did not produce a noticeable response in group dramatic play until March, after an incubation period of six weeks. James, however, made much earlier use of the model in drawings at home. His response is described in his case study in Chapter Five. Martello (2001) had earlier researched the use of drama to build bridges between home and school, so there was a research precedent for this strong home-school connection.
after drama experiences. Raymond took out his own puppets at home and began building a narrative with dialogue between himself and his puppets, described to me later by his mother. He brought a puppet to school a few days later, to include in the next puppet session (Obs, 2: 6). Raymond’s puppetry response in his dramatic play at home indicates that the drama also stimulated oral narrative.

In dramatic play, the social interaction modelled in the drama was being taken up and imitated. Like the written responses, dramatic play responses occurred first at home. I noted in my journal that there were no obvious immediate written responses to my name-writing model in children’s classroom dramatic play, but that the children seemed happy and enthusiastic:

The puppets seemed to serve a function this week quite important to the future of literacy learning, but not directly linked to immediate literacy outcomes. They helped to produce a group of happy, settled children, ready to engage in everything offering, and attentive to a teacher speaking to them in a group. (Dis, t1:w1)

Parents in the interviews supported this perception. For example, Charlotte’s mother reported: “I was surprised how excited she is about Prep, since day one. She doesn’t give me lots of feedback, but I hear her singing the songs, and she’s so excited to come every day” (Pl, t1:p. 5). Dramatic play responses to the drama took a couple of days to emerge in the classroom. Children began including the puppets in their dramatic play after one child “read” a story to a puppet during a brief rest time on the second day (Obs, 1:30).

To support my observations of children’s alphabetic knowledge during the first key event, I obtained, through individual consultation in weeks two and three, baseline data on the children’s literacy levels, and their attitudes to reading and writing, in order to assess whether I was accurately focusing my explicit instruction, and to provide a measure to compare the data with end-of-year performance. The tables of initial and final performance are included in Appendix B.

The data from the initial consultations indicate that the children generally began the
school year knowing the purpose of books and most of the conventions for handling them. With the possible exception of James, they were aware that written words had meaning but could not access the cues for letters and sounds. Most recognised some letters and could write their names; several knew other letters as well, and could name them. Attitudes to reading and writing were positive, though writing and drawing, as expressions using a writing tool, were not clearly distinguished in their thinking, as Kress (1997) had observed. As a cohort, these children generally demonstrated emergent, role play (Phase A) literacy, where exposure to symbols and literate cultural practice are present but not a great deal of phonetic knowledge available for use. The consultations and checklists I obtained reinforced my judgement that the model of literacy used in the first drama event appropriately met the needs of this particular cohort of children and should be supported by skills’ practice sessions to build alphabetic knowledge and use.

**KEY EVENT TWO: The alliterative spell for the statue**

**Phonemic awareness, live drama and a context for signs**

**Focus**

During the third week and in the weeks that followed, I attempted to combine the children’s need for phonemic awareness and my own goal of applying process drama techniques. Fortunately, another recipe was available in the research literature to support me. Hertzberg (2000) had developed a drama with beginning Year one children in South Australia, to introduce phonemic awareness through devising an alliterative spell. In her research model, the spell was used to free a statue, frozen and silent in a beautiful garden, and children took on the “mantle of the expert” as competent devisers of counter-spells, to free the statue from her silence.

**Description and responses**

I made slight adaptions to the recipe, because my children were six months younger, and because I was still unsure if they could manage without puppet models. I chose a boy puppet, Charlie, and a girl puppet, Susie, introduced the previous week, as characters to lead the action, and to provide a link with prior
experience (for myself as well as the children, the observing caterpillar notes). I built a play garden in front of the circle of children, describing the setting as I constructed it, and while I had their attention, provided a narrative of the events leading up to the commencement of the improvisation. Then I took on the role of the gardener (what Morgan & Saxton, 1987, would call a “second-in-command” role, with middle status), dressing in front of them with a hat, jacket and boots collected from home corner. The puppets, Charlie and Susie, asked the children, as experts in devising alliterative spells, to help revive the statue. They rose to the occasion, but needed lots of scaffolding from the gardener (myself in role), who, notes the observer on the mushroom, was sometimes in the action and sometimes stepping out to coach alongside. Fortunately, the children were not perturbed by this movement in and out of role, for, as Sawyer notes (1997), it is typical of their own improvisation and use of narrative during dramatic play situations.

During the sessions, we attempted to co-create a sequence of words beginning with the /s/ sound, the first of our letter/sound investigations. The children then took on the role of obliging animals that crept into the garden at the stroke of midnight, under a full moon, to join in a chorus chanting the spell: “Snakes slither slowly”. The statue slowly came to life and thanked the children, before stepping out of role to become my ever-obliging aide again.

The play context of the garden remained in the space fringed by shelves of blocks, scarves and other props, to encourage further play, along with my gardening hat, boots and shovel. Charlie and Susie, the puppets, were then taken to home corner for breakfast. I became a co-playing mother alongside other mothers and fathers, supporting the writing of a shopping list, which included sausages. Later, glancing through the diary Candice used for the shopping list, I observed lots of “s” symbols appearing amongst the scribble writing she used to simulate a mother writing a list. Meanwhile, the world of the garden, with its flowers, pools, fountains and moonlight, struck an aesthetic chord in Lucy, who continued in role as the gardener, becoming a catalyst for other children to participate as well. She, James and eventually others began to build structures around the garden. Lucy needed a
name for her structure (a hotel) and a sign indicating that it was open. James was recognized as a writer with the competence to support her. Later other features were added which required names as well, and signs to prevent buildings being destroyed during “pack-up”. A complex web of interactions including drama, dramatic play and writing, unfolded in the play world which they co-created. It is described more fully in Chapter Five in relation to the case studies of the four children.

**ANALYSIS**

**The role of drama in supporting writing**

As in the previous key event, the drama situation I constructed engaged the children with the learning. The entire group were involved this time. Everyone contributed to the action, and most to the script of the spell. The drama provided another catalyst for the establishment of a shared garden play world where aspects of other modelled forms of literacy were able to flourish. Signs, modelled earlier, could emerge here, as soon as there were children with the skills to produce them, and master dramatists (Creaser, 1989) who could develop the play. As in the first event, dramatic elements helped to fix the plot and setting in the children’s memory, supporting the development of responsive play, narrative, and contexts for literacy. The setting of the garden had great aesthetic appeal, encouraged with rocks, scarves, flowers and block structures. Lucy employed all these props in her developments of the dramatic play. Dramatic tension was created in the moment of silence at the stroke of midnight, and symbolism was there in the shared chanting of the spell. The mood was established through the narrative description, supported by turning the lights off to create the illusion of darkness. In my journal I noted: “Branching into live drama was a successful move. They advanced very naturally from making puppets move to being the actors themselves” (Dis, t1:w3). Role-taking was modelled, and supported with costumes. Furthermore, by openly discussing what costumes I would need, and where to find them, I implicitly conveyed to children, as I had with the props and sets in the first puppet drama, the message that costumes were available to them to use, and that home corner had great potential as a resource centre. The setting of the stage as a garden, left
invitingly for the children to use and extend in their dramatic play, would, I hoped, encourage the flow from drama into dramatic play. Likewise, the adoption of the puppets as characters in the drama supported the modelling of roles, dialogue and narrative building.

I was beginning, as a drama teacher, to make use of Heathcote’s (1980) mantle of the expert strategy, which she used to provide children with equal status as capable and responsible group members whose expertise would be needed to solve a social problem. As stage setter and as “second in command” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987) in the first event I was fairly intuitively allowing children to assume comparable status. The mantle-of-the-expert strategy supported this status by conferring on the children expertise as people able to create spells to free the statue. They were capable problem solvers, even though the solution involved phonemic awareness, requiring literacy skills which very few, if any, had yet mastered. However, when the mantle of the expert was employed across several drama events, this pattern of empowerment became more obvious to me as a drama teacher. Furthermore, from the elevation of the mushroom it seemed to Alice’s caterpillar that I was gradually adopting new stances toward the children. I had reasonably successfully taken on an enabling “second-in-command” role (Morgan & Saxton, 1987) alongside the animals in the garden, only dropping back into my usual coaching or facilitating teacher position to prompt with the spell construction.

Stances familiar to me from my teaching experiences with younger children, such as co-player and coach-from-the-sidelines, launched my move into less supportive, more challenging positions. It was, however, not easy to relinquish the reins of control, to believe that children had the maturity to take them. There was, moreover, the fear of chaos if I gave children the lead. Another major concern was that children would move into situations where they would feel unsupported and lose confidence. Using recipes of experienced drama teachers gave me a great deal of security at that time.
Chapter 4: The Self Study

The role of dramatic play in supporting writing

One of the explicit goals of my early childhood teaching was to help children connect and apply learning across contexts. Almost always this was through modelling a connection in my own behaviour or thinking aloud, rather than through a direct explanation. The puppets were often used to model these connections, and left for children to use in their own play, inviting the children to continue the narrative and dialogue they had seen demonstrated. This goal had been consciously present in my pedagogy long before I began this research.

A specific goal of my approach during the research, however, was to mediate “authoring situations” (Miller, 2007) in the play context. Like Miller, I used the children’s dramatic play as well as the drama events preceding it, to provide these situations. When I entered the dramatic play as a mother suggesting that a shopping list would be useful, and that the puppets might need sausages, I was mediating authoring situations to support the connections I was trying to build, using the approach of orchestrating social contexts where literacy would be relevant and useful. Candice’s response with “s” symbols in her diary list indicated that the youngest child in the cohort had made this connection, even though, in the devising of an “s” spell I had needed to provide a lot of scaffolding to all the children to draw out contributions. Mediation continued to occur as Lucy needed a sign, James needed scaffolding to complete Lucy’s sentence “Hotel is open”, and others wanted signs to protect their buildings.

By providing children with the models of narration, dialogue, dramatic action, sets, props and role models, and the cocoon of time, space and resources to develop responses, I was making use of the dramatic play as a support for literacy, but discovering that an incubation period was involved before children made use of this interactive site for their literate expression. That incubation period can be understood in terms of time and practice needed to deepen pathways across the brain, which finally become adequate for the automatic, self-generated literate responses (McCutchen, 2000). Perhaps also it reflected the maturing social and language development of the children, who were still exploring ways to relate to
one another, and only gradually weaving literacy into the mix of interaction. I was not discouraged though, as I waited for the writing to emerge. As an early childhood teacher still rather tentative about introducing explicit alphabetic concepts and literacy models, I wrote with some amazement, in my weekly discussion:

Perhaps the transformation is happening quietly for me in my discovery that 4-5 year old children can make such effective use of and engage so enthusiastically with these tools of the culture which have so long been on the other side of the great divide…these children are eminently ready to learn. (Dis, t1:w4)

As can be seen in the tables of response timing in Appendix C, apart from isolated artefacts which James produced at home and which his mother collected for me (described in his case study) there was little evidence of the effectiveness of my approach across the multi-case until a rainy day in March with an extended indoor play period, when a plethora of responses emerged. Some artefacts were names added to buildings, and some had a previously modelled “Don’t touch” warning with or without a crossed hand icon. These symbols of power and authority began to appear regularly through that month. In the one below, Candice added some random letters from her repertoire.

![Fig. 1: Candice’s “don’t touch” sign.](image)

I wrote in my journal: “This was a breakthrough week in terms of literacy, and really brought home to me the importance of providing time to absorb and practise new
learning and to include it in their play world explorations” (Dis, t1:w5). At that time, the elevated observer realises, I was seeing the potential of the dramatic play context chiefly as providing practice time for the literacy skill. A great deal more was occurring, as later analysis revealed.

*Interweaving the fields: drama and dramatic play with the flow of written literacy*

By providing a drama event immediately followed by a cocoon of play time, resources and space where I hoped drama, dramatic play and writing would merge, I was, realises the pondering caterpillar, facilitating the interweaving of the vines across the three fields. Children’s enthusiasm for particular themes in this play often guided my choice of drama recipes to follow, as my pedagogical purpose in making sign-writing relevant and useful drove the literacy I embedded in the borrowed events. I tried out two more process drama “recipes” that week, both from Warren (1999), about birds. I wrote: “For next week I would like to extend the use of live drama by following the interest in animals and linking it to writing animals’ names and signs” (Dis, t1:w3). The cohort responded very enthusiastically, and again contributed ideas that actually changed the direction of the dramas.

Meanwhile, as my little caterpillars grew, I was attempting to grow alongside them, by trialling new strategies and games as well as whole drama recipes provided in the research literature or practical drama workshops. I attempted a drama game to help children with pairing up and negotiating. I called it “the grab game” (see glossary). This was taken on board with enthusiasm. I was viewing games as warm-up routines to encourage participation and rouse and focus energy, rather than seeing their potential as pretext that could lead into the purposes of the drama.

My introduction of games and other strategies was often too ambitious, and had to be modified, once I reached the implementation stage of a drama plan (an example of Schön’s, 1983, “reflection-in-action”). I imagined, for instance, that I could trial a
“postcard” strategy (see glossary) in the same session as introducing a grab game. Once in the action, I realised that this was too much for the children to absorb.

Teacher experience in pacing early childhood learning over-rode my enthusiasm to try new techniques. I noted this a few times through the year, for example: “Sometimes I backtrack when I get into the real situation and realise I may be overloading children” (Dis, t1:w3).

These responses suggest that I was moving beyond being merely a recipe-user, though perhaps right from the beginning I was not a pure "recipe-user" because of the involvement puppets had in so many of the drama events. I was beginning to question some of the assertions of drama experts even while I used their games, strategies and whole drama recipes. One such assertion came from Warren (1998), who stated that children performed best in drama if encouraged to use their imagination and not depend on props and costumes. Because I wanted children to carry the ideas into their dramatic play, which depends to some extent on the use of props and costumes, I included props in the setting as pivots for their imaginations, in the sense that Vygotsky describes (1978). Dunn (2000) also found props and costumes to be useful in focusing the improvisation of older players. Setting up a scene with aesthetically pleasing but reasonably open-ended props such as the large building blocks, a tree-like hat-rack, scarves, flowers, a wooden sun and moon, and the puppets, would, I had found in the first two drama events, suggest possibilities to the children for constructive and imaginative play with these props, especially when the process drama had introduced a plot, characters and some aesthetic features. Dressing up in front of children as a way to suggest a character, and leaving them the costumes for play later, had seemed in the second event to support dramatic play development as well.

Broadhead and English (2005) had done as much in the dramas described in Moyles’ play text, as had Lindqvist (1995). Props did, at times, become a distraction, spoiling moments of high tension or contrasting mood, for instance later in the year when I brought in fluffy “eggs” (pompoms) for the turtles to lay in a turtle life-cycle drama. These were just too much of a novelty, and too suggestive of ball
games. I was learning that props had their place, but that their use must be
judicious.

**Key event three: The wolf and the three little pigs**

**Letter of apology and interview in role**

**Focus**

Generally speaking, by the time key event three arrived, I was still very much a
recipe user and again I applied existing work in order to support my use of new
drama techniques. Here I attempted a “hot-seat”, an interviewing technique
outlined in a drama Winston (1998) had used to explore the perspective of the wolf
in “The Three Little Pigs.” His goal was to challenge the stereotype of a “big, bad
wolf”. My chief focus was to explore this interviewing technique as a tool to extend
narrative understanding and to create a context for modelling the writing of a letter
of apology. I was also curious about the children’s ability to take on other
perspectives and understand and question stereotypes, believing that this critical
process might be beyond many of them.

**Description and responses**

After a joint enactment of the narrative of the original story, I followed Winston’s
recipe and entered the classroom as the penitent wolf with my tail in a bandage.
I had donned the mask and tail beforehand and arranged for one of the children to
answer my knock at the door. Taking on a rather woebegone demeanour, I
attempted to argue and defend my actions. I planted my aide amongst the
children to support by modelling questions, but the children managed their
questioning and dialogue without any help. Here is a vignette from the interview (FT: 3:13)

> Self, plaintively: What am I going to eat then if I can’t eat pigs?
> Lucy: I got a little baby pig what you can eat.
> Mrs. R. laughs incredulously: Are there any more questions you could ask
> him?
> Annie: How did you get hurt?
> Mary: Why did you blow the houses down?
Michael: If you didn’t blow the houses down you wouldn’t ‘ve got burnt.
Mrs. R: One at a time.
Self: You see I blew the straw house down because I really wanted to eat the little pig who was inside.
Nellie: And why did you hurt your tail for?
Self: It got burnt by some pigs. Some pigs put a pot of boiling water there and I had to run away as fast as I could. Don’t you think I should eat pigs?
Mrs. R.: Annie has a good question.
Annie: Did you go to the vet to get that bandage on?
Lucy: Stolen?

I was excited and rather amazed at how effectively the children engaged with this drama strategy, taking at times an oppositional stance, rather than simply following and imitating my own roles. They seemed to believe they could speak for the pigs, though they were still rather vulnerable to emotional manipulation.

To contrive a context for literacy in the wolf interview, I asked, in role as the penitent wolf, for assistance in sending an apology to the pigs. The wolf wanted help sounding-out and writing “sorry”. The children had learnt five letter/sound connections by this stage, which gave them enough sounds to begin to build some words. Children in role showed a strong sense of competency to accomplish the writing task, on behalf of the less confident wolf, particularly Mary and Michael. Their confidence inspired others, such as Lucy, who later wrote a response, and Annie who told the story orally with the puppets. Here is another vignette from the dialogue just before we began sounding out the word “sorry” (FT, 3:13):

Self as wolf: But the trouble is, I don’t know to how to write ‘sorry’.
Chorus of voices: We know!
Mary, loudly: C, C.
Self as wolf: I’m so glad you’re helping me. I ran away from school when I was a little wolf. Didn’t want to do any work.
Lucy, sympathetically: Just because you’re tired.
In role I was attempting again to pass on an implicit message. This time it was that the literacy process of putting words together was one that would require perseverance and hard work. This aroused the sympathy of Lucy, even though moments before she had most suspiciously asked whether my bandage was stolen.

Analysis

The role of drama in supporting writing

The enactment of the plot using small group roles resulted in dramatic playing of the whole “Three little Pigs” narrative by some of the children, notably Annie, who performed a complete narrative with puppets later, and Edward, who used a story board version to play it out. Others built pigs’ houses and carried on segments of the dialogue, possibly scaffolding the development of these children’s narrative competence. Role-awareness was scaffolded as well. I was not at the time aware of the firming up of role-understanding taking place dramatically, or of the increasing challenge I was intuitively providing in response to this by taking an oppositional stance, though these behaviours were beginning to have significance to the caterpillar puffing on the hookah.

Strengthening of role-awareness among the children would begin to have significance for writing in these roles. The challenge provided by this drama was the taking of an oppositional role rather than one which children could use as a model. Morgan and Saxton (1987) would describe the position I took as an “authority against the group” rather than a true “hot-seat” because the children decided to maintain their role as pigs. Morgan and Saxton differentiate between in- and out-of-role interviewing, but like the children, I tended to move in and out of role rather fluidly. The role of wolf arguing against the children’s stereotypes of good and evil characters, would also be described by Morgan and Saxton (1987) as taking a manipulative stance, though I attempted to lower the authority of my role by being woebegone and pleading (which perhaps was just as manipulative). Children showed considerable evidence through their responses, that they believed they had voice and status as questioners of motives, interviewers, and
defenders of the rights of the pigs, throughout the drama. They also demonstrated their readiness to take up drama techniques that I thought might be outside their zone of proximal development as dramatists and users of language. Their active participation in the dialogue, and ability to compose questions showed unexpected maturity from children who were just turning five.

Mediation of authoring spaces in socially relevant contexts continued to be an effective feature of the approach, as did the conferring of the mantle of the expert as writers. Children believed they were competent to contribute sounds to the “sorry” message, sounds which reflected their growing expertise with phonemic awareness. I was using the mantle strategy to confer the expertise they needed for their role. The role of a pig or wolf would not seem to be very productive for writing, unlike zoo-keepers, garage mechanics or medical practitioners, but Lucy was one who took up this behaviour from the drama and continued it in her dramatic play because she was very conscious that she was one of the pigs involved. Again, the presence of master dramatists like Lucy encouraged more of the group to contribute to the interaction and enabled Lucy to sustain this role into her play, so that she could write as a pig later. Mood and emotion were other dramatic features that supported the significance of the event to generate engagement and responses. Strong emotions were roused as children tried to handle the wolf’s defensive position in the face of their own experience as the pigs. Edward was a little anxious, Annie curious, Lucy at first suspicious and then very sympathetic.

**The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing**

The tendril of the competent writer wove a connecting vine between the drama and the ensuing dramatic play. The dramatic play situation provided an opportunity for Lucy at least, in role as a pig, to carry the stance of the expert into her play. She copied my drawing and writing and added “no” and a touch of glitter for aesthetic effect.
As noted earlier, the provision of a cocoon of dramatic play time, space and resources, seemed to be factors that facilitated the emerging narrative competence and oral language development of Lucy and other members of the cohort as they played out the story using the supporting props as prompts.

**Key event four: Goldilocks makes restitution**

**Letter of apology, extending narrative and writing in role**

The next key event strengthened and reinforced the learning from the third. It reinforced as well my understanding of how drama pedagogy could expand children’s narrative comprehension and production, and my role in supporting that process. It would also provide an opportunity for writing in role, further weaving the vines between the fields.

**Focus**

The event occurred in the same week as “The Three Little Pigs”. One focus was on narrative comprehension. I hoped to develop this through innovating on the ending of the traditional tale. I had seen models for innovations on endings to traditional stories in the literature and wanted to use this approach to devise my own. I created a drama situation in which Goldilocks would return to the three bears with a letter of apology. My goal for writing was to reinforce the letter-writing model I had just introduced, including sounding out of a word. We were
investigating letter “p” that week in a variety of hands-on ways including songs, stories, craft, letter-shaping, brainstorming words to establish the letter/sound connection, cooking, and special events.

For my own professional development, I was seeking guidance from the Queensland Years 1-10 Arts Syllabus (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2002), though the level one “recipes” I found there seemed to be too long and complex for my four to five year olds. I noted that the documents defined three areas of dramatic activity: performing, viewing and responding. I had been focusing on performing (of drama and puppetry) through improvisation and re-enactments, and viewing (of puppetry), but not providing any model for verbal responses. I therefore planned to model responding-as-audience in the drama session of “Goldilocks”.

**Description and responses**

As such, I chose a small group to enact the story while I narrated from the side, commenting favourably on the use of appropriate vocal registers by Father Bear and Baby Bear. This was another step away from whole group enactments in a shared role into individual role-taking before a peer audience. Again I acted intuitively, though the understanding of developing role-awareness became clearer to me later in the year. Children took up my “responding” model and began to comment (also favourably) on aspects of the performance of others. Other children in the audience spontaneously cheered the climax. We then attempted the planned innovation on the ending. The plan was to include some inferential reasoning. I would step into role as Mother Bear, who would find a set of shoe tracks in the cottage a few days after Goldilocks had been, and wonder who might have been there.

When it came to the moment of action, I realised that an introduction to the reasoning process might be better served by letting children *observe* the process of creating and discovering the clues, rather than requiring them to make a prediction from the evidence. So, instead of taking the Mother Bear role within the
drama, I took the stance of the coach on the sidelines, instructing Lucy, who had just been Goldilocks in the children’s enactment, to come inside, still in role, and leave the letter of apology on the table. I followed her out, laying a paper footprint trail, and asked her to drop a flower and a lock of hair. Instead of the inferential reasoning dependent on visualisation to determine what might have occurred, there was dramatic tension as the bears woke up and discovered the clues, and the dramatic irony for the children of being “in the know” while the Bears were still “in the dark”. The thinking process had been enacted in front of them, which I hoped would create a pathway for future cognitive connections. I wrote that day: “I am finding that my plans are frequently turned upside down by the climate and potentials of the actual classroom moment” (Obs, 3:15).

When I modelled the “sorry” message this time, I extended the word-building I had demonstrated in the wolf interview by explaining the orthographic conventions of the doubled “r” and the use of “y”.

Analysis

**The role of drama in supporting writing**

I have mentioned the unplanned but effective creation of a situation of dramatic tension and dramatic irony when I changed the way the innovation was structured. Silence and secrecy were elements of the placing of the letter of apology, important in creating a dramatic significance to the context for literacy. Moods of excitement and celebration supported the learning. The modelling of the language of responding to the individual performance of others built children’s explicit understanding of elements of effective dramatic performance. Edward at least, made use of the model immediately. Not till much later, when I reviewed Hattie’s (2003) research identifying features of effective teaching did I understand the importance of giving explicit feedback to support children’s understanding of features of effective performance.

The drama supported children’s growing narrative competence. It provided a model of plot, characters and dialogue that was familiar and accessible but which
also opened up possibilities for imaginative extension beyond the confines of the traditional tale. I was beginning to understand the potential within process drama to lead children into the co-creation of imaginative worlds. This understanding developed further when I planned, implemented and reflected on the next key drama event.

The Goldilocks drama also provided another opportunity to mediate authoring spaces as Miller (2007) had done, and to respond to children’s progress in writing by providing the appropriate model for combining sounds to make words which several children were ready to use. I could step into their shared zone of proximal development to provide the scaffolded cognitive challenge they were ready to take up.

Reflection-in-action, as well as reflection-after-action (Schön, 1983), as I reviewed video footage each night, was important in shaping my understanding of the practice and potential of the drama approach. The reflection led to modifying and simplifying recipes, strategies and plans to suit the developmental level of four-to-five year olds. I had always modified and simplified materials and programs as an early childhood teacher. In developing as a drama teacher, I was not always able to anticipate the modifications required during my planning. It was the flow of the moment which gave me the best insights into how to implement a drama recipe in my own context.

The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing
Responses to the drama work outlined above occurred immediately both in play and in writing. This time there was no incubation period. Some children continued to play out the original drama, taking individual roles as father, mother and baby bears and Goldilocks, opposite one another as I had modelled it in the drama, employing the familiar script for the dialogue of the nursery tale. Lucy, however, who had been in role as Goldilocks in both the enactment and the extension of the story, continued in role as a competent “authoring” Goldilocks (Miller, 2007) and wrote her own sorry letter, which is included in her case study. The stance of the
children as competent performers, audience and in-role writers was an important outcome of this event, even though my pedagogical understanding at the time was limited to my own role in facilitating responses through modelling the language, and of dramatic possibilities in innovating on dramatic endings, the facilitating behaviour Trawick-Smith (1994) describes in a study of teacher/child interactions in play.

Key event five: The Bear Hunt
Innovation and extension of narrative

My next step into using and understanding drama pedagogy involved trialling, as a lead into the drama, a ‘What if?’ strategy sourced from the work of O’Toole and Dunn (2002). Again I was following a recipe, but from the elevation of the mushroom my ruminating caterpillar detects progress into the next stage of “Developing novice” as I grew in confidence to blend games and strategies in the devising of drama events designed to promote literacy learning.

Focus
The focus of the Bear Hunt event was again on innovation and enhanced narrative competence. This time I hoped to encourage children’s own innovations, by asking “What if…?” I wanted to allow the children to gain status and confidence, to relinquish my nurturing stance and provide them with opportunities to take up challenges in their shared ZPD.

Description and responses
Within the learning experience we chanted the familiar “I’m going on a bear hunt”; then I asked “What if there was something else in the cave? What might you see and what might happen?” There were some tentative suggestions about what we might see, after which I sent a volunteer into the “cave” we had prepared. The action came slowly. Peter paused indecisively when he went into the cave. To prompt his imagination, I wondered, nervously, out loud, what he had seen. “Treasure,” he called and began digging. I asked if he needed a helper, and he called on Vincent. With peer support he became more confident in his action and
language. I continued to offer leading questions, and the improvisation proceeded to the hiding of the treasure on another island. With different volunteer explorers I had to scaffold with questions again, as the children still seemed to find it fairly difficult to improvise individually in front of their peers. The cave became the site of adventurous play with bears and treasure hunts. It was extended to the outdoor setting where there was more scope for boisterous adventure. Play around maps and treasure reappeared several times through the year. Laurence was a studious map-maker and included labels on the maps he brought from home. Even his painting of the original bear hunt, I observed on the day of the event, was laid out as a map. After “The Bear Hunt”, I wrote in my journal: “The children painted scenes from the bear hunt, and these were varied and imaginative” (Obs, 3:21).

I also commented in my discussion that weekend (Dis, t1, w9) that mapping had extended into drawing chalk arrows everywhere on the concrete paths. Significantly, there were lots of letters interwoven among the arrows and this was the same week that all the writing in dramatic play, in the form of signs and messages, emerged out of incubation.

Analysis

The role of drama in supporting writing

The bear hunt, even without the innovation, was full of the tension of an anticipated chase, and the confrontation with a large, scary character. The setting of a dark, gloomy cave assisted the building of the mood of high excitement. The chief challenge of the innovation was to keep this excitement high whilst coaching from the sidelines and helping children to focus on thought as well as action. Asking children to take individual roles supported the focus required for this task. Master dramatists such as Peter (with the support of his friend Vincent) were able to take up the challenge and step into role as treasure hunters. Finding a treasure and transporting it home was a familiar enough plot for the two to take it to a conclusion. I was able to extend my drama discourse and consciously make use of questions and tentative statements in the situation to empower children to find and access their own imaginative ideas and memories. Narrative competence as
co-creators of story was supported by this event, and outpourings of story as ballad occurred soon after, from several children.

I was replacing shared teacher roles with individual ones, and supporting children’s lead through extending questions rather than direct participation. The role of extender was familiar from scaffolding early childhood dramatic play and show-and-tell sessions, but novel in a drama setting. According to Morgan and Saxton (1987) scaffolding through the use of leading questions makes use of the facilitator stance of “coaching alongside”. Clearly, in using this strategy, I was still fairly tentative about giving children the lead. I wondered whether they would find the ideas, images and language to carry the improvisation forward and have the confidence to do so in front of a whole group.

Nonetheless, my vision of what four to five year olds could actually learn and understand was enlarging as I introduced each new drama strategy and literacy task.

An emerging insight at this time was that process drama was extending visualisation in an imaginary situation for these young performers. Mages (2006) had described the beginning of the process in her theory of narrative production: “As they enact the story children become better able to project themselves into the make-believe world of the narrative. They improve in ability to simulate the events, characters and nuances of the story and of narrative in general” (p. 5). In my drama event innovation and questioning stretched children to project themselves imaginatively into new scenarios which they could visualise as they described them.

**The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing**
The dramatic play in the space again afforded the opportunity to continue the exciting plot and exciting roles, and to continue to experiment with the signs and icons involved by making maps. Not only was the indoor play space utilised for these explorations, but as I initiated treasure hunts with maps outdoors, children
extended the scope of their bear-hunting play to include all of the playground. Tools extended from marker pens to chalk, symbols from letters to arrows and signs to labels on maps created in private “offices” at home. As Goodman (1990) found, in research connecting dramatic play and narrative, maps hold high status as powerful dramatic play props and their presence leads to effective plot developments. In Goodman’s study as well, continuity of narrative from picture stories to dramatic play was the clearest connection noted between literacy and play. In my case, there was considerable imitation of signs and symbols on the maps they created, and Laurence and Lucy were key instigators of both the map-making and the action around their use.

**Stage two - “Developing novice”: understanding the concepts within the frame of process drama pedagogy**

In this second stage of my professional development, as understanding of the concepts beneath the process drama recipes increased, I could scaffold children’s progress more explicitly and make more effective use of the elements of the art form, to the point where I could combine some of these elements into drama events of my own devising. In the process I was working inductively, learning by doing and reviewing, rather than proceeding solely from theory to practice, though theory certainly had a place at all stages in the planning, implementing and reviewing process. The research of Putnam (1991) and Schön (1983) supports this cyclic model of learning in the developing professional. I was beginning to create original drama plans, modify and combine games and other strategies, and connect them to my own themes. My confidence in my practice was increasing, as was my belief in children’s capacity to understand and use the strategies, and to carry through longer drama events which might explore a narrative or idea across several days. The next key event illustrated this emerging confidence both in myself and in the children, and my movement into this stage of understanding.
Key event six: Monkey and the crocodile

Signs as warnings, games as pretext

The next drama event was chosen for analysis partly because of its high productivity but also because of its place in my development as a novice drama teacher. I had made some discoveries about extending and questioning language, about roles and stances and about encouraging visualisation in improvisation, but this time I was consciously able to describe in my journaling an understanding of the interconnections within a recipe or plan, as my concept of “pretext” (O’Neill, 1995) began to take shape.

Focus

This drama event was focused around employing signs as warnings to help protect others from danger. The recipe I used was a game “Sleeping Lions” (described in the glossary), which was adapted to relate it to the storyline, also borrowed from literature, about a monkey who didn’t believe in crocodiles (from Paul White’s series of “Jungle Doctor Fables”). My personal goal was to weave together puppetry and live drama in an event which I devised myself, with the children positioned as experts in sign-making and competent as rescuers of monkeys in dire straits.

Description and responses

In the “crocodile” version of the “sleeping lions” game, children secretly rescued captured puppet animals while the “crocodile” child in the centre of the circle was “asleep”. An atmosphere of stealth, stillness and rising tension was created within the game, which transferred into the drama and focused the action. The defiant monkey puppet, undeterred by the children’s warning cries and persuasion, crept down to the river by night and narrowly avoided being eaten by a crocodile puppet manipulated by one of the children. The children then became a confident and united cohort of literate experts who created and successfully trialled warning signs for monkeys, to protect them from the dangers in the river. I modelled drawing a sign depicting a crocodile with a cross through it and its name. All these aspects of
the sign were familiar. I then encouraged children to create their own signs with any kind of dangerous animal Monkey might meet in the jungle, accompanied by the warning cross. Laurence was the first to create a similar sign after the drama in the dramatic play time which followed. Nearby, James and Martin made a cage for an eagle and Martin created his own sign for it, with scaffolding from me. Other cages were built in the play space, and Candice took a zebra sign I had made as another warning for Monkey, and added it to her cage.

The play world of the jungle grew as we went on to perform several jungle tales with Monkey and his friends, all with warnings and instructions. The satisfaction from their successes spilt over into the creation of many signs, one of which is featured here, and others in the case studies in Chapter Five.

In this later sample, Raymond has used the warning: “It is not a log.” By then children could confidently write and read a sentence with simple consonant/vowel/consonant words. Raymond was an active participant in this drama, no longer subverting its purpose, but revelling in the excitement of the danger involved.

**Analysis**

*The role of drama in supporting writing*

The successful building of tension, and the more effective use of contrast were instrumental in making this experience memorable to the children, memorable
enough for the themes and actions to be transferred into their own play and writing. As the drama game set the mood and evoked the initial state of tension to focus the drama, I realised I could use games as pretexts in more purposeful ways. Most significantly it assisted my broader understanding of how all the techniques of a process drama could work together to build a complete dramatic event quivering with tension, meaning and emotion, at the same time deepening the aesthetic engagement and visualisation involved in the event. I was becoming more conscious by then, observes the reviewer on the mushroom, of the function of the mantle of the expert, endowing children with responsible expertise for the high moral cause of rescue as well as the authoring expertise of sign creators. Again, expertise flowed on into the ongoing dramatic play, so that Martin, for instance, believed he could make an eagle sign of his own. I had modelled the encoding of sounds connected to letters many times by now, in context and as explicit teaching. I was encouraged to see instances of children finding this skill useful for their own play purposes after a drama event which had seemed so exciting and satisfying for both children and teacher. The shift from “recipe-user” to “developing novice” continued as the events that followed built on my emerging understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for children’s writing.

**The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing**

The drama event provided a clear example of the three fields of drama, play and literacy intertwining immediately. There were both immediate and ongoing responses to the writing model, in drama and in spontaneous dramatic play situations, as Tables 8 and 9 in Appendix C demonstrate. The drama led immediately to the establishment of a play context, which future drama events sustained. Within those events the modelling of warning signs, increasing in complexity as children’s skills in writing and reading improved, supported the continuation of the writing in role as expert rescuers of naughty but loveable monkeys. The writing models linked as well to prior use of signs as names, helping children such as Martin, Candice, Sally, Edward and Nellie, who were not yet competent to sound out and write whole sentences, but could copy names, so that they could access the sign writing as well. As the year went on, the gap
between the literacy competence of the highest performing and the struggling learners was widening, and the zone of support in the dramatic contexts had to grow broader in order to continue to be responsive to children’s needs.

**Key event seven: The forester**

**Signs, petitions and posters and an “authority against the group”**

**Focus**

The next key event was focused around using the “authority against the group” role to provoke oral and written responses. It was not a recipe, though a drama from Neelands (1984) about conservation issues initially sparked the idea I developed. The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, which I revisited at the time, recommended enlarging children’s perspective on conservation and environmental issues. Relating the action of an antagonist to puppet characters for whom the children had already formed emotional attachments, would, I hoped, help the children toward a “heightened awareness” (Bundy, 2003) of conservation issues, because they would have some emotional connection to the animals’ perspective. The drama was also more sustained than any I had done till then, continuing over three days. I planned to encourage children to read a sign pinned up on a tree, to respond to that in improvisation and to create signs of their own. Other writing responses, such as the signing of the petition and the creation of posters to find a lost joey were “seize the moment” opportunities (Cremin *et al.*, 2006) that arose as the narrative progressed.

**Description and responses**

The event occurred in May. It was the week when we were pursuing a variety of teaching and learning situations around the sound /f/ (hence the “forester” as protagonist), and children were continuing to demonstrate, in their play, a lot of interest in the play world of Australian animals. The event connected my curriculum purposes for phonemic and social understanding, with the children’s interests. I set the scene in the Australian bush as I had done previously in several drama events with the puppets.
In becoming an “authority against the group” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987), I was much more assertive and antagonistic than I had been as the woeful wolf looking for sympathy from little pigs. I wondered if the children would be able to handle, emotionally, a situation in which they could not empathise with my character’s disposition. I was, moreover, extending Heathcote’s (1980, 1995) mantle of the expert into a wider community context. Expert roles till then had been family and friend-oriented.

There was an audible gasp of horror when, dressed as the forester with hat and axe, I declared my intentions to chop down the puppet animals’ trees. The children, ostensibly as concerned citizens of the nearby town, but probably still as little children whose favourite toys were being threatened, attempted to solve the problem for the animals and create petitions to the forester. I did not film this dialogue, but I recorded in my journal: “The response was electric. Lucy and Michael immediately argued the cause of the animals” (Obs, 5:2). Edward, however, showed signs of strain. Perhaps he struggled with the possibility that he would have to stand his moral ground against me, and was relieved when I stepped out of role and asked for solutions. Peter, on the other hand, as an emerging master dramatist, found the authoritarian role of the forester exciting. He became the forester, in his dramatic play later, refusing to listen to me and to other children pleading the animals’ cause, with much bombast in his voice and pose. He led the play in the forest setting, carrying on the dilemma of building or destroying trees. Destroying was, after all, more exciting dramatically. In a rare debriefing we discussed the moral issues of the situation, because I did want constructive dramatic play!

I carried the drama over to the next day and returned as the forester to read the petition the children had jointly made. Outside the drama I had explained that people signed their names to a letter to add solidarity. Later the children chose to take on animal roles in the drama, so, in order to enlist them as children again, to write a “thank you” letter on behalf of the animals, I had to “think on my feet”, and have them overhear a plan by the animals to thank the forester. I modelled the
simple two-word message and children were able to contribute enthusiastically to the shared “sounding out”. James even demonstrated knowledge of the /th/ sound in “thank you”.

Encouraged by the effectiveness of the innovations so far, I was able, in role as a responsible and friendly park ranger, to lead the children into a successful improvisation in the forest where a joey was lost. This was the final episode of the three-day forester drama, which was by now clearly independent of Neeland’s original recipe. Lucy and Peter responded keenly, becoming experts in techniques for following animals’ tracks. No spontaneous writing products appeared immediately in the play area, despite the enthusiasm for shared writing during the drama event itself. I wrote in my discussion at the end of that week (Dis, t2: w3): “This week seemed to be a consolidation of trends emerging from earlier weeks. It was good to see the letter to the forester suggested (by the children) as an activity they could confidently plan to participate in”.

In a teacher-directed activity later in the week, the children demonstrated enthusiasm and sustained interested to create posters to find lost joeys, continuing to operate as supportive experts who could team up with a park ranger. I wrote: “I was surprised at the ease with which most of them moved from copying short words to sounding out and writing for themselves” (Dis, t2:w3).

**Analysis**

*The role of drama in supporting writing*

I was becoming increasingly aware of dramatic elements of tension, mood, contrast and visualisation and their place in supporting learning. I was also beginning to track the development of role differentiation in the children’s growth as dramatists. In the discussion that same week (late April), I wrote: “The powerful use of humour and dramatic tension have been important features of the drama this week and I think I can stretch them further with this, and with role differentiation and consistency” (Dis, t1:w9).
The drama event also had a period for reflection, an aspect of drama which could help children achieve the type of engagement which Bundy (2003) described as “heightened awareness”. This heightened awareness and willingness to engage with deeper life issues had been noted from the responses of students during a debriefing, in Parson et al.'s early study (1984). Few of my drama sessions had made use of a debriefing, though there was often one planned in the recipes of other drama teachers and even in my own plans. “Why?” ponders the caterpillar, “why such a lack of explicit discussion to round off a drama?” Perhaps it was because I wanted to achieve an aesthetic “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1992) from process drama to dramatic play, with the literacy model intact. Perhaps I believed that stopping to debrief would bring children back to the real world and lose the momentum of the drama. Perhaps it merely reflected my position as an early childhood teacher, framing learning implicitly rather than with explicit explanation.

Christie (2002) would consider the lack of explicitness in debriefing children after drama events (which generally occurred) to be an example of “weak framing of learning” typical of early childhood teachers. I would argue that the process drama situation had engaged and focused the minds of the children with the language, literacy, plot and knowledge portrayed, and that they were highly motivated to carry these on into their own activities during play. To interrupt this flow with discussion and explanation might, I feared, destroy rather than create a learning opportunity. In this instance, however, I had introduced a moral dilemma in which children might need emotional support. I wanted to provide that support and also avoid encouraging imitation of the aggressive, assertive role of the protagonist, even though aggressive roles in dramatic play might provide high dramatic tension.

Meanwhile, the use of mantle of the expert continued to confer status on the children. Status as competent rescuers and writers, even against a bombastic and powerful tree-feller, was evident as children argued their position, and enthusiastically signed the petition, jointly scribed a letter of thanks on the animals’ behalf and created their posters. The sustained motivation to take on authoring as
well as rescuing and tree-felling roles was also notable in other drama events occurring around that time, outside of the twelve described here. The experiment of using challenging oppositional stances to develop children’s resilience and confidence in responding to their use seemed to have been successful, indicating a maturity among the children that was unexpected but gratifying. It encouraged me to try further ventures into longer and more complex dramas.

The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing

The strong antagonistic role of the forester seemed to be one of the vines which wove through from drama to dramatic play in this event, but plot and setting continued to reflect the drama as well, as children went on to improvise other rescues in the space. For example, they carried on the model of camping in the bush which was part of the rescue of the joey. Peter unfortunately took this idea rather too literally at home and plugged in and burnt out an empty kettle in his living room “camp out”, much to his mother’s chagrin.

There were writing activities that week too, which, although unrelated to the theme, made use of the modelled genres. As noted in Table 6 in Appendix C, James created a sign on the door announcing the mother’s day picnic, and Candice and Edward wrote lists of children’s names, which we had done together for the petition. These were spontaneous free play writing activities for real-world purposes, the former to let mothers know about the picnic, the latter possibly for birthday invitations or friendship listing. The “flow” occurring that week was a flow of writing as pleasurable activity for many, just as striding around with an axe asserting his right to cut down trees was highly pleasurable to Peter, though resisted by several staunch puppet carers.

Key event eight: The palaeontologist investigation

The discourse of scientists, speculating and writing in role

The next key event took children away from dramatic rescue themes into the world of the scientific investigator. As can be seen from the quantity of red highlighting
for the period from April to August in Table 6 of Appendix C, these months were highly productive in terms of spontaneous writing that correlated with the themes of the dramas. I was also intrigued by my use of language here and as such, this palaeontologist drama became the second film transcription which I attempted to analyse for specific linguistic features. It was almost the middle of the year, and I believed that analysis of this event, for which I also had a complete film transcription, would indicate some changes in my teacher talk across the first semester. Once again, I drew on Christie’s (2002) descriptors to help me analyse the discourse occurring in this event.

**Focus**

The focus of the drama was to develop the literate activity of palaeontologists discovering, observing, recording and speculating about fossil bones at a “dig”. Again the connections were three-fold: the children’s interest in dinosaurs (particularly Peter, Michael and Martin), the curriculum purpose of investigating scientific phenomena, and the phonemic exploration of letter “d” (for “dinosaurs”). As an early childhood drama teacher, I was curious to see whether children could and would write in role within an improvisation in process drama, if I mediated the expectation that they could, alongside the activity of hypothesizing and speculating as scientists. I reasoned that I could keep the writing expectation within the range of their expertise as word-builders. Furthermore, I believed that a life-like context of *being* scientists would be more effective than detailed explanation to build understanding of scientific activity in young children. The caterpillar notes my bias toward experiential rather than direct instructional approaches in this, as in other instances of scientific learning in early childhood.

**Description and responses**

In the drama event, I introduced the session by reading a factual text about fossil discovery, then divided the cohort into groups of palaeontologists and fossils. The drama did not seem to get off to a good start. Any tension of mystery or discovery was diffused by the mechanics of adopting coats, clipboards and brushes for the role. Fossils became restless, and without action happening,
Raymond lost focus altogether and became a fierce and very alive dinosaur. In typical early childhood teacher style, I dealt with this “Menippean” response (Cheyne & Terulli, 1999) by ignoring it and attempting to get the action moving with metaphorically softened imperatives: “Ready?”, “Got your clipboards?” and the inclusive “So everybody come and get your clipboards.”

Once we were over the distracting hurdle of dressing and acquiring props, I began to model the discourse and practice of scientists, commenting on long bones, wings and beaks. Children responded to these cues by adding their own suggestions, such as Peter’s “short bones”, and even arguing about their findings. Christie (2002) defines these linguistically as themes in the dialogue, which flow from speaker to speaker, and are given prominence in the sentence structure. Here is an example from the transcription:

Self: So big, long wings ….It had teeth, didn’t it, draw some teeth.
Peter: It didn’t.
Self: And it had legs.
Michael, with conviction: It did have teeth.
Self: I found teeth on this one.
Peter: No, it didn’t.

I made use of opportunities to extend ideas and to turn them into writing opportunities, the “seize the moment” approach described by Cremin et al. (2006). The transcript below reveals how these opportunities were generated in action:

Michael, assertively: It must be killed by a volcano. It must be killed by a volcano.
Self: Uhu. Why, did you see some ash down there?
Michael: Yes.
Self: Okay. So write that down, scientist Michael found ash, so write that down, ash, “a-sh”, from a volcano.

*Michael watches me as I write it on my clipboard.*
Peter: A-sh.
I also began to describe and hypothesise tentatively about my discoveries:

   Self in tentative tone: Must have been from a volcano. Might draw a volcano.  
   *I draw one as I speak.*  
   Michael, still assertive: Must have been caused by a volcano.

But his tone changes:

   Michael, speculatively: It must be killed by one another one of the other  
   dinosaurs, do you think?

And a little further on:

   *Someone is slowly sounding out ‘T –r-e-x.’*  
   Michael, slowly, scratching his head: I think he hasn’t got teeth.  
   Self, still writing: No teeth. Must be a pteranodon.

Almost all the palaeontologists wrote labels on their drawings while in role,  
thoughtfully imitating my model and taking up cues from my “think-aloud” sounding-  
out of words such as “t-rex” and “ash”. On reflection, I felt that only half of the  
children had benefited from the opportunity to interact with written literacy while the  
other half had enjoyed being fossils. When I attempted other science experiences  
and repeated the drama in following years, I gave children the opportunity to swap  
roles. The dramatic play that developed from the drama on that first  
palaeontologist investigation, clearly involved many children who had been either  
scientists or fossils.

Dramatic play, as palaeontologists and museum curators, continued well into the  
next week, and included the writing of several signs. Here is Kelly’s “in the  
moment” sample written in role. It depicts a flying dinosaur with a beak (or are they  
sharp teeth?), and mentions the “ash” found at the site:
Raymond relived the experience some time later in his “office” at home, and added details for drawing a rocket, which he explained to the group one day at “show and tell”. Again, Martello’s (2001) findings on the strong home-school connection after a drama experience come to mind.

Children were imitating my teaching models as well as other roles. They could mimic my efforts to teach an inattentive monkey the rules of the jungle, and my scaffolding of sign-writing, and used these models to teach less competent peers. Vincent taught his monkey all the rules I had taught, and Peter created new ones. James taught Martin how to sound out a word for his sign. Raymond shaped a dotted outline to show other children how to make a rocket. Later he attempted a “stop, drop, roll” message to instruct children in fire procedures.
As Vygotsky (1978) wrote, peers could create zones of proximal development for one another, and my teacher role was carried over into the play contexts along with narrative themes, and contexts for writing and reading, giving the children models to support one another in their ZPD.

I was satisfied with the effectiveness of embedding the science investigation into a drama session and repeated the process several times through the year with life cycle and space investigations. The dramatic enactment of real-life processes in the world of science correlated with literate responses such as flow charts, newspaper reports and report-like statements, as well as play worlds mimicking the events in the life cycles, as when Raymond played out the whole turtle life cycle in the sandpit (Obs, 3:2). James was one who responded eagerly to the modelling of scientific processes, particularly the flow charts and report descriptions. Some of these responses are included in his case study. Laurence wrote descriptively about his guinea pig, for his first independent attempt at a sentence. Kelly wrote about shells: “Shells are pretty and you can paint shells ...then you can...”
Analysis

The role of drama in supporting writing

Most children had become active participants, Warner's (1997) “talkers” and “processors” in drama situations. Raymond was an exception; he often rejected a role which lowered his status. Considering the length of time fossils lay there prone, this restlessness was rather understandable, but the rest of the fossils were quite keen to be examined and to position their limbs in interesting ways.

The mantle of the expert strategy again came into play. The direct language I used in my authoritarian stance as chief did not detract from the sense of agency of the cohort, once they were enrolled, in the manner of Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), as a team of experts alongside their chief. They engaged beforehand with the reading of factual texts about the topics we investigated, in order to dramatize the exciting events that occurred in the world of scientists. When they saw themselves as capable scientists in role, their engagement with the mode of the scientist in language, thought and action was further supported.

Dramatic elements reinforced the impact of the drama and the ease with which children embraced literate activity themselves within their roles as scientists. The pace, important for maintaining tension once the initial difficulties with costumes and props had been resolved, was regulated by ignoring aberrations and by using imperatives such as “Look!” This was a similar approach as in the first
drama event I analysed. The constant introduction of new topical themes, through the discovery of different bones and features such as cracks, beaks and teeth, kept the tension of surprise and discovery high.

Linguistic elements reflected the sense of agency developing among the children. Again I made use of Christie’s (2002) descriptors in my analysis. Children made use of direct imperatives using my model of “Let’s…”, “just” and “look”. As teacher-in-role I used five declaratives of information during the whole process drama, but used speculative modes of address twenty-five times, to suggest and model the tentative mood of hypothesis-making, appropriate in the discourse of scientists discovering new material. Children responded to the modelling by using these forms themselves, though, as in the society of real scientists, bias crept in, and preconceived views were hard to shake, as when Michael insisted, three times, that “It must be killed by a volcano!”

There are twenty-seven declarative statements over the course of the drama from children to the team generally or to myself, relating their discoveries, and eight exchanges in which declarations were made by the team members in response to leading questions from the chief, facilitating the movement of the improvisation. The tentative language I modelled as a researching scientist transferred to the responses of some of the participants as well. Michael, for instance, could add “do you think” to his assertion: “It must be killed by another one of the other dinosaurs, do you think?” and “I wonder what this died of?” Later he said, “I want to see those teeth. I think he hasn’t got teeth”. Thoughtful action was suggested by scratching his head and speaking slowly before he made his later assertions, and even the “must be” had a tentative rise in intonation. Peter commented on a “short sort of bone…” as well, which had a tentative mood. Contradictions had not occurred in drama sessions before, and perhaps arose out of the strong connection Michael and Peter had with the palaeontologist role and the knowledge they had to back up their convictions. They reflected as well the status which the children carried into the dialogue.
There were no explanatory teacher monologues. As in the first drama event I analysed, practices were rarely explained; they were modelled, shown and imitated. The interrogations were open-ended, not the “interrogation-response-evaluation” (IRE) model Christie (2002) had noted in much of teacher discourse.

Themes initiated by self as chief led the action seven times at the commencement of action, and twenty-seven times as a feature of the speculative discoveries. In amongst these, children themselves provided seventeen of what Christie calls topical themes, some stimulated by leading questions, more offered spontaneously. Their contributions actively led and developed the improvisation. In addition, the early childhood teacher stance, continually scaffolding language with action, was important, as it had been in every key event. Dialogue maintained, reflected and sustained the action and the “think aloud” modelling during discovery.

Vygotsky’s model of the ZPD has on-going relevance here as it supports understanding of the cognitive process occurring during the adult-child and child-child dialogue of these experiences. In this case, as the children’s cognition and concept-formation moved slowly from the perceptual and concrete toward the verbal and abstract, they were being scaffolded in their cognitive zone until they demonstrated independent language and more generalised constructs and concepts.

In analysing this film transcription and comparing it to the one at the end of January, the increased quantity of dialogue between myself and the children is suggestive of their language development, their improving improvisational skill, role identification and a growth in confidence across the cohort generally over the four months.

The flow from literary action in dramatic contexts also led to writing within and after the event as had occurred in the research described by Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Cremin et al. (2006), and Marino (2012), all with much older children.
Mediating the opportunity and expectation for children to become capable scientists included assuming their capability as literate as well as investigating and hypothesising adults. These five year olds confidently accepted this mantle of expertise and believed with me that they could do it. This was true even for children such as Nellie, Sally, Candice, Charlotte and Martin who had not sounded out a word independently before. It appeared that, because the children in play stood “six feet tall(er)” (Vygotsky, 1978) than in real life, they could assume the status of the adults they were emulating, and identify with the literate roles of these adults.

**The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing**

The writing of literate scientists continued in their play in the classroom and at home, for some time. The provision of a human role, as palaeontologist or curator, and a play context where people continued cultural activity, gave the children much more scope for writing in follow-up play than when they were in role as animals, even anthropomorphic ones who wrote letters of apology or signs. There was certainly evidence of this productivity following the palaeontologist event, the zoo week, the doctor and vet dramas, the restaurant, and the activities of the shoemakers at the end of the year, though, the caterpillar reminds me, I did not realise the significance of literate cultural settings in my pedagogy till much later.

**Key event nine: The three billy goats Gruff**

**Warning signs, narrative building and speech bubbles**

**Focus**

In this ninth key event I was building on children’s understanding of narrative and their ability to tell and sequence a familiar tale by using a circle storytelling technique. As well I was reinforcing understanding of signs as direct regulators of the behaviour of others, which had been the literacy focus in several of the earlier drama experiences. I was still experimenting with ways to extend the individual improvisation of very young children, and again searched for “recipes” for inspiration and guidance. I found some process drama examples where teachers storyboarded the action before beginning the improvisation. I reasoned that I might
be able to model the dialogue in storyboards and at the same time encourage literary activity if I included speech bubbles. Another process drama technique came to the forethought of my thinking. In process drama workshops I had attended, participants had taken individual improvised roles in small groups together, before brief presentations of segments of an emerging improvised scene to their peers. Perhaps this technique might be accessible to my blossoming dramatists who could now take up individual sustained roles. I devised a process drama for “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” which blended some of these purposes and ideas.

**Description and responses**

It was the end of May. We enacted “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” with small group shared roles and teacher narration. The next day we retold the original story around the group circle. I tried a drama game in which a magic stick is used to choose a person to mime the action, while a storyteller on the edge of the circle provides a segment of the narration. I observed (Obs, 5:29): “Everyone was very attentive” and “Oral language in the story retell was impressive”, with only three children needing prompts. After the retell I took on the role of the smallest billy goat and suggested to the group that the troll might return, and perhaps we should warn other goats about it. The children wanted a letter of reconciliation instead, and jointly provided the wording of the letter. “Lucy, Annie, Peter and Mary were the chief composers, while Michael, Laurence, Kelly and James helped with the mechanics” (Obs, 5:29). On the third day of the drama (31st May) I practised the “What if…?” questioning technique, in order to innovate on the story ending. My question was “What if the troll escaped up the river? Where might he go and what might he do?” I mapped their shared ideas for the next piece of action and potential dialogue, using a storyboard with speech bubbles. Peter, who was blossoming as a dramatist and also as a writer, contributed the idea that the troll went fishing up the river. Others, such as Annie, took this further, including suggestions that he met up with his wife and son, who asked him how he got so wet. Following this group devising of narrative and dialogue, I grouped the children into threes, with each group enacting a small section of the new ending. I invited the groups to
perform their brief improvisations in turn, and several groups were keen to do so, though somewhat self-conscious when they became aware of audience. Few seemed to baulk at including the dialogue. Later Laurence, Raymond and James began to use speech bubbles in their drawings. Dramatic play, featuring trolls and billy goats on bridges made from blocks, continued the world of the nursery tale. I encouraged some sign-writing about trolls under the bridge when children built the bridges, since my sign-writing purpose had been deflected into the shared composition of a letter of reconciliation in the process drama.

Analysis

**The role of drama in supporting writing**

April to August was the period when some of the most satisfying drama experiences occurred, probably, comments the caterpillar, because I was beginning to feel very comfortable with the whole meaning and purpose of a drama event and devising drama sessions of my own directly linked to the interests and experiences of the cohort. Perhaps, concedes the caterpillar, I was also more successfully building dramatic tension, mood and contrast in live drama improvisation. As Morgan and Saxton (1987) write: “Focus, tension, contrast and symbolization are fundamental to generating, motivating, sustaining and crystallizing the shared significant experience - the means by which the teacher achieves her objectives” (p. 5). I believed I was also providing support for oral language generally and story retelling in particular, through the enactive mode of drama, without attempting to make much use of the explicit explanation of story structure and vocabulary which would be expected of a teacher of English in the primary school setting.

The success of the techniques used to support narration in this event, reinforced my belief in the effectiveness of a dramatic pedagogy to enhance narrative competence. The “What if…?” innovation, the story board, the speech bubbles and the small group improvisations had all proved to be techniques which, if introduced gradually, could be accessible to very young dramatists, as they were to the older children in the research literature. The scaffolding of the shared
narrative-building and dialogue in the speech bubbles seemed effective in giving children time and confidence to contribute ideas, and to visualise the action and dialogue they would engage in.

The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing
The responses of children such as Laurence and James, in including speech bubbles with their own words, occurred in children’s free play, as in the previous drama event, immediately after the modelling. They reflected the competence and confidence as writers that children were exhibiting during this productive period of between April and August, illustrated by the highlighted examples in Table 6 of Appendix C. By this stage of the year, almost at the end of the first semester, many of the children had demonstrated their competence to compose signs independently, and to sound out individual words as responses to investigative tasks. Children were using the symbolic repertoire which was now at their fingertips to respond as soon as the literacy was modelled in the drama sessions.

Children wrote for the sheer pleasure it gave them in reliving the moment, but also perhaps for their status and power writing gave them. Rowe (1998, 2003) and Goodman (1990), in earlier research into young children’s dramatic play, had found that the generation and use of literate artefacts contribute to such a sense of power. Children believed they had a voice and agency as contributors, changing the direction of the literate response in the drama itself, and composing and jointly constructing the letter of reconciliation. Perhaps, too, the middle status role I took as an anxious billy goat being interviewed reminded them of previous interviews where we had composed “sorry” letters, prompting the suggestion that the goats and trolls, like the wolf and forester, bury their grievances. In the next key event the focus shifted from writing to reading, but there were elements of both in the responses that followed.
Key event ten: Ollie the octopus

Reading messages, building tension by delaying resolution

The “Ollie the octopus” set of experiences was chosen as a key event because of its success in blending drama, dramatic play and literacy, its effectiveness in drawing out responses from the children, and because it was satisfying dramatically. In it, I discovered how to delay resolution of the story problem in order to consciously build tension. Linguistic analysis using Christie’s (2002) categories is once again included. This drama event was the last of the three I examined more closely using Christie’s discourse analysis descriptors. I had a detailed transcription of both the palaeontologist and octopus dramas, and both were rich in responses from the children, so the choice of these three for extra investigation was fairly clear. I did not have detailed film transcriptions of many drama events in the latter part of the year because my aide, who was responsible for most of the filming, was only with me part of each day in second semester. I filmed dramatic play sessions more extensively during that period.

Focus

While I was excited about children’s growing confidence and proficiency with writing, I was disappointed in their slow engagement with reading. I wrote (Dis, t2:w7): “By and large the children are defining home-reading as a play-reading task”. I therefore contemplated creating “more reading-linked dramas to support their progress.” Writing had certainly had a greater dramatic exposure so far. Knowing that reading and writing could support each other and would ultimately weave together in the children’s cognition, I began to ponder how I might encourage reading situations in process dramas. My focus in this key event became the promotion of reading as the literacy element of urgency and high tension for the children in role within the drama and follow-up dramatic play.

Description and responses

Interest in the life of the ocean had been stimulated by a treasure hunt earlier that week as I was attempting to provide other exciting reasons to read as well as to write. The key event continued this play setting. The plot involved two puppet
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characters, Owen the fish and Ollie the octopus. Ollie’s friend Owen was caught in a trap, and needed competent rescuers to read the message from him, which was floating in a bottle in the ocean (the drama space) nearby. Children eagerly took up the challenge to find and rescue Ollie’s friend. Below is an excerpt from the transcription, including the finding of the message and the attempt to read it:

Self as Ollie: Oh, something’s here in the water, floating along!

Children follow the action with eyes and bodies. Several children rise and move towards the bottle when I bend with Ollie to retrieve it.

Michael: It must be a map.

Edward: Must be a map... (inaudible) something...

Self as Ollie: It looks like a message of some kind, doesn’t it?

I pull the message out of the bottle.

Annie, very excited: Yes!

Self as Ollie: You know what, I often find messages in bottles floating in the sea. Sailors often send the messages. (FT, 6:5)

Moments later the children attempted to read the message, supported by my movement in and out of role:

Mary, immediately: I am in the...

Others, mimicking her: I am in the …

Laurence, correcting: A…

Self, out of role, pointing with Ollie’s tentacle as they came to a big word: T-r-a-p…

Unidentified voice: Trap!

Self as Ollie: Oh, no! He’s in a trap. And what’s this other word with big capital letters?

Mary: H-i-l-p.

Self, out of role, obliquely correcting the vowel: H-e-l-p.

Another voice - possibly Vincent or Michael: Help!

Peter, indicating right: He went that way.

Self, repeating, using voice pointing: I am in a trap. Help, Owen.
Chapter 4: The Self Study

Self as Ollie: So if it’s a trap we…
Peter: Have to save him. We have to save him!

Children had participated confidently in the decoding of the message. I went on with my staunch team of rescuers to attempt to uncover the mystery of Owen’s disappearance, putting various delays into the resolution, to build tension.

Self as Ollie: Well if we’re going to save him we need to put on diver gear, ‘cos you people can’t go down under water without equipment on. You couldn’t breathe.
Peter, standing and miming putting on goggles: Well I’m going to…
Self as diver miming dressing: Put your oxygen tanks on your backs, flippers, snorkels. Owen, where are you?
Other voices: Owen, where are you?
Self as Ollie: Okay everyone, listen and see if we can hear him calling as well.
I cup my hand to my ear. Children stand silent for a couple of seconds.
Self as Ollie, anxiously: Nothing yet. Keep calling. Owen, Owen, Owen, where are you?
Peter, triumphantly: I’ve got him.
He puts his hand out to grab him.
Self as Ollie: Careful, it’s a dangerous trap! How will we open it?
Michael, softly: I know how to undo the trap. With a special key.
He holds out an imaginary key which I take from him and mime opening the trap slowly.
Self as Ollie: There he is. Oh, thank you, everybody for helping me!
Peter: We’re divers.
Self as Owen: How…How did you know how to help me?
Peter: We … (inaudible) led to the trap by some kids.
Michael: And some divers!

This event produced sustained dramatic play with underwater themes over several days, including play which involved reading and writing messages in bottles. Here
is Laurence’s message. In his version the octopus has been captured instead of the fish!

Edward’s case study describes his response to the event.

Underwater worlds were also the setting of ballads that Sally, Laurence, and Lucy composed and sang to the class during a wonderful outpouring of spontaneous song one afternoon, much later in the year. The themes correlated well with the underwater adventures we had shared together in our drama sessions. These “flow” responses (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1992) seemed particularly apt in a climate encouraging an aesthetic pedagogy, where children had permission to create and compose, an approach that Tarlton had advocated (2003).

Analysis

The role of drama in supporting reading and writing

In this key drama event emotional fervour had been roused by the dramatic tension of the mystery, and built by the delays to its resolution, for example when I indicated the need for diving gear, the calling and pauses to listen, the danger of the trap and the obstacle of the lock on the cage, which Michael overcame by producing an imaginary key. High tension even made possible the moment of silence (very rare in my early childhood dramas) when we stood listening for a response from Owen. Children introduced symbols of their own in the octopus...
drama, in the shape of the key and a rope. These were high moments in the development of the quality of our improvisation. Heathcote and Bolton (1995) had stated that drama teaching needs to contain all the elements of the art form, in order to create an aesthetic experience for the children. Lindqvist’s research (1995) into the creation of play worlds employed effective theatrical techniques, to create dramatic tension, mood and emotional empathy. She also made use of props, costumes and settings for children to carry on into their own play. The results were shared, sustained play worlds. Broadhead and English (2005) used theatrical techniques, characterisation and dramatic tension in their dramas. Hall and Robinson (2003) created their real-world but potentially mundane “garage play” setting, then infused the dramatic play with the tension of urgent tasks, difficult relationships, and surprise visitors, creating the excitement which drove the theme forward and created many literacy contexts. Haseman and O’Toole (1987) described dramatic tension as the driving force of all dramatic activity and define mystery, surprise, relationships and tasks as means of generating it. Learning to build tension and create moments of heightened awareness for this group made possible the sustained enthusiasm for the themes and content of the drama so that both writing and reading could be supported.

By seizing these moments of high tension and focus for explicit literacy modelling and demonstration, rather than using sessions of direct instruction, I could effectively model skills for decoding and encoding of words, and mediate the expectation that children could use these skills. Children who saw themselves as rescuers also believed they were competent to read the messages they would need for the rescue.

Linguistic elements I identified during analysis of the discourse of the film transcription indicated children’s agency as rescuers, readers and writers, as well as reinforcing the changes occurring in my own instruction. There were, for example, some forms of utterances which were more typical of primary school discourse. For instance, there were some general explanations in the dialogue, such as the one prompted by Peter’s general question: “What do octopuses eat?”
I also made, through the voice of Ollie the octopus, general declarative statements about divers, messages in bottles, and sailors. I intuitively took the cue from Peter’s general question that children were ready cognitively for some generalisations of concepts, and therefore for the language of generalisation, the explanation. Children further demonstrated their readiness for explanations by responding to my explanatory model with ten explanations of their own in relation to the mystery of Owen’s disappearance. However most teaching about the activity of divers and octopus behaviour was embedded in detailed, personal, explanatory dialogue between the teacher and puppet. A general statement was not used. Here is an example:

Self as Ollie: I think a shark bit me when I was asleep.
Self to Ollie: Why, were you lying in the den and did you have one of your legs dangling out?
Self as Ollie: Yes, I thought I had all my eight legs tucked into the den, but I think I had one leg hanging out and I only had seven legs inside.
Self to Ollie: Oh you silly old thing, you shouldn’t have done that. Of course, if you’d seen the shark you would have squirted at him with ink, wouldn’t you?

There was a rare, in role, review of the action.

Self as Ollie: How did you know how to help me?
Self as Ollie: How did you know I was in danger? Did you get my letter?

I was probing for a retell of the plot from the children, to reinforce their memory of what had occurred. Several children contributed to this in-role retell. Other interrogation in the discourse was open-ended, though one question, “Who put Ollie in the trap?” sounded so much like a typical behaviour regulation that children responded to it by denying that they were implicated. Open-ended questioning modes and “thinking aloud” encouraged children to wonder, argue, explore and imagine further. Reciprocal dialogue within the improvisation, with the carriage of themes and ideas by the children themselves alongside my own in role as the octopus puppet, included confident assertions, building the narrative through the improvisation. The group as a whole were actively involved in their own learning.
They believed they had a voice and agency as rescuers and readers. Pufall and Unsworth (2004) wrote, “Agency means that children’s actions affect their worlds, especially their social worlds” (p. 9). These children, in the social world of their friendship and support of a little trapped puppet character, were exercising such agency. Pufall and Unsworth (2004) had said earlier:

Children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think. They measure issues against their own interests and values, they make up their own minds, they take action as a function of their own wills - that is, if the more powerful class, the adults, allow them to do so. (p. 9)

As Rainio had found in research into playworld activity (2008), children who were allowed to determine their own roles and actions demonstrated agency as competent community members.

The linguistic elements of the dialogue I examined supported my belief that through the dramatic pedagogies I was providing children with opportunities to exercise agency in positive ways within the classroom learning environment. Their contributions to the dialogue showed the intense involvement of the cohort in the action of the narrative, their unity of purpose, and the ideas that were tumbling forth from imaginative minds. Affirmations of one another’s ideas occurred in the context of the improvisation, and further illustrated their unity within the world of the drama, for example:

Michael: It must be a map.
Edward: Yes! Must be a map…something

My caterpillar surveying from his elevation notes how fluidly I stepped in and out of Ollie’s puppet role in order to scaffold the literacy, to develop the role of the diver, to include Mary’s idea of being mermaids in the rescue, and to object to Mary and Peter pre-empting the climax by revealing where the fish trap was hidden. Children were also somewhat fluid still in their role connections. Michael said divers had come to the rescue, while Peter identified the group as “some kids” even though he had been vocal as a diver dressing. Mary had asked to add
mermaids to the team as well, and several saw themselves as capable readers of messages.

_The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of reading and writing_

Clear understanding of the plot and the high tension achieved assisted children in playing out exciting dramatic moments, and developing them in their own way, during the dramatic play that followed. They read each other’s signs with focused awareness of the alphabetic symbols involved, and wrote more messages in role as competent rescuers and trapped creatures. The themes from the drama remained in their minds, shaping later writing and the composition of narrative ballads.

Parent interviews at that time supported my perception of the ongoing flow from the drama contexts to children’s play writing. Laurence’s mother said: “He still has his office and writes there all the time” and “He loves doing his home readers, but he’s memorising them” (PI, t2: p.41). Annie’s mother was just as positive: “Annie is having a great year so far. She’s always writing and drawing at home and asking me how to sound out different words. She’s so full of enthusiasm” (PI, t2: p.43). Michael’s mother commented first on reading: “He loves bringing his readers home and he listens to his brother doing his, and picks up on the sounding out” (PI, t2: p.51). Peter’s mother focused on the writing: “He says he has to do his work and goes off and writes and draws. He’s really doing great pictures with stories behind them” (PI, t2: p.62).

I wrote in my journal (Dis, t2:w8): “Interviews with parents continue to support the contention that drama is enhancing the desire to be purposeful writers and readers.” Certainly the enthusiasm and purpose were there in their spontaneous joy in writing and reading.
Key event eleven: Zoe, the zoo catcher
Labels, a zoo play world, and extending dramatic play

Focus
My confidence received a blow in second semester. Five new children joined us unexpectedly and eight Year one children were visiting regularly for literacy support. Management became a serious issue in the drama events. Attempting active drama sessions with over thirty children put serious constraints on my freedom to try out new strategies. In the stress of the period I felt I was losing my creative impetus, my focus, and my skill in crafting effective drama sessions. Concern about this appeared in my journal as I sought to regain my focus: “Above all the drama needs to keep its planned literacy focus, and provide some quality excitement and learning. I can’t afford to let this get sloppy” (Dis, t3: w3).

I tightened up my planning and went back to using puppetry rather than live participation for several sessions, till I could handle the new dynamics of noise, numbers and space. I returned to the drama theorists and their recipes for renewed inspiration, as I struggled with failures and fatigue. I revisited Warren (1999) and noted that she prepared young children for improvisation by discussing with them beforehand what they might say when in role. Here was another strategy useful for scaffolding the development of dialogue in improvisation, alongside giving children familiar, repetitive story scripts to follow, and story-boarding the action that they suggested might ensue, with occasional speech bubbles. In re-reading Dunn (2003a) I observed how she sustained existing dramatic play by introducing more dramatic social problems. My focus in the next key event became one of building improvisation, as well as extending an established play context with a variety of literate and dramatic content.

The children’s competence as writers was growing, and they were ready to experiment with a wider variety of text forms, so another goal was to offer, through the unfolding drama and play, opportunities to write lists, ticket, feeding times signs, labels and descriptions of the animals they were keeping, along with typical zoo warnings about dangers in touching and feeding some of them.
Description and responses

A zoo had been established with the children during dramatic play when we began focused activities around the sound /z/. African animal puppets had been very popular since we began the “Monkey tales” drama sessions. The world of the zoo had merged with the world of the animal sanctuary months before, and veterinary and museum play themes extended this interest. Museum cages became zoo cages. The whole cohort were enrolled as zookeepers in a guided drama, and in my managerial role I required each to provide food, water and shelter for their animal, and a feeding time clock. A map was created to position the animals in the space, with due consideration about not placing nervous plant-eaters next to ferocious meat-eaters. The event of a zebra escape was introduced on the second day of the drama.

I was realising, notes the caterpillar approvingly, that a sustained play context would be supported by situating several drama events in the one setting, and building on the dramatic play, rather than introducing several different drama themes in the one week. This level of sustained play had already occurred when we explored underwater themes over a two week period.

I also tried Warren’s (1999) strategy for preparing children more explicitly for dialogue, in the zebra drama, with some success. Later in the week we addressed conservation issues connected with zoos, in the drama of Zoe, the zoo catcher. The zoo catcher was persuaded to go to another zoo to replenish her animal supplies instead of poaching from the wild in Africa. I appeared as an authority figure against the group, opposed by the game keeper who later became the owner of another zoo (my student teacher), who pointed out to me the arguments against taking animals direct from their natural habitat. Children were delighted to be animals, of course, during the first negotiation with the game keeper, but later in the same drama became zoo keepers alongside my student teacher, as, reformed in my attitude to poaching, I went to her zoo to buy some of their surplus animals.
Chapter 4: The Self Study

Analysis

The role of drama in supporting writing

This key event, like those before it, relied on the rousing of tension as children as expert zookeepers dealt with the escape of the zebra. The mystery was solved by following clues, though I had trouble containing the children’s excitement in the chase. The event provided an opportunity to model the language of new text types, especially information text, as children read about the features and needs of the animal puppet they chose to care for. These text forms were beginning to appear in their writing samples, such as those of Kelly and James, described earlier. The children were also orally imitating persuasive argument, a skill which would be useful later in their writing.

Children took on the mantle of the expert within the drama event as zookeepers who could care for particular animals. Their job description involved tasks which sustained their involvement in the zoo for some time, and when this flagged, I introduced the zebra escape. They were also confident in taking an oppositional role against me when I tried to take rare animals from the wild for my zoo, with the support of the student teacher modelling arguments in role.

Their growing skills in language and literacy were matched by their development as dramatists. The presence of the new children who didn’t sustain roles or were lacking in confidence in individual roles, contrasted so clearly with the skills of the group who had been with me for six months that this development was very obvious. The Queensland Arts syllabus (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2002) tables the changes in audience awareness and individual role-taking across outcomes levels. I returned to the syllabus to see how my observations related to the outcome statements, and noted behaviours well beyond the scaffolded foundation level where I generally expected the children to perform.

The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing

The drama events around the zoo play context effectively sustained the dramatic play over a week or more, and the necessary literacy involved was sometimes
teacher-mediated and sometimes independent. I showed children how to make the warning signs for the cages and encouraged descriptive labels and feeding time notices for each. James went on to make descriptions of his animals, at home, and writing about animals emerged throughout the rest of the year. As in the key events described earlier, children saw themselves as competent zookeepers and took on the literate roles required of adult zookeepers. Having a play context that required literate expertise, and sustaining the play in that world, were planning choices that supported the production of literate artefacts. The zoo drama sessions provided Edward and James with a narrative theme which they attempted to turn into creative picture book writing, and Simon made a cage and a label for a panther, sounding out the name by himself.

![Fig. 9: Simon’s panther sign.](image)

Authoring picture books was a new and popular development, for empowered zookeepers in role. The literary butterflies were hatching. Writing was appearing everywhere. By the end of August I could write ecstatically about a flood of literary activity on another rainy day, with a variety of literate events occurring. I fed off the excitement, enthusiasm, successes and achievements of my growing caterpillars. The reciprocity of creative energy, along with the thrill I experienced with the continual appearance of gems of writing, lifted my vision for learning, so that I could survive the sloughs of overcrowding and fatigue that had occurred during third term.

Children were not only following my models for writing, but applying their new skills in their own ways for their own ends. Table 6 in Appendix C collates some of these new
independent products. I also described some in my journal: “Peter brought in a star wars book he had made, illustrated and written a title page and one sentence for, entirely on his own. His mother is overjoyed at his progress” (Obs, 8:14).

His book had a title page and other illustrated pages with statements surrounding the text. The message above says, “When the star wars is not run on the rock landing.” Soon after I wrote:

Laurence brought a sentence from home. He had made a kite the previous week and his mother had taken it home as a template for making kite outlines.... He brought the kite back earlier in the week but it was obviously still on his mind. The sentence read: “I Hav a kitewich isapresins wich is clohe kite.” (spelling and punctuation unedited). I was rather excited about this sentence because it was multi-clausal and intelligible and obviously his own work. He has remembered /ch/ from our frequent use of it, and used several important pieces of punctuation and word spacing fairly consistently. Presumably it meant: “I have a kite which is a present, which is Chloe’s kite.” (his baby sister) (Obs, 8:17).
Stage three: “innovator and interrogator”
Meanwhile the observing caterpillar can detect a movement from recipe user, via developing novice to a stage where I was innovating on and questioning the process drama frame which I was exploring. Putnam (1991) describes the third stage of professional development as one in which the practitioner understands the concepts within the frame or theoretical construct of the professional domain he or she is exploring, and steps outside of this frame to question concepts and practices or to work independently or innovatively. I had begun to do this during the forester drama event and as I devised the octopus drama and the palaeontologist event. The next drama event was certainly a step outside the accepted process drama frame, and had aspects of innovation. However, I would be very tentative about defining my position as truly in Putnam’s third stage, because I was still trialling strategies and recipes which, I believed, the children in my class were ready to benefit from, and I still had much to learn about becoming a drama teacher.

Key event twelve: The Elves and the Shoemaker unit
Many text forms and varied responses in role

Focus
My goal in this final key event was to create a drama-based unit for fourth term, incorporating learning in many domains, culminating in a theatrical performance for
the parents of “The Elves and the Shoemaker”. The innovative aspects of this plan were two-fold: the attempt to convert a successful improvisation into a theatrical performance by young children, and to create an eight week learning unit, exploring an arts theme. I was very aware now of the benefits of a sustained period exploring one play context, and could see the possibilities within the unit for engaging with more advanced literary genres. I had the drama resources and understanding to assist children to explore more fully the world of a story, its characters, setting, and literate and dramatic possibilities. It was September.

By this stage of the year children were using the alphabet confidently to build words and often longer messages. They no longer needed a stimulus from me in order to write. I was aware that some were experimenting with literary language. These children were ready for modelling of more complex and varied text forms beyond single sentence messages and signs.

**Description and responses**

The eight week drama unit included at least thirty drama sessions and a great deal of related dramatic play and writing activity in a shared and sustained play context in which, as Rianio (2008) found, children had agency and control. It emerged from a dramatization of the story the children had found particularly satisfying. The choice of a shoemaker story had been prompted by a decision to extend phonemic understanding to include digraphs such as /sh/, /ch/ and /th/ in our sound investigation and also by Lucy, Mary and Sally’s particular interest in fairy tale worlds. After the improvised enactment of the story the children enthusiastically took up the suggestion that we prepare to present “The Elves and the Shoemaker” as a play for their parents at the end of the term. I immediately found that the process of moving from drama improvisation to theatrical presentation was fraught with difficulty, probably because children identified process drama more strongly with their dramatic play than with performance, and lacked a strong audience perception. There were some unsatisfying rehearsal sessions and unfocused children as I attempted to rehearse dialogue and movement without eliciting boredom.
I continued to try new games and strategies in connection with the “Elves” drama unit while I worked on translating the improvisation into a theatrical performance, and continued to make discoveries about ways I could scaffold children’s learning through adopting process drama techniques. Some drama sessions were explorations of wider aspects of the imaginary world of elves and some of the real world of shoemakers. On one occasion we explored the making of leather for the shoes. The drama game of progressively adding to a line of action, which I applied to the production line of the leather factory, helped with understanding of the process of leather-making. After enacting the process, the children immediately began to build the physical structure of a factory with their large blocks, and continued being factory workers with real bits of leather and models of vats and machines made from their smaller blocks. At my prompting, labels and signs were enthusiastically added to the factory by Peter, Laurence and Edward, as extra pieces of useful literacy. Enhanced visualisation, facilitated by enacting the process, led to effective dramatic play in an area of community life that they had never explored before. They became “experts” in leather production.

I discovered I could build understanding of stage time by signalling it as “day” and “night”. The elves came on stage and carried out their activities at night. The shoemakers and their wives were busy during the day. This gave each group an opportunity to present a scene without being interrupted and distracted by the continual flow of participant activity which was characteristic of the children’s dramatic play. Day was signalled by a kookaburra and a wooden sun, night by an owl and a moon, with a special spell devised by Lucy as the elves entered the “window” (the stage area). The discovery of this method of scaffolding came through the leather factory drama event, when day and night were signalled to “switch on” the activity of the factory.

**Analysis**

*The role of drama in supporting writing*

Children had many more opportunities to work together to build tension, contrast, mood and symbols in the drama events that occurred throughout the unit. Some
sessions related to the world of the original fairy tale and others to stories from Hans Anderson and other traditional tales we also explored. They had moments of sorrow with the dying emperor, relieved by singing their own compositions as nightingales. They felt with the ugly duckling mocked by the superior swans. They entered into the mechanical process of creating shoe leather in a factory, and added elements of tension and excitement to the performance we were devising, with symbolic spells to open the window, and a joyful celebratory ball attended by Peter in role as an officious door bouncer. These dramatic elements built their memory of the narrative flow and their identity with the characters within the story. They continued to contribute confidently to the dialogues with their own themes, assertions, affirmations, declarative statements, and inclusive comments which illustrate linguistically the unity and cohesion of the group. These built their commitment and focus as well as their skills in oral language, visualisation and improvisation.

In attempting a theatrical performance it seems to my reviewing caterpillar that I was searching professionally for an eclectic balance between my emerging understanding of process drama and my years of experiences with theatrical presentations across the school. I was conscious from my reading that process drama advocates viewed theatrical performance for young children with disapproval, despite my own passion for it. I argued, however, that the master dramatists (Creaser, 1989) in my class would particularly benefit from the opportunity to hone their intuitive dramatic skills, and that the theme of the “Elves” story, and the values it represented, were worth practising and reinforcing. Moreover, a dramatic presentation to parents would be a worthwhile culmination activity for a highly dramatic year.

Positive benefits were the sustained involvement with the play context of the elves and shoemakers which enhanced children’s comprehension, their play ideas, their relationships with one another, their knowledge of community processes such as shop transactions and leather production, and their connection with roles. They developed productivity as writers and agency and control as narrators and
innovators (Rainio, 2008). Negative effects were some ineffectual and unproductive rehearsals as I searched for varied ways to strengthen their memory of dialogue and the flow of the plot, and their ability to give each other centre stage. The rehearsals involved a considerable amount of teacher direction. This did not deter the eager dramatists and writers however, as the case studies in the next chapter suggest. Despite the managerial stance involved in the theatrical rehearsals and performance, and the directive stance of some of the roles I had taken throughout the year of exploration, I believe the children appreciated my playing alongside them and providing a stimulus for their growing imagination, language and dramatic skills.

It seemed, as I reflected on the year, that the children were viewing the daily drama sessions we had had throughout the year as times of play interaction which built friendships between adults and children as co-players. I wrote a closing comment in my diary discussion in December:

I believe the drama has helped all of them with motivation, listening skills and focus. For some children more than others the drama has been important emotionally. They have become my friends because I have played with them. Others have been more focused on relationships with their own friends opened up by the drama (Dis, t4: w10).

**The role of dramatic play in the flow-on of writing**

The opportunity to live in a world of a story for a sustained period, enacting dramas, rehearsing dialogue, developing the knowledge of shoemaker and elf activity and innovating on the story in various ways, strengthened the effectiveness of the connections between drama and dramatic play, drama and writing in role, and dramatic play and writing in role. The unit enabled me to introduce the writing context for a variety of relevant text forms (as Purcell-Gates et al. recommended, 2007) and the shared reading and enactments of several related fairy tales, which built children’s understanding of the decontextualized language of literature. I had decided to include in my “Elves” unit such text forms as a “Who am I” character description, advertising posters, lists, letters and invitations. All of these except the
“Who am I?” flowed out of the story pretext. I chose the character description as a way to develop descriptive language around a character, but some of the children found the mechanics of the task far too demanding. Others slipped into their role as elves or shoemakers and wrote three clues about their character easily. In role children wrote advertising posters when I complained that I couldn’t find their shop. In role they wrote letters and lists of requests to Santa and the elves, so the shoemakers could have presents for Christmas. Out of role they continued as competent readers and writers, creating books, certificates, letters and messages about other stimuli in their environment. Some of these are included in the case studies in Chapter Five. They branched into writing poetic statements, thank-you notes, programs, invitations, lists, advertising signs and pieces of writing with literary text features, such as “once upon a time” and “‘Ho, ho’, said Santa.”

Findings from the self-study
Throughout this year of learning, I had been weaving together drama, puppetry, dramatic play and literacy not only to develop my own understanding of the possibilities of this approach, but also to contribute to the literature across these fields and at their nexus. These understandings address the second research question:

What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?

I have summarised these as eight pedagogical findings:

1. My developing ability to manage key aspects of dramatic pedagogy supported children’s growth both as dramatists and writers.
2. The dramatic modelling of writing in context stimulated and supported the children’s writing.
3. Sustaining the dramatic context supported the flow of dramatic play and writing.
4. Resources introduced within the drama opened up new possibilities and built connections between drama and dramatic play.
5. *The specific discourses used within the dramatic contexts assisted children’s learning.*

6. *The approach adopted provided opportunities for the children to exercise agency and voice.*

7. *The agency built within the drama and dramatic play contexts supported children’s confidence when engaging in real world tasks.*

8. *An active triune stance that was simultaneously early childhood, drama and early literacy focused was vital to the success of the approach.*

The following section elaborates on each of these findings in turn.

1. **My developing ability to manage key aspects of dramatic pedagogy supported children’s growth both as dramatists and writers.**

This reflective case study has revealed that, as my ability to develop key aspects of dramatic pedagogy grew, not only was I better able to support children’s dramatic growth, as O’Mara had found (1999), but their growth as writers as well. This growth in my understanding was particularly keen in relation to the more effective use of dramatic tension, mantle of the expert and improvisation. I also gained insights about expectations and limitations when creating performances involving young children.

In relation to dramatic tension, I learned to structure drama experiences so that when the children returned to dramatic play following focused drama events, their play was charged with emotion and significance. I learnt that when I chose a pretext that involved tension, as when I played “Sleeping crocodile” with them (p. 141), or slowed down the resolution of the plot in the drama of “Ollie the Octopus” (p. 160) by finding clues and putting more problems in the way, the whole drama event took on a new significance. Time spent playing out roles and plots rich in tension supported their emerging memory and visualisation, which in turn supported both their written and oral narrative production.

Throughout the year I also discovered how to make the “mantle of the expert” approach accessible to very young children. At first I did this through puppetry,
giving them the role of carers for animal characters. When, cognitively they could begin to identify themselves as a group (demonstrated by their use of the inclusive pronouns “we” and “us”), and then as members of a wider community, I was able to introduce the expertise of community roles, as, for instance, when I built expertise as palaeontologists by modelling the role, language and behaviours of researching scientists studying the fossils, or shoemakers and leather producers working in shops and factories. Heathcote has previously described the mantle of the expert (recorded interview, 2011) as this sense of ethical and responsible citizenship that goes beyond endowing children with expertise. Giving children roles as responsible citizens in drama contexts developed their sense of responsible classroom citizenship as well. As such they could compose signs to warn other children not to walk in puddles, to encourage parents to attend a mother’s day function, to notify other about the learning topics of the week, and to sign a petition against chopping down trees.

Assuming agency as capable experts translated into enhanced confidence and autonomy as writers. In the underwater drama for instance, when I mediated an opportunity to write and also the expectation that the girls could write a letter of thanks in their roles as mermaids and princesses, I was making use of the high expectations and elevated sense of expertise that play gives, to support the children’s confidence as writers. As co-player I could scaffold the actual production of the letter so that the girls’ belief in themselves was not shattered by the demands of the literacy task. Likewise, in the palaeontologist drama event, when I modelled the role of the expert scientist who observed, hypothesised, recorded and collected samples of discoveries in the field, children took this expertise on into play in the museum and in their private offices, producing remarkable labels for fossils with multi-syllable names. Mediation of learning by significant others, as a dynamic feature of social and cultural interaction, had been described in the research and theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995a) and developed by Rogoff (2003). Rogoff described the mediation as a reciprocal process. Miller (2007) based her research on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1995a) theoretical model. She saw herself as researcher-in-role mediating literacy activity
whilst endowing children with a mantle of expertise as authors, both within process dramas and as co-player in dramatic play situations. My research built on Miller’s model by mediating systematic literacy learning, and making use of many more drama events to guide dramatic play. Miller’s intervention came mostly during dramatic play, and was done by herself as a visiting researcher, with the support of the classroom teacher. As in my research, she relied heavily on the mantle of the expert.

In addition, I learnt how to scaffold improvisation to support children’s oral language confidence and develop their narrative skills. Through this scaffolding, children could begin to provide their own input in improvisation when the dialogue and action were planned ahead, particularly when a visual story map clarified the process of the plot. They could innovate on a story ending, during a shared planning time, and then enact it, either as a group or individually, because they could then visualise the process, and had their ideas ready. The narrative brought to life by the active and interactive mode of drama supported their growth in narrative competence, which flowed on into writing, despite the hurdles of the mechanical challenges of shaping letters, blending words and composing sentences. Open-ended teacher questioning led children forward in imagining and visualising, when I coached from the side as well as when I led from within a drama event. Having memorable themes and moral imperatives to deal with in their writing helped them overcome the mechanical hurdle of writing so they could record statements like Laurence’s “An octopus is in a trap” and James’s “A zebra has escaped from the zoo”. Other research with older children such as the work of Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Cremin et al. (2006), Dunn and Stinson (2012), Marino (2012) support this dynamic feature of drama to “overcome the hurdle of the blank page” (Neelands, 1992). My study extends this earlier research by illustrating that this could be true even with writers in the very earliest stages of learning.

While I was gaining understanding of children’s development as dramatists and of ways in which I could facilitate this, experimentation outside the frame of drama
pedagogy, for example, when I attempted a theatrical performance of their “Elves and the Shoemaker” improvisation, provided insights into some of the barriers relating to performance and young children. For example, I realised the difficulties young children have in holding the perspective of the fictional context and that of the audience together in their minds, because they saw the fiction of the performance as a play context in which they were fully and continuously engrossed. Conventions of turn-taking on stage, of voice projection for an audience rather than a private conversation between two players, of positioning their bodies to include that audience, were challenging for them. Audience presence dampened their confidence with dialogue and the portrayal of mood and action, even though they made progress in their understanding of dramatic elements and in audience awareness. Perhaps, mutters the caterpillar dryly, I should have left theatrical performance alone in the first place.

2. The dramatic modelling of writing in context stimulated and supported the children’s writing.

Though many early childhood educators have modelled writing incidentally in children’s dramatic play (Morrow, 1990, Neuman & Roskos, 1992, Morrow & Schickedanz, 2001), there appears to be no existing research relating the modelling of literacy within drama situations. Within this study, however, I systematically modelled the uses and methods of writing, especially within drama events where the dramatic tension engaged and focused the children’s attention. As a result I learnt that children as young as four would respond to explicit literacy teaching when presented in this mode, creating a shared zone of proximal development. This was a paradigm shift in my thinking as an early childhood teacher. Previously I had generally waited for preschool children to demonstrate that they were “ready” to learn before I challenged them with new material, particularly in relation to the symbols and sounds of the alphabet, and their explicit application in writing. I was discovering the significance of a proactive teacher stance.

At first my modelling involved demonstrating the power of words as signs, which
was closely followed by guiding them into the construction of the words themselves. Then I introduced the shaping of longer warnings and messages, as the children’s skills in using alphabetic symbols grew. The systematic modelling flowed from careful observation of children’s emerging insights and skills in action in other contexts, and reinforced explicit teaching of the sound-letter relationships, the shaping of the letters, and the decoding and blending of sounds recommended by Ritchey (2007). As the next chapter will demonstrate in the case studies of four of the children, the establishment of each new insight about literacy was applied in dramatic play contexts. Engineering many social contexts for the use of the symbols of their literate culture helped the children to understand the value of the alphabet as a tool. I had begun the year believing, as teacher and researcher, that this approach to teaching literacy would be effective. The results, described in the stories from the quintain, confirmed my faith in the pedagogy.

Importantly, this modelling was taken up and imitated by the children. Friendships were vital in this process. Friends became “significant others” (McNaughton, 2002) in the play context, with the master dramatists (Creaser, 1989) being especially significant, alongside parents (Sonnenschein, 2002, and Taylor et al. 2003). Master dramatists and peer tutors assisted the development of literate practice and expertise by keeping the dramatic elements of the play and the inserted literacy models alive, thus sustaining and developing the literacy. Lucy, for example, developed the play theme of the garden with several other willing participants. James offered her the peer mediation of sign-writing to support her in placing a hotel message on the building that bordered her garden, and in which little paper cut-out characters from another drama session were housed. He constantly showed Martin how to create signs, and words, as Lucy did for Candice and Sally outdoors. Children peer-tutored each other as they copied my modelled teaching behaviours in their own play.

3. **Sustaining the dramatic context supported the flow of dramatic play and writing**

I found when I tried to introduce a variety of settings and themes in the one week, play was sustained only across the course of a day, but when I developed the play context over two or more sessions, or a much longer period as in “The Elves and
the Shoemaker” sequence, play complexity, role commitment and the opportunity for sustained engagement occurred. As in Lindqvist’s play worlds (1995), where themes were introduced and revisited several times, sustained drama contexts led to complex shared dramatic play. By providing the conditions for sustained contexts, roles and narratives, the skills important for building the narrative competence of my budding authors were enabled.

The timing of dramatic play periods directly after the drama events, was also important, particularly in the first half of the year when children’s memory and visualisation were less mature. Having dramatic play contingent on the drama events supported the flow of written literacy and children’s independent explorations of the alphabetic script. When play times were cut short or interrupted by other activities, the flow experience necessary for the flourishing of the literacy did not readily occur.

In addition, providing dramatic situations from the world of people, rather than those of anthropomorphic animals, was also important in the development and maintenance of literate worlds. As museum curators, doctors, veterinarians, zoo keepers and shopkeepers, they developed many more writing contexts than at those times when the dramatic context involved pigs, bears and wolves.

4. Resources introduced within the drama opened up new possibilities and built connections between drama and dramatic play.

Across the year I learnt how to handle the introduction of props, costumes and writing tools in ways that supported rather than impeded the action. The establishment of settings in partnership with the children and with the props from the drama work available proved to be effective in engaging the children, arousing curiosity and defining the drama space, as well as suggesting possibilities for the construction of dramatic play contexts, particularly when the props and sets were open-ended or aesthetically pleasing pieces such as blocks, scarves, and fake rocks. Costumes likewise built connections with play, as did significant objects such as bottles, maps, letters, keys, coins, pens and card. Originally I had
seen these objects as necessary pivots for the imagination and visualisation, but gradually as my caterpillars matured in visual memory, I experimented with replacing props within the dramas with language and music to create the mood and images, while continuing to have the resources available for their dramatic play.

Dunn (2000) found props and costumes valuable even for pre-teen players, suggesting possibilities for characters, themes and the sustaining and building of ideas for the play. She supported their judicious use. Broadhead and English (2005) and Lindqvist (1995) likewise left props for children to carry from their adult intervention into their own play, with very satisfying developments. This finding supported earlier work by Ilgaz and Aksu-Koç (2005) who found children's narratives were supported by toys as props when they were three to five years old, but not so much as they grew older.

5. The specific discourses used within the dramatic contexts assisted children’s learning.

When I attempted to analyse my discourse in the drama events I made further discoveries about the language of early childhood drama and how the particular language structures demanded by this approach were assisting language, thought and writing. The discourse analysis component of this reflective chapter reveals that I was using language which focused on teaching implicitly and incidentally, rather than explicitly and with declarative statements of knowledge and explanations. I was frequently making use of the inclusive “we” to build solidarity in a shared environment of learning and play. By comparing teacher talk from the first part of the year with my mid-year “teacher talk” (Christie, 2002), I discovered that there were responsive, often intuitive changes in language modes being used. For instance, I employed the particular, personal, inclusive and relational as modes of address at the beginning of the year. These were important for children who depended on relationships with others for their security and understanding. I was providing perceptual cues and demonstration through action to assist their visualisation and make connections between objects and language. By mid-year however, I was introducing explanation, generalisation and making more
declarative statements of knowledge, alongside modelling the language of scientists hypothesising and making tentative, speculative comments. These findings demonstrate that, contrary to Christie’s (2002) criticism of weak framing of learning in early childhood, the actions, language and thought I employed as an early childhood drama educator reflected an understanding of the changing cognitive ZPD of the young child and the choice of modes of address and interaction which would best facilitate learning in shared zones within the drama contexts.

6. The approach adopted provided opportunities for the children to exercise agency and voice.
As I delved further into the analysis of the language across the three selected drama events, I discovered that when I consciously lowered my status in the drama, by taking on roles as the weak, helpless or lacking in knowledge, I supported children’s own status, voice and sense of agency within the drama situations. Even in the first event I analysed, children were beginning to offer thematic contributions to the puppet improvisation as I allowed the puppets to make demands for appropriate props for building their nests and burrows. During the second and third events analysed, I was still introducing themes, but children themselves were providing many more thematic contributions to develop the emerging improvisation. They were also echoing my inclusive language with “we” responses that indicated that they saw themselves as a community of co-players, learners and experts. There was reciprocity of dialogue throughout, reflecting children’s active involvement and engagement. Children’s confident responses supported me in building narrative, extending cognitive challenges and using more and more sophisticated and complex language.

Pufall and Unsworth (2004) had found that children can and will exercise agency if given the opportunity to do so, and Einarsdóttir (2005) had ensured that children as valued researchers were given that opportunity in her own study in Icelandic preschools. Woodhouse (2004) encouraged educators and others involved with children to treat them with dignity and to see issues from their perspective.

The dialogue of the drama situations provided many opportunities for children to
demonstrate their own perspective and to gain status as valuable citizens with a contribution to make.

7. **The agency built within the drama and dramatic play contexts supported children’s confidence when engaging in real world tasks.**

The confidence initiated in drama, and developed during play, flowed on into other contexts of children’s lives: into their homes, their real-life literary activities, and eventually into their embracing of the change to formal schooling. Agency as players during dramatic situations was important for their stance as responsible and involved learners. The stance that the appropriation of responsible, literate roles gave to children seemed to sustain their ability to write in real-world roles as competent and capable cultural members. There have been illustrations of this growth in agency as real-world learners in this chapter. The stories of the children in Chapter Five will further demonstrate this important aspect of the pedagogy.

Among earlier researchers, Hall and Robinson in their garage experiment (2003) provided children with many opportunities to exercise this responsible citizenship in the life-like world of the garage, but their findings did not trace this agency on into real-world tasks. Miller’s zoo-keepers likewise were responsible citizens in their care for the animals in their zoo, but again, Miller (2007) did not trace this agency further.

8. **An active triune stance that was simultaneously early childhood, drama and early literacy focused was vital to the success of the approach.**

As I began to synthesise my understandings into findings about the pedagogical approach adopted within this study, I came to understand and appreciate the importance of my multiple teaching stances. The early childhood stance provided the enabling, facilitating, extending, nurturing and challenging pedagogies necessary for supporting children as co-players. In addition this stance provided opportunities to respond to the children’s need for particular, personal, relational and emotionally-charged learning, and the breakdown of skills into tiny step-by-step components. The emerging drama teacher stance provided the mood, characters, powerful strategies and dramatic tension to make experiences
memorable and significant and to sustain the disposition as writer. Finally, the literacy teacher stance was necessary to systematically insert into the drama events models which were accessible to the children and which supported the insights and skills they needed to become effective users of the alphabetic code. As these three stances merged in my professional development, I became able to integrate them into a pedagogy which sustained literacy learning.

As I wrote in Chapter 2, I have not found research at this intersection of drama, dramatic play and literacy with which to compare my own, except for Miller’s study (2007) and recently, Dunn and Stinson’s work (2011, 2012). These educators came into the classrooms of other teachers to conduct their research, and though all used components of drama, dramatic play and literacy, none were the children’s classroom teachers and none could sustain their interventions across a whole year of learning, which my study was uniquely positioned to do.

**Conclusion**
The understandings about the dynamic processes operating within the dramatic pedagogies synthesised many of the understandings that I had been developing as teacher/researcher during the period of the study and as the researcher examining the data from the vantage point of time and distance. The pedagogies of drama and dramatic play, rich in dramatic elements, reciprocity of dialogue, mutual thematic development, emotion, inclusive relationships and action, and the powerful mediation of expertise had supported effective engagement with literacy learning.

With these findings now articulated, I wonder about the response of my enigmatic caterpillar. I like to think that in his excitement, he choked on his hookah, abandoned its filthy contents, toppled off his mushroom, smiled and broke into a joyful song.

I turn now however to the other caterpillars in this research, to share case studies of four hungry caterpillars - four children who, like me, participated in this year long
journey of learning. Their individual stories relate specifically to my first research question:

*What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and play are privileged?*
Chapter 5
The children’s case studies

Introduction
Many caterpillars hatched, grew and transformed in the course of my inaugural year of preparatory teaching. The case studies describe four of these metaphorical transformations in the children I taught in 2007, as they changed from role-play writers to confident experimenters with a phonetic script. Their stories are unique but intertwined, with similarities and differences in literacy acquisition which reflect the gender, age, dispositions, learning styles, background knowledge and ability of the individual children.

Each study describes the child’s engagement, the progress made from emergent to phonetic writing, and the correlations between their engagement with the drama sessions and their growth as confident and competent writers. Samples of the children’s work, viewed through the socio-semiotic lens, give a perspective on their progress into the alphabetic code and the literary conventions of de-contextualised language, as they employed the tools of the culture for their own meaning-making (Lindqvist, 2001, Kress, 2003a, Lofdahl, 2005). Findings in relation to their development are drawn from each study, and summarised at the end of the chapter.

Edward’s story
The Caterpillar hatches
Edward walked rather tentatively up the ramp and entered the classroom on that first day and handed me a card. It was decorated with stickers and had his name scribed in it by his mother, not Edward. As researcher, I had sought a baseline sample of initial literacy from the cohort. Edward was one of several children who responded to my holiday greeting card, but notably the only one who did not sign his own name. He could however find his locker and name tag. I observed that he was a Phase A writer (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995) who “recognises own name (or part of it) in print,” but not yet one who “attempts to write own name.” I also sought some indication of parental expectations for literacy in
the new Prep venture. Edward’s mother had written, in her “goal and aspirations” during the orientation session in December, that she wanted Edward to gain in confidence as a result of his Prep experience. She reiterated this in her interview with me early in the school year: “Our main goal for him is to see him get the confidence to try things and see things through…. and be more independent” (PI, t1:p.1). She showed a great interest in her children’s education and was involved in the classroom throughout the year. As Landry and Smith (2001) suggest, parents who provide responsive, emotionally and linguistically rich models of interaction encourage literacy. Edward was certainly encouraged to participate in literary events. His mother commented, at the initial interview in week three:

   Edward has a short attention span for desk jobs, particularly writing, but he’s just beginning to co-operate about that. When I called him to write his name this morning he really tried. That’s a first.
   
   Self: What about reading?
   Mum: I read to him a lot. Every night we have bedtime stories. He loves that, knows if I change any words, and says all the voices. He reads all the pictures. (PI, t1: p.1)

He was very pleased, his mother said, to have received a welcome letter in the mail before the school year began.

Edward was the older of two siblings. He was, however, one of the youngest in a young cohort (May birthday). He was also the smallest in the class and in the school, and was very aware of this and sensitive to slights about his height and age. He was careful, polite, and anxious to please, initially preferring to play by himself with the “duplo” train set, rather than join in dramatic play with others.

“On Monday he ate through one apple…” (Carle, 1970): Aesthetic Engagement
I don’t remember him as one of Warner’s (1997) “talkers”, the children who had spontaneously joined in the drama at the orientation session in December, but Edward was a full participant from the first moments of the first drama in 2007, and
remained fully involved throughout the year. From the beginning, Edward’s involvement had two of Bundy’s (2003) descriptors for aesthetic engagement: animation and connectedness. These were demonstrated through participation, body language and movement, facial cues such as smiling, wide eyes, frowns of concentration, and laughter, and contributions to the singing and dramatic dialogues. Here is an example of the body language (Film transcription, Jan 30th and 31st, or “FT, 1:30, 31”):

    Self as Cocky, demanding: Want a nest!
    Self: A nest….
    I look around again as if finding something to represent a nest, and Edward puts his arms out and shrugs dramatically.

Later in the same session he was making suggestions for an attic and mailbox for my drawing of a house to accompany a song:

    I begin singing and drawing from the beginning of the song again, drawing in a chimney as I mention it, and redrawing the roof.
    Edward: You need an attic.

Minutes later,

    Edward: You need a letterbox.

He was very connected, very aware, and very vocal, despite the careful reticence of his initial greeting and earlier interactions. Next day, when Wombat bumbled into Platypus’s house by mistake, Edward commented “Mr. Platypus is very cross!” and “The wombats will have to go to jail!” but when presented with Wombat’s confused and sorrowful plight, he was ready with solutions: “What about you make him a home, a cave?” and “What about the platypus be his friend?” (FT, 1:31). He was also one of the most responsive to the humour in the puppet shows.

Even though ‘duplo’ trains were his first play interest, he responded to the stimulus of the large puppets, Charlie and Susie, who were introduced to help with social issues such as making and keeping friends. When the puppets came into home
corner play, I stepped in as a co-player (Dunn, 1998). Edward entered, donning a police hat. We had just begun to explore the letter/sound connection of our first letter “s”. I suggested “s” words like “sausages” for the breakfast shopping list that Candice was scribbling. Edward then became the dad doing the shopping.

Self, as Mum: And Edward, what are we going to buy for dinner tonight? Edward, as Dad, frowning thoughtfully: Dessert, ’cos we’ve run out of jelly.
Connor and Charlie the puppet are putting a pot on the stove.
Self, as Mum: Good. Jelly… and ice-cream?
Father Edward purses his lips as he considers. Martin has come to join Connor at the stove.
Edward, as Dad: Yep, yep, ’cos that’s for Sunday. And we need some porridge as well. (FT, 2:12)

I extended the play with play money and recycled cereal boxes, and later noted with delight an “s” among the scribbles in the notebook Candice had used.

Edward was very animated and responsive to the drama event about the statue who needed an alliterative spell to bring her to life, and contributed the suggestion for a water fountain in the garden (Observations, Feb 13th. or “Obs, 2:13”), which he helped to construct. It was he who suggested that we build a second nest for Owl when he took over the nest of another bird (Obs, 2:21). Skill in construction, as well as people problem-solving emerged again in the “Angela the swan” drama, as Edward offered to construct a big block pond to fit the large puppet. When Angela went, very nervously, to an animal sanctuary for help for a broken wing, he was very sympathetic to her needs (Obs, 2:22). He showed the same emotional awareness and empathy when he included a playground as his contribution to the jointly-constructed map for the sanctuary: “so the puppet animals won’t get bored!” (Obs, 2:22) Later in the drama he took on the role of a possum caught in a trap, when everyone had the opportunity to be an animal coming to the sanctuary. In March he offered to assist me with the telling of “The Three Little Pigs”, because, he said, he had a version of it at home. He did a convincing performance of the pigs’ words in the story, to a peer audience, with the traditional squeaky voice of
the little pig. In each of these drama situations, Edward was a full participant, animated and connected to the dialogue and action, ready to notice and respond orally in the drama sessions. At the same time he lacked the fine motor and phonemic awareness skills to make immediate use of the literacy models I was introducing. For example, when I had first demonstrated how to write Wombat’s name, and offered the first sound /w/, he asked: “And what’s his last name?” (FT, 1:30) suggesting an intelligent and aware interest in the writing procedure but confusion about letter/word distinctions.

In the interview for “The wolf and the three little pigs”, Edward was a sympathetic respondent:

Self as woebegone wolf: If I don’t eat pigs what am I going to eat?
Child: Grass.
Another child: Food.
Lucy: How ‘bout fishes?
Self as wolf: I don’t like fish.
Edward: Do you like steak? (FT, 3:13)

He even offered to cook it for the wolf! My woebegone appearance aroused his sympathy. He watched attentively as the wolf composed a “sorry” letter, affirming the sentiment and the solution to the problem. A project task that day, to build a strong house that a wolf couldn’t knock over, was too complex for most of the children, but Edward understood the principles of design and the problem being solved, and created a box house with a wide base (Obs, 3:13). He was eager to explain his design to others during a debriefing session.

Small group enactments of individual roles in “Goldilocks and The Three Bears” gave him an opportunity to demonstrate his emerging competence as an actor, when, in role as Baby Bear, he again changed his voice to a high register as I had done and used my dialogue in front of his peers (Obs, 3:15). When he watched the performance of another group of bears, he quivered with joy at the dramatic tension produced, and clapped and cheered in response (Obs, 3:15). Drama
sessions such as “The Pedlar and His Caps”, “The Monkey and the Crocodiles,” and “The Hungry Caterpillar” featured Edward as a committed participant. However, when I played the role of the “authority against the group” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987) in “The Forester”, he was deeply shocked (FT, 5:2). It was the first time he could not follow me into a role, but had to stand his moral ground. He was relieved when I stepped out of role to suggest we explore solutions to the dilemma. Bundy’s (2003) third feature of aesthetic engagement, heightened awareness, was being demonstrated here as he dealt with the moral issue in the drama.

As Heathcote said during a lecture in 2011, the mantle of the expert, which he embraced, had an ethical dimension; it was not simply the adoption of expertise, and Edward was always a very responsible citizen. An active problem-solver, Edward was deeply interested in the concept of petition-writing, with signatures from concerned members of the group, to save the animals that would be affected by the forester’s actions.

All of these examples from the first five months illustrate Edward’s ongoing, strong and animated connection with the daily drama sessions, and even with the deeper issues they addressed. He was fully engaged, and I anticipated that this would flow into literate practice in his play, because he was observing the modelled literacy as well as the other practices. Edward’s engagement supported my belief that a live drama context, could, like puppetry, support young children’s engagement with the learning of the classroom, including the literacy. Edward, it appeared, was engaged because he was essentially a dramatist. My teaching style suited his mode of learning, and the play role gave him confidence. In play he was “six feet tall” (Vygotsky, 1978), not the smallest child in the school.

“On Tuesday he ate through two pears…” (Carle, 1970): Acquiring Literacy

In contrast to his oral confidence and expertise in the group sessions, Edward’s confidence with his motor skills was tentative. When I modelled a greeting card in week one, he was one of the children who needed help with “Mum”, “Dad” and even his name, and he could not track the message. In relation to the developmental continuum, tracking observed behaviours in writing, Edward had
some indicators for Phase A of writing, for example: “shows beginning awareness of directionality” and “places letters randomly on page” but not yet “copies layout of some text forms, e.g. letters or lists”, which is a more advanced indicator of emergent literacy. The words on the greeting card text had no meaningful connection with the names he scribed. The initial literacy and numeracy consultation with him in week three (tabled in Appendix B, 3) provided the following baseline data: he had some letter-name recognition (notably letters from his name). He also had some numeral recognition and an enjoyment of “reading” (as role play reading) and being read to. He said he liked writing and drawing but as his repertoire was limited to letter “E”, he may not yet have distinguished drawing from writing. During the first fortnight Edward was striving valiantly to write his name on the sign-up sheets for activities he chose to engage with, and came to me or the aide for help. These were tasks he had previously baulked at, but saw as appropriate to his new role as a Prep student. He did not yet see the purpose of writing other letters, and struggled to shape them, but was always ready to oblige.

Kress (1997) traces writing development from the creation of signs using a variety of forms, through a series of stages to explicitly written forms of expression making use of de-contextualised structures and dense language. I was following the same sequence in my genre modelling in the drama events. Edward closely observed the signs I modelled and seemed to realise their power and status. Perhaps they could assist him in protecting his block-buildings from the ravages of other children? One day, he stepped into role as a policeman (Obs, 3:1), and asked me for a sign fining anyone $100 if they touched his building. I also modelled a hand icon with a cross through it, which he might find easier to comprehend and copy. James observed the first sign being written, and the next day produced his own. Others “read” Edward’s sign with interest, and his building was not destroyed.
Some children began making iconic hand signs to protect their own structures. “Don’t touch!” was added to these signs as children developed the skill to copy the letters or sound out the words. They also began to write name signs, like the ones the Australian animal puppets had modelled in the first Wombat drama event. Soon Edward had the skill to make a name sign for his railway track (Obs, 3:5). Now he could do it, he did, frequently, proudly and confidently! Shaping letters and numerals continued to be a challenge, but he always persevered. Letters had power! They were a part of the play world he was beginning to share with others.

Making significant marks on paper continued to relate to his imaginary world. Following some exciting dramatic play using maps, introduced by Lucy in the playground, we began mapping, in the context of the first “Bear Hunt” (Obs, 3:21). Maps were another accessible genre, employing symbols, icons and labels. Unlike the rest of the cohort, who copied real features such as the shed and sandpit, Edward created an imaginary map, which described action he could visualise, but which had no representative features.
He then enacted it, so the imagery must have been quite vivid to him. He took me on an imaginary walk through a snowstorm, a desert, and various other places till we found his lost teddy in the desert, which happened to be the tennis court. Clearly, visualisation was a part of his cognitive repertoire. His creativity could not yet find expression in written literacy as it could in oral language and dramatic action, because of the mechanical and linguistic demands of the tasks, which, Kucer (2005) indicates, are enormous. He could represent it with swirling arm movements which were closer to drawing action for a snow storm than they were to writing. As Kress said (1997), children make use of whatever medium is at hand to express their purposes. Like the hungry caterpillar Edward had a lot of eating and growing to do before he could spin his cocoon and became a literary butterfly!

I endeavoured to ascertain what alphabetical and phonological learning had taken place in the first eight weeks, doing so, unobtrusively, by testing what answers the children’s teddies would give to a nurse puppet. Unobtrusive, naturalistic assessment of young children’s knowledge and skills is supported in the research methodology of Einarsdóttir (2005) and Murphy (2003). In my puppet drama the nurse puppet pointed to letters on an eye chart and asked teddies, manipulated by their owners, to say the letters’ sounds or names, if they could “see” the letters on the wall in the health clinic. I used only the six letter/sound connections we had been exploring (s, a, t, i, p, n). Edward, via his responsive teddy, revealed that he was retaining the knowledge as I introduced it; his teddy gave the sound for each letter as the nurse indicated it (Dis, t1:8). The practical function of this knowledge
still eluded him.

Skill in scribing words and understanding their functions was, however, increasing. He wrote a Mother’s Day card, a teacher-directed activity after a drama of Charlie the puppet and his horse. Charlie went camping and missed his mother, so he decided to write her a card. Edward had been Charlie’s “horse”. Edward’s card demonstrated progress in scribing messages (Obs, 5:9). He could write his name, and “Mum” and “Dad” in the appropriate places in the message. There were some visual links in the alphabetic code which he could now recognise as he tracked the message. He was also beginning to copy the modelled behaviour of writing lists, though they were still scribble-writing at that stage. We had made a list of scenarios describing how different animals had been wounded, after the drama event of Angela at the Bird Sanctuary. Each child became a carer or a wounded animal. We had also listed foods which rangers would need to collect for sick animals. Edward revelled in the ranger role and the responsibility of collecting the appropriate food. When he wrote his list, it was a scribble list, but featured his name. Isenberg and Jacob (1983) and Mayer (2007) have noted that children only use in their play the literacy that they already command, and do not necessarily always use it, if a play situation can equally be served with scribble-writing. Mayer particularly observed that children commonly move from real to scribble-writing, depending on the play context, even when they have the skill to write real words. Edward’s symbolic repertoire by this time included eight letters and sounds, but also all the letters of both his first name and his surname, so these proudly headed his shopping list. The list had the visual appearance of the hurriedly scribbled jottings of adults in the context of memory aides to shopping (an activity which he understood and played out regularly), with scribbles going left-to-right and in a series, one below the other. Edward now displayed a sub-indicator for indicator 5 of Phase A writing: “copies layout of some text forms, e.g. letters, lists”. He was identifying with aspects of these texts even though much of their alphabetic content was still inaccessible.
He had just turned five, and representational shapes, but not written labels, were beginning to appear in his mapping. Below is his map of the play equipment that his team planned, constructed, and then drew. Planks, saw horses, bridges, a slide and stepping stones can be identified.

![Edward's map of the obstacle course.](image)

By the end of the month, he could add scribed words to his power signs: his were among the many “don’t touch” signs daily littering the floor after precious buildings finally had to be dismantled.

![Words appear.](image)

He was playing cooperatively, not alone, and making use, in his dramatic play, of props from the drama events, such as blocks, puppets and the rescue helicopter. He helped construct the large block museum for dinosaur bones, and the zoo with labelled cages. He was visualising and using the play contexts I was introducing, including some of the modelled literate aspects of these worlds. He scribed, but
did not sound out with alphabetic connections, signs for the museum, with adult support.

He now had all the indicators for Phase A or “role-play” writing (listed in Appendix B 11), a phase where the alphabetic code was familiar enough for him to copy, but not to employ as a phonetic tool. Edward was moving closer to synthesising and using a plethora of literacy input, but the results were fairly slow in emerging, and a difficult period, in which awareness was not matched with skill, lay just ahead of him. I, as an early childhood teacher would be put onto the horns of a dilemma as I tried to support his hesitant, struggling steps into a process which he would ultimately find easy and rewarding.

**In the cocoon: Edward’s dilemma**

Early in June there were some break-through insights in his writing development. For Edward, dramatic events seem to have had a significant role in these “eureka” moments. By now he had several letters and sounds secure in his memory. He could sound out “emu” with scaffolding, for a sign for his friend Sally, when they were building a zoo cage together (Obs, 6:1). This behaviour had been modelled several times by now within dramatic contexts and in focused teaching sessions. I had decided to pursue the zoo theme in some dramas, as the puppets from the Wombat drama sessions and the Sanctuary drama were being used frequently now and the sanctuary had become a zoo. Edward was beginning to sound out instruction signs for real-life purposes by this time, for example instructions like “hop” and “run” (Obs, 6:4) for the outdoor obstacle course.

Writing is the focus of this research study, rather than reading, but the two, which may emerge independently at first in children’s development, gradually interconnect (Adams, 1990), so the next insight in Edward’s story of literacy progress is included here even though its focus was reading. It was the drama of “Ollie the octopus” (FT, 6:6), described in Chapter four, which seemed to provide the illumination of the connection between decoding and reading. This literacy insight is identified by Stahl and Murray (2006) as crucial for beginning readers. I
had become aware of a strong bias among the cohort, in favour of writing over reading, which reflected the focus in the literacy events in the dramas and the earlier introduction of writing, but not the general pattern of development recorded in the research (Juel, 2001, Clay, 1975, 1991). When I began to plan drama sessions which depended for their dramatic excitement on people being able to read messages, as well as write them, Edward responded immediately. In the drama event of Ollie the octopus Edward strongly identified with the diver rescuing trapped fish after reading their messages (Obs, 6: 6, and FT, 6:6). In the enhanced competence he felt during the follow-up dramatic play, he seemed to find a functional, very dramatic and very emotion-packed reason for using graphophonetic cues to decode and identify words. He continued in role and found a bottle containing a message written by Sally. He identified her beginning letter on the signature, connected it to her name, and set off to rescue her as a trapped fish, just as I had done with Ollie and Owen. Drama pedagogy, combined with the opportunity to play with the props of literacy and drama, provided support for Edward’ discovery that reading was as powerful, important and motivating to him as writing.

He transferred this illumination to the written text of his basal readers, but the connections were not strong enough for him to be able to crack the code easily. He became very anxious (Obs, 6:13), and a parent interview at that time gave me the only negative feedback I received from a parent in 2007. His newly found confidence had been shaken, and he became anxious and uncertain about coming to school.

Mum: I’m not so sure about how Edward is going. He’s starting to drag the chain about wanting to be here. He seems happier going home than coming, at the moment.
Self : How long has this been happening?
Mum: My husband noticed it first a couple of weeks ago (about the time of his birthday). He’s a bit negative at home. He can’t be persuaded about anything easily. He’s always thinking about what might go wrong or negative things. (PI, t2: p.1)
I was devastated at this interview result. Was Edward anxious because he could see the goal and not quite achieve it? Was he upset about being little and vulnerable in the playground? Was he tired, or unwell? Was I putting too much academic pressure on one so young? As Edward hovered on the brink of literacy discoveries, he wallowed in something rather like depression! I attempted to see the situation from his perspective. He now knew that the writing he saw adults produce was not just fluent scribble. Text needed to contain letters linked to sounds. It seemed to be important, for Edward’s social identity as a competent writer, that he write the words correctly now, not just pretend. He had the symbols, but the automatic pathways in his memory (described by Kucer, 2005, in his “dense processing model” of literacy acquisition) were not deep enough for him to access this knowledge easily in his own writing or reading. He wanted to be a real adult doing real things with words, but it was just too hard, too confusing.

The slough didn’t appear to last. The day after I recorded his anxiety, he was composing ballads, in the context of a mermaid drama, and helping resolve the mermaid/sailor dilemma in the follow-up dramatic play, with every evidence of happiness and involvement (Obs, 6:14). He was also responding well to activities such as cutting up and reordering simple sentences in order to focus attention and understanding on the words in sentences.

His oral language and understanding of narrative and dramatic elements continued to benefit from the dramatic situations we were exploring together. Edward fully identified with the expert, the beekeeper, in the bee drama event, as he had with the ranger and zookeeper roles, but it was Lucy, not Edward, who affirmed the group’s ability to write for the newspaper. During the debriefing I interviewed him as chief protagonist. As always, he could confidently retell the events orally:

Self as a beetle interviewing for the insect newspaper: Now I think I should interview the bee catcher himself. Would you like to come up, bee catcher?
Edward as beekeeper: Yes.
Self as beetle: Can you tell us a bit about your job?
Edward: I had to hide at my workshop so they couldn’t find me.
Self, writing in notebook: Ahh!
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Edward: And I shut the door so they couldn’t come in ‘cos some followed me.
Self: Did they wake up?
Edward: Yeah, and I saw one on my foot, so I had to run and I slammed the door so they didn’t get in.
Self: And how do you protect yourself from these bees
Edward: Cos I have my safety helmet. (FT, 7:17)

There is a clear sense of chronology in his retell, and the exciting plot is vivid in his imagination. A check on his alphabet /sound knowledge that day indicated that everything he had learnt about the code was there as latent potential, waiting for the time when he could confidently combine it for his own purposes. The slide below shows the letters written in order, as I gave the sound, following the sequence in which they had been taught week by week.

![Image of letters written in order]

*Fig. 17: A strong letter-sound connection.*

**The butterfly emerges**

By August, ten children had independently produced their own sentences, but not Edward (Dis, t3:5), though he was blending single words. He was still hovering on the brink of competence as a writer. We enacted “The Gingerbread Man” story and Edward was the main character. He performed confidently and strongly, and could improvise his own words in role when we moved into an innovation on the ending. Examples of that same confidence in his stance toward literacy finally began to appear, through a series of supportive events, not all dramatic. First he
discovered he could make a sentence using the magnet letters (Dis, t3:6). This bypassed any difficulty he might have with fine motor skills. His confidence returned when he realised he had the power to combine letters to make words, and words to make sentences, without the handwriting barrier. Then, when I dictated the sentence “I am not a cat”, he could write it all, along with eleven of the others (Obs, 8:20). With the scaffolding of a dictated sentence in which each word was available in his bank of literacy skills, he could write the whole clause, with spaces between words and in an ordered sequence. He was extremely proud of this achievement. He now was beginning to demonstrate a Phase B (experimental writing) indicator: “uses writing to convey meaning”. The relevant sub-indicator is: “is beginning to use written language structures. Has a sense of sentence, i.e. writes complete sentences with or without punctuation”. Edward was also consistently demonstrating another indicator: “uses left to right and top to bottom orientation of print”. He was not yet able to write sentences of his own composition, but he was very close. His confidence and fluency with the tasks was emerging, frequently supported by his competence in powerful dramatic roles, such as rescuer and worker.

The Butterfly stretches his wings: investigating texts

During September we had a student teacher who introduced a learning unit on farms. She set up a writing table with notepapers, envelopes and pencils. Edward’s experience with success in the dictation, along with his new confidence in the role of writer, enabled him to work creatively at the writing table and design greeting cards to his friends, with a minimum of adult scaffolding (Obs, 8:27), using phrases and messages which were familiar to him. Greeting cards were a genre very dear to Edward’s heart, striking a chord with his caring disposition.

The Father’s Day card was another opportunity for him to try out his new competence with words (Obs, 8:29). I had modelled card-making and its uses in the Platypus drama, Charlie and Susie’s activities around friendship, the penitent wolf hot-seat, Charlie’s camping expedition, and Goldilocks’ apology. Moreover, Edward’s mother often supported him with writing cards for real purposes at home.
He wrote his card “to Dad, with love from Edward” with very minimal scaffolding. Suddenly his confidence with a few well-rehearsed messages exploded into a belief in himself as a competent writer of a variety of texts. This child who had had picture books read to him from birth began to create “books” with title pages, or story pages written and illustrated by him, often written at home and scaffolded by his supportive mother. One was a book on transport, which featured a title page and a set of drawings:

![Page from a transport book.](image)

The zoo theme, developing out of the original Sanctuary drama sessions, had been extended over several drama events, including “The monkey and the crocodile” and “Zoe, the Zoo Catcher”. It provided the theme for another book, about a lion. We had read and enacted “The Lion and the Baby” which included an exciting lion chase. Edward brought to school a composition which was four pages long: “Once upon a time there was a zoo. There was a lion. There was no lion. The end.”

(Obs, 8:29) Unfortunately I was not able to keep this precious sample of writing. A closer examination of the journal record of this text using the semiotic lens provides a window on his progress as a writer. He used a past tense chronological sequence, not merely a frozen moment in time as in children’s drawings and their early written utterances (Kress’s second stage). And yet the narrative dealt with just a moment in the story, not a narrative flow, so the continuity with the “frozen moment” stage was still there. Words, not pictures, dominated each page, though drawings were present under the text. The language of written discourse: “Once
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upon a time” and “The end” occurred. The literary language was modelled in his shared story-reading at home and school, and like the messages on cards, was latent in his long-term memory. He was now able to access this knowledge in his short-term memory, as his command of the mechanics of writing developed (Mccutchen, 2000).

As Kress (1997) suggests, he had begun to grapple with the differences between drawing and writing, image and action, without having enough fluency to tell his audience the whole story of how the lion met his fate. The drama events set in the zoo had provided him with a play context to assist his narrative and visualisation, while his background experiences with literary language gave him his introduction and conclusion. I commented in my journal:

This is a different Edward from the anxious unsure Edward of a couple of months ago. He was confident and fairly independent with his sounding out, composition of story and structure of the book, only coming for help with very tricky words. (Obs, 8:29)

His identity as a competent writer was secure. Sentences composed in his “office” at home began to appear daily. Writing in an “office” was a behaviour which several children with professional parents exhibited. The artefacts were often brought to school by the proud child or the supportive mother. Suddenly, writing was not only something Edward could do, but something he wanted to do, all the time. Worries about coming to school vanished and never returned in 2007. Instead his mother had worries about getting him to relax and stop writing! Here are some samples from this productive period (August to October):
This was a page in the fire-fighting book he created with pictures and captions teaching fire safety rules. He seemed to be in role as a fire officer, demonstrating the “Stop, drop, roll” routine we had performed that week. Significantly, during the same week, we had had a drama session about a cat rescued by the fire-brigade. This rescue plot made a deep impression on Edward, who had been in role as one of the rescuers, the fire chief. The competent and powerful role transferred into the authorship of the book, which included other fire captions such as “Get down low and go, go, go!” The plot remained clear in his memory and emerged again in later writing when his grasp of the alphabetic repertoire was even stronger. He included literacy competency in his sense of competency as a rescue worker.

The context for the next piece of writing was a listening activity conducted by the student teacher. She took the children outdoors to investigate sounds and to draw what they heard. Anxious to encourage some literacy in the task while the student was directing, I suggested they might write the words as labels beside their pictures, and Edward was one of those who believed this was an accessible feature of the task, as did many of the others. He could hear a motor bike, a duck, and a van driving by. His art was becoming more representational, though it was always simple, functional and unornamented. He also understood the significance of arrows as icons to connect words and pictures, and his vehicles featured drivers. The presence of the arrows signified his understanding of the distinctiveness of, yet connection between, words and drawings, and his knowledge and use of labels.
on drawings as a textual practice. The large smiling figure in the middle may have been Edward, or children whose voices he could hear in the background.

![Fig. 20: Sounds in the playground.](image1.jpg)

There was no dramatic stimulus here, but Edward’s confidence was continuing into the real world of school investigations.

![Fig. 21: Innovating on a sentence.](image2.jpg)

This last message was a humorous innovation on the dictated sentence which had first given him confidence to write full sentences. “A cat sat on a rat and the rat sat on a mat.” (E, 9:11) Now he could not just write it, he could make it into something with more dramatic content, and humour! He wrote it at home in his office and presented the artefact for “show and tell”, with chuckles and smiles at his own
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performance. Drawing dominated the page, but he used the past tense model I provided in the dictation, and wrote a compound sentence with the connector “and”. He could express his competency in the real world, but at the same time employ his skills for his own imaginative purposes. Another piece of writing continued the playful exploration of the words, this time in a speech bubble:

![Image of a drawing on a page with a handwritten text saying: "I sayd a mat and the vat followed me."

Fig. 22: More innovations.

When we performed “Waltzing Matilda” together, Edward had the lead role as the swagman, another significant worker role. His written response to this drama, which he enjoyed hugely, was the statement: “I like sheep," written, in role, as the swagman.

![Image of a drawing on a page with a handwritten text saying: "I like sheep."

Fig. 23: Comment in-role.
Illustration accompanied, but did not dominate the text. Again, dramatic pedagogy seemed to have supported his confidence to write, to make use of the digraph /sh/ as it was introduced, and to read back his writing.

For Edward, writing in role developed even more strongly during fourth term. Most of the independent pieces of writing so far had followed a familiar picture book layout, with text supported by an illustration (Kress’s stage two). “Multi-modality is an absolute fact of children’s semiotic practices” (Kress, 1997, p.137). Children’s visual images are usually static, but when they write they move into a mode which is linear and chronological, describing action (Kress, 1997). One task for a beginning writer is to make the transfer across media from static image to linear narrative flow. Edward had already attempted a chronological structure with the vocabulary of an imaginary tale, back in August when he wrote his lion story. The next piece of writing came from a basal reader, parts of which he copied at home. The storyline revisited the rescue theme from an earlier drama. The plot was almost identical to his own fire brigade rescue, and may have reminded him of his position as fire chief.

Edward’s story included key lines from the original ten-page text, edited down into a page-long story that read:

Fig. 24: The story of a fire chief’s rescue.
“A cat is stuck up in the tree.
A fireman comes to rescue the cat.
A ladder comes up to the cat.
The little cat is safe.” (E, 11:31)

He could read it back to me with one-to-one correspondence of voice and finger-pointing. Visual images were not important in his writing sample. He had the story clearly in his mind. The memory of the dramatic event supported his reading and writing, though he needed the support of the text model to help shape such a long piece of writing.

**The butterfly spreads his wings: experimentation with many texts**

It was now fourth term, and we had begun the drama unit based around “The Elves and The Shoemaker”. Edward was deeply involved at every stage in this project, and was in role as a shoemaker during dramatic play, for much of the term, while he was developing awareness of theatrical conventions such as voice quality and volume, blocking, characterisation and audience. All the tasks we attempted for the project were easily within his grasp, whilst his confidence in his ability, both as a student of literacy and as an actor, was high. My focus in the literacy was to encourage awareness that writing involved a variety of authentic and accessible genre (Purcell-Gates *et al.*, 2007, Duke *et al.*, 2006), which could have purposes in the play context of the elves and the shoemakers. Because Edward identified with his shoemaker role, he fully immersed himself in activities appropriate to his role, including those which were literacy-linked. He made “leather” shoes, which he was very pleased with, but which taxed his emerging fine motor skills. He built and worked in the “leather factory” after the drama establishing the leather process (Obs, 11:7). The main literacy products in this dramatic play were the making of signs for the warehouse.

Edward enthusiastically engaged with teacher-directed literacy tasks which emerged out of the daily drama events as well as his spontaneous activity playing and writing in role. When I became a customer who couldn’t find a good shoe shop because there were no advertising signs, Edward immediately engaged with
the task of improving the advertising in the play world and made his poster. On another occasion I came in role as an elf and suggested to the group that we should all write “thank-you” letters to the shoemakers and their wives for their gifts of clothes and shoes. In these roles I was directly mediating literate capabilities and opportunities which were part of the action of the developing play context. Hall had done this in his garage experiment (2003), and had observed the literacy develop as part of the action in the shared play context. Miller had done the same in her zoo (2007). A ball was planned (by Peter) at Cinderella’s palace, so that everyone could wear their new dancing shoes, and Edward wrote a “thank-you” note as an elf, but combined it with the invitation to the ball, which was more in line with his role as a shoemaker.

![Edward's “thank you” note.](image)

I endeavoured to extend children’s skill at visualising and supposing by asking them to imagine what might happen after the elves went off in their new clothes. I asked for a written response, without first devising any response with them in the dramatic play context of the story. The responses to the question seemed prosaic and unimaginative.
Edward wrote: “The elves went (to the) shoemakers then the elves went back to the forest.” Children had found it difficult to imagine, describe orally, and transpose their ideas into improvisation, when I had tried this process earlier in the year, with the drama about a mermaid cave. To imagine, describe orally, and transpose directly into a written sentence was astronomically more difficult, and the mechanics of the task most probably took attention away from imaginative composition. Perhaps the question itself seemed to require a prosaic answer. Besides, because Edward was in role, most of the time, as a shoemaker, not an elf, he may have had no particular interest in what the elves did when they left.

He wrote his sentence, however, confidently and enthusiastically, with no adult help apart from the spelling for ‘elves’ that he accessed from the word bank provided. He used past tense, so had the sense of retelling the events chronologically, supported by the wording of my question. The teacher-provision of lined areas and space for drawing determined the layout and picture size. The spelling was alphabetic, with an emerging sense of the phonetic detail of the syllables, especially “shoemakers” (sowmakis - his /sh/ was often pronounced /s/) and “forest” (forsois). Edward’s response was all one sentence, but there was a new conjunction, “then”, to join the clauses.

The next piece of writing fulfilled a more authentic purpose for him and was much more strongly linked to dramatization. (Authenticity of purpose has already been
identified by Duke et al., 2006 and Purcell-Gates et al., 2007, as significant in motivating good writing.) We had enacted the drama of the shoemakers and their wives writing wish lists of what they would like from Santa. Children had written, in role during the drama, a single request for a toy, and then received it via a friendly elf helper. As in the first attempt at in-role writing I had mediated an expectation of competence to write and to read the messages. Writing and reading for an engaging and familiar social purpose was woven into the task. It built on the friendship-making which was so important in the children’s dramatic play, as they mimed making and bringing gifts to each other. I suggested, after the drama, that the children write their own lists for Christmas, using paper ruled as a column, to scaffold the regular layout of a list. Edward continued to write as a shoemaker, rather than Edward, for some way into his list, so strong was his identification with his character. He also illustrated his list:

![Figure 27: Christmas wish-list.](image)

Edward the shoemaker asked for “shoemaker clothes, a shoemaker shop and a pet donkey”, before, presumably, Edward the child asked for “a rocket, puppet, Santa Puppet, and a playground”. Puppets were important features of his wish-list. He often noticed and used the sound /sh/ in his writing, now, and tackled double-syllable words. The expertise assumed during the writing task in the drama continued into the teacher-guided task of the longer list. The writing sample demonstrated his competence as a literate shoemaker. Edward had, by disposition, such empathy with others, such awareness of their needs and
emotions, that he could achieve a level of role-awareness remarkable in a five-year-old child (E, 12:4). His standard letter to Santa, thanking him for his presents the previous year, was the final sample of classroom text writing which we attempted together as a class. Edward the shoemaker may have been remembering his play gift in the drama as well as the real Edward’s gifts from the previous year, as he wrote.

![Letter to Santa](image)

*Fig. 28: Letter to Santa.*

His spelling was alphabetic, and demonstrated an awareness of sophisticated phonological features, for example hearing the /ng/ sound in ‘thangk’ (thank) and the dominant syllable in ‘prez’ (presents), and of orthographic conventions in words such as “you”, “they” and “the”. He used word spacing and some punctuation. His letter shaping was still large and somewhat irregular. These independent writing samples provide further evidence of Phase B performance, including “writes using simplified oral structures” and “attempts familiar forms of writing”. Using evidence from all the samples of independent work in November and December, I established that Edward was operating not as a role-player (Phase A) of writing but an experimental phonetic writer (Phase B) (phase descriptors, Appendix B, 11). Edward had achieved in his Prep exposure to literacy, not only the skills to build and decode the written English language, but the confidence to use these skills for his own play and real world purposes.
**The butterfly flies away**

As the year drew to a close he wrote a thank-you card for the student teacher and tried his hand at a certificate of congratulations for his mother (Obs, 11:19); he had just received a certificate on assembly for his writing achievements. The message in the gift book the children shared in creating is: “Thank you Mrs. Harden for teaching us and for being the best teacher ever. Love from Edward.” (E, 12:10)

![Fig. 29: The shared farewell gift.](image)

The page is bordered with love hearts, rainbows, flowers, two pictures of himself, and images which could be houses. Santa is laughing, with a speech bubble saying “ha”, at the top of the page. The spelling was assisted by the parent who helped children compile the book. His final card reads “Dear Mrs. Harden, You have done a lovely lot of things for us. You are a good teacher. From Edward.”

![Fig. 30: Message from a transformed caterpillar.](image)
The words are written on a flower shape he drew and cut out for me first, and the writing follows the line of the petals after crawling down the stem. The shaky little caterpillar has become a graceful butterfly, completing his term in Prep 2007 with a delicate literary flight, around, aptly enough, a flower!

Summary
By the end of the year, Edward was competent and highly motivated to write and to read; he was constantly, almost obsessively, applying with pleasure the cultural tools he had acquired, for real and play purposes. His performance in the final theatrical production was masterly, showing a dramatic use of dialogue and strong role-awareness, a sense of audience and also of showmanship. His year in Prep had been transformative both in terms of his social and his academic development. He truly made the transition between role-playing writing and using the alphabetic tools for his real world and play purposes. At the same time he transformed into the confident and happy individual, at least for that year, that his mother had so hoped to see emerge.

Edward’s story reveals constantly the connection between a pedagogy of drama and play, and literate responses which were authentic and meaningful to him. An aesthetic pedagogy seemed to match his dramatic, empathetic and imaginative disposition and the rich literary background he brought with him. The themes and roles I had used connected with his interests and his desire to be "six feet tall". The plots roused his creative imagination and storytelling potential and supported his narrative production. The literacy models I inserted in drama sessions seemed eventually to prompt a rich harvest of literary outpourings, despite the period of uncertainty and depression during the complex task of acquiring early literacy.

Epilogue
I interviewed Edward in March of 2008, after he had been in Year One for several weeks. His transition to this new learning environment appeared to have been seamless, and although a little ill-at ease in the interview situation, he could tell me that he enjoyed Year One and liked reading and writing. I asked him what he liked
to write and he replied “I like to write...when we made cards...”, (CI, 08:17) which seemed to be a memory from the Prep year coming slowly back to him, rather than a comment on what they were doing in the new classroom. He was reading confidently as well. He didn’t readily recall much of what had happened in Prep other than some songs and games we had played. I asked him about “The Elves and the Shoemaker” and he recalled the plot, and smiled at the memory. I asked him if there were any things he didn’t like about Prep. He hesitated. “When we had to do like...can’t remember...” (CI, 08:17). Perhaps there was something in his memory of Prep which vaguely recalled the period of anxiety of those middle months, or the worries at the beginning when someone told him he was too little to be at school. Perhaps he preferred not to talk about what it was. Perhaps, characteristically, he did not wish to offend.

Lucy’s story

The Caterpillar hatches

Lucy, youngest daughter in a family of four children, presented at the orientation day for Prep, in December 2006, as a confident and responsive young person, a “talker” in Warner’s (1997) categories. When I concluded the Prep induction session with the teddy and puppet drama of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”, she was the first to volunteer for a role in the action and to respond verbally to the drama. Her mother commented at the initial interview:

She loves having stories read to her at night - not one a night but several…
She’s very creative with little objects…
She hasn’t said she wants to read but wants lots of stories read to her. If we don’t grab a book, she will. They’re always looking at books. I guess I read all over the place too, before bed and during the day. She sees that. They’re very careful of books. They never destroy them. We even read chapter books now. (PI, t1:p.19)

Bedtime stories and dramatic play with siblings provided her with a rich language base to bring to the Prep experience. McNaughton (2002) gives a place in the emergent literacy process to significant others, the carers who give the child a
purpose for imitation or valuing of literacy. Lucy’s family modelled reading as part of the joys and pleasures of daily life, mingled with play with siblings and bedtime imaginings. Lucy had, moreover, come to school when her mother was a volunteer helper in 2006, and had joined in singing and phonics activities with her older sister. Lucy was very ready for learning experiences and eager to learn in an environment where the arts and particularly drama were valued. On the other hand, like Edward, she was one of the youngest children there, a factor which can be a disadvantage in relation to memory and fine motor control.

“On Monday he ate through one apple…” (Carle, 1970): Aesthetic engagement

When I introduced the initial puppet drama, Lucy responded instantly and expressively. My pedagogy seemed to match her disposition, experiences and interests. She joined in enthusiastically when the puppets sang their songs. She held out her hands to feed the cocky, when it asked for food, leading the response of the whole cohort. When she fed the emu puppet, she was heard to say “I liked that apple,” taking on the role of Emu herself. A segment from the first drama event, after I had sung Platypus’s song, establishes her as a full participant (Simpson, 1999), contributing action, affirmation and comment:

Self, looking at Platypus, who has covered her eyes with her flippers: She’s hiding again. What did I do? I said she’s absurd. That means she’s silly. Lucy: Yeah, too loud.

Self: I’ll sing it again and say she’s really not absurd. Okay? Lucy: Yeah.

I sing it again, and the puppet claps.

Self: Oh, she liked that. Want a house, Platypus? Want a high up one like Possum and Cocky or a low down one like Wombat.

Lucy: Yeah, water. (FT, 1:30)

She continued to have something to say about every song and action, throughout the drama. Warner (1997) believed that talkers engage immediately and lead the group into action, but that they use little imagery. This descriptor of “talker” does
not give full credit to the responsive young children in this study, who seemed to have ready access to visual imagery as well as expressive language. Bundy’s (2003) categories of animation, connectedness and later heightened awareness describe her engagement, as they did Edward. Her responses were animated and she was intensely connected with everything that happened. She was the first on her feet, quivering with alertness, sometimes dancing on her toes when she waited to begin, as I observed at the commencement of the second session of the drama of Wombat and Platypus. (FT, 1:31) Her verbal responses were varied and her vocabulary rich. For example, in this incident when the puppets were playing (and modelling) “hide and seek”:

Self: Okay, now everybody say ‘ready platypuses!’
Many children join in.
Self: Okay, Mr. Platypus is going to look first. Nah, too cold!
I make him look under the table.
Self: Not over there… too cold…oh getting hotter.
Vincent: How ’bout in my shirt?
Self, making the puppet look: looking…ahhh, found one.
Lucy giggles.
Self: Now Mrs. Platypus’s turn. You tell her if she’s getting hot or cold.
Lucy’s voice leads the cohort as Platypus searches in several places: Cold, hotter, hotter, hotter, STEAMING HOT! (FT, 1:31)

The next time we had a hide-and-seek hunt, her interjection was “Boiling!” Her suggestions were imaginative, already giving evidence of visualisation:

_self: Now I’m going to put Platypus’s pond out here in the middle. Right over here. Do you think we better put a shelter round it? Make it a bit secret?
Edward: Yes we should.
Lucy: Secret lab. They could even make a secret lab. (FT, 1:31)

Her sense of humour bubbled over again when Wombat bumbled into Platypus’s home. She rocked forward laughing while Edward was suggesting that Wombat should go to jail. She and Edward were the ones who picked up the puppets,
ready to proceed immediately with the drama in their own play, pausing as I
demonstrated how I could make a sign with Wombat’s name. When Susie and
Charlie, the puppet children, made their appearance that Friday, she and Vincent
introduced the puppets to home corner to join in dramatic play (Obs, 2:2).

Her solution to Susie and Charlie’s problem of making friends with the platypus and
wombat, was not to suggest a script for friendly words, as I had envisaged, but to
step into role as an animal and play the game with the puppets. Here is the
dialogue:

   Self as Susie: Want to hear our problem? Well, we don’t know how to make
   friends with Wombat and Platypus.
   Mary: Just, just…
   Lucy interrupts: You need to be an animal.
   Self as Susie: An animal? If we play we’re animals do you think they’ll like us
   then?
   Mary: Put some suits on.
   Lucy: Yeah, animal suits.  *She is shaping them with her hands.*
   Self as Susie or Charlie: But we haven’t got any animal suits.
   Lucy: Maybe Mrs. Harden does.  *(FT, 2:5)*

After all, she had watched her sister dress up as a fox in a “Gingerbread Man”
production at the end of the previous year. Her expectations of the classroom
definitely included dramatic behaviours and dramatic roles, with costumes.
Like the children in Dunn’s dramatic play research (2000), costume meant a lot to
her, and supported her imagining and sense of role.

When I introduced the live drama of the statue in the garden, Lucy led the
children’s responses as animals and then, at play time, dressed up as the gardener
(the role I had had) and developed the play context of the magical garden
(Obs, 2:13). Supported by other children she brought out a play picnic to share,
and draped scarves and more flowers about. The gardener was her favourite role
during dramatic play, throughout that term. It seemed to strike a chord with her
artistic disposition, as did the aesthetic setting of the garden with colourful scarves
and flowers. Later, this connection would lead to literacy practices in the play context she built and sustained with the willing support of others. In terms of the building of connections between the literacy purposes of the dramas and the flowering of responses in play, the presence of “master-dramatists” (Creaser, 1989) who could and would take up themes and roles effectively and develop the play context, was very important. I accepted this happen-chance of a child “master-dramatist” as a ‘given’ for every cohort, but found in later years that this was not always so, often requiring the co-playing adult to step in and build the ideas, language and action.

Lucy was a role-model to many of the children and a catalyst for the development of the drama events. When Angela the giant swan puppet made her debut, Lucy instantly stepped into role as her baby swan, which Kelly copied, and they fluttered about calling “Marmie! Marmie!” when Angela flew down to land in her new, enlarged pond (Obs, 2:20). Angela returned in a later drama session. She was a frightened visitor to the Bird Sanctuary, and Lucy reassured her, changing from being a dependent baby swan to a supportive doctor:

Self to Angela, coaxing: And would you like to go there and have your leg fixed up?
Self as Angela: No, no!
Self to Angela: Why not?
Self as Angela: Oh, no, I don’t know anybody there. I’d be scared!
Lucy, coaxing: You’d only need medicine.
Self as Angela, drawing out the tension: I don’t want to go. I’m scared, I’m scared.
Lucy, on her feet beside me, stroking the swan: You’d only have to have medicine one day.
(And, seconds later…)
Self to Angela: What are you scared of? You’re not scared of the medicine, so what’s wrong?
Self as Angela, still baulking: I don’t know what creatures are there.
Lucy, coaxing: They’re just dogs and little cats and little birds and swans. (FT, 2:23)

Lucy was the one who carried the drama theme into the dramatic play, caring for animals in the sanctuary (Obs, 2:23). This was enthusiastically copied by many.

In the midst of this joy, energy and exuberance, Lucy had a week when she became very fragile. She would come, unaccountably, for cuddles, or burst into tears (Obs, 2:27). This fragility, her parents reported, was due not to fatigue or settling-in anxiety, but to issues at home. There was more than a hint of catharsis in the fear and anxiety of Lucy the frightened bunny who huddled beside me in Noah’s ark during the torrential rain in the “Noah and the Rainbow” drama session (Obs, 3:1), and who then gambolled happily on the grass when the rainbow appeared. Her creativity and exuberance were not, however, completely dampened by the issues at home. When I confessed I had no song for the eagle puppet, for the drama of two birds competing for the same nest, she immediately stood up and composed a song (Obs, 2:21), which she remembered again the next day when Eagle put in an appearance, but which, regrettably, I didn’t record.

Lucy was ready for new dramatic challenges as I presented them. She managed to maintain her self-assigned role as a pig in the wolf hot-seat interview, and use arguments from within her role, even though I was working as “authority against the group” and not with them. She affirmed the literacy purpose in the interview, which resolved the conflict between wolf and pigs (and therefore, for the security and comfort of the children, between myself and them):

Lucy, sympathetically when I put in a woe-be-gone appearance as the wolf with the injured tail: What’s the matter?
Others take her cue and echo the question.
Self as wolf: I got a burnt tail.
Voice from the floor: Why?
Self as wolf, stalling: Um, well...
Lucy: Pigs?
Self as wolf: It was from boiling water, actually.
Michael: Why did you knock the pigs’ houses down?
Self as wolf, defensively: How did you know I knocked the pigs’ houses down?
Lucy: Cos we are the pigs.
Self as wolf, falteringly: Well…It was because I wanted to eat the pigs.
Lucy, out of role: I had a baby pig and it died.
Self as wolf: Can’t I have pigs to eat?
Lucy back in role: No, ‘cos we have to live.
Other voices: No.
Self as wolf, whimpering: What am I going to eat then if I can’t eat pigs?
Lucy, swayed by my demeanour again, sympathetically: I got a little baby pig what you can eat.
Aide, laughing incredulously: Are there any more questions you could ask him?
(A little later…)
Aide: Annie has a good question.
Annie: Did you go to the vet to get that bandage on?
Self as wolf: Well I really didn’t want to tell the vet that I was eating little pigs so I just wrapped the bandage around by myself.
Lucy, accusingly: You stole it! Did you?
Self as wolf: The bandage? No, no, I had it in my first aid kit.
There is a silence.
Self as wolf: If I don’t eat pigs what am I going to eat?
One suggestion: Grass.
Another: Food!
Lucy: How ‘bout fishes?
Self as wolf: I don’t like fish.
Edward: Do you like steak?
Lucy: I have steak at home.
(FT, 3:13)
Lucy’s role understanding and voice were very strong. She was the one who established that as pigs they should be suspicious of the wolf’s motives. She could comment “Stolen!” showing an understanding of the wolf’s character. Nonetheless she was swayed to sympathy by his arguments.

“On Tuesday he ate through two pears…” (Carle, 1970): Acquiring Literacy

The reading running record in the first fortnight of school demonstrated that Lucy already knew that writing conveyed meaning. She was able to point one-to-one to the words as she told the message of the pictures. Her finger followed the left-to-right sweep of the page and front-to-back of the basal emergent reader. The table of initial literacy, in Appendix B 3, records that she still identified writing with drawing, enjoyed both, could write her name, recognize, but not label, some significant letters from her name, did not know the sounds of any letters, liked to “read” and be read to, and could count on her fingers to five but not recognise the numerals. In relation to Phase A writing, she had several but not all indicators. Like Edward, she began with enthusiasm but little alphabetic knowledge in her symbolic repertoire. Her fine motor skills were more developed than Edward’s.

In that first fortnight she consolidated the writing and recognition of her name, and was ready for the exploration of letter/sound connections in week three. At that stage she could hear a /s/ in a word but could not identify its position as the onset of that word (Obs, 2:12). By March (Obs, 3:12) she showed clearly that she could hear the sound /p/, at the beginning of words, when I brainstormed words which begin with /p/. This was an example of phonological awareness emerging during a teaching focus on alphabetic skills, rather than as a necessary prelude to these, as Stahl and Murray (2006) had noted. In dramatic play situations she was still using scribble-writing when making cards for Susie the puppet with Annie (Dis, t1:4). When Nellie the nurse puppet tested the eyesight of teddies, using the six letters we had learnt (Obs, 3:19), Lucy could give the sounds of three of them, but did not have enough in her repertoire to produce words spontaneously in her play.

Lucy had access to other types of symbols and cultural icons of dramatic
significance, however. She introduced the idea of maps in the playground, and this led to a whole new exploration of signs and symbols among the children (Obs, 3:19), including the first “Bear Hunt” enactment. Goodman (1990) had observed power issues linked to the possession of literary objects such as maps, in children’s dramatic play, as I had observed power play around signs in Edward and James’ activities. Compass points and arrows, and ‘x’ to mark the spot where treasure was buried, were all important symbols on the maps. This knowledge became part of Lucy’s available symbolic repertoire, along with numerals. Other children began to bring maps with signs and icons on them to include in the play world of treasure hunting which developed, in which Lucy was a key player.

The caterpillar grows: developing identity as a writer and performer

The threads of emerging literacy were beginning to intertwine between the dramas and the social situations of writing they demonstrated, the growing repertoire of letters and sounds Lucy had access to, and the dramatic play in which she was a lively leader and participant. Lucy became a catalyst for the drama, dramatic play and literacy interconnections. Just as she had led the cohort in responsiveness in the Wombat dramas, and in developing the garden play context, so she became one of the first to respond with sign-making as an accessible and useful part of the play. When she built a hotel alongside the magic garden (Obs, 3:1) she enlisted James, because she knew he could write, but also because he was building the structure near her, to put a sign on the hotel. He was stumped for ideas, so she composed the message “hotel is open”, leaving it to him to write the words. The garden and the hotel re-appeared in play the following week, and Lucy created a “Don’t touch” sign with the hand icon, which she had previously observed on Edward’s building, to protect her own (Obs, 3:5). This incident or series of incidents illustrates the interweaving of drama sessions and play, which built the play contexts and mediated the literacy that was emerging. Lucy was the master-dramatist (Creaser, 1989) who could take an idea, and with her instinctive sense of the dramatic, and her vivid imagination, could develop the play, with the literacy immersed in it.
Lucy was also producing signs of her own for other situations, which made use of random letters, some of which she had recently learnt, and some of which she was noticing in her school environment. She believed herself competent, a belief I supported through the conferring of expertise during the many drama situations with modelled literacy. She could readily transfer that confidence into the real world of playground signs or cards and messages.

Fig. 31: Lucy’s first alphabetic message.

In terms of role play writing, Phase A, she was using “letters or approximations of letters to represent written language” (Writing continuum, Ed Dept, WA, 1995).

During the period of emotional vulnerability, some of her enthusiasm for learning seemed to have waned. This was suggested by a comment about school and learning. It was toward the end of the wolf interview:

Self as Wolf: I'm so glad you're helping me. I ran away from school when I was a little wolf. Didn’t want to do any work.

Lucy, sympathetically: Just because you're tired. (FT, 3:15)

Was Lucy herself tired from the strain of learning for a term, or was the emotional stress at home taking its toll? Was she just sensitive to the sorry state of the wolf? Was she echoing adult comments to older brothers or sisters when they didn’t want to do homework? The power of the drama modelling was stronger than such emotions, however, because Lucy carried my wolf response over into her play,
including repeating the phonetic spelling of the word “sorry” which we had earlier jointly encoded. I repeated the “sorry” card for Goldilocks two days later, but explained the correct spelling (Obs, 3:15). Again Lucy responded with a written response, this time in role. Lucy had been chosen as Goldilocks (ostensibly because of her golden curls but also because she was one of the confident ones who might manage an individual speaking role). She had to lay the trail of clues described in Chapter 4, and leave the “sorry” letter on the table for the bears (and all the children) to read. Perhaps because she was in role “writing” and stealthily delivering the note, Lucy was deeply interested in Goldilocks’ letter of apology.

During play, still in the important role of Goldilocks, she wrote a “sorry” letter to the three bears. She took my modelled letter and wrote her own on the back. Initial sounds and the “y” are present, along with some other random letters, crossed footprints of the bears (or are they perhaps her own, from the drama event) and a love heart. I have included the back-to-back artefact.

![Image of a handwritten letter](image)

Fig. 32: Phonetic connections appear

She was now using the modelled strategies for encoding words phonetically to support her role-playing in dramatic play. The importance of the play role in supporting her identification with the writing behaviour is particularly significant here, a pattern of interconnectedness which appeared again and again in third and fourth term when many children had the tools for writing at their fingertips and saw play time as an opportunity to explore this aspect of their role. Lucy clearly had all
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of the Phase A writing indicators by this time, and was moving into a phonetic stage.

Her engagement with direct instruction was clear, as was her engagement with every aspect of the dramatic situations, and her sense of inclusive identity with the whole class and our shared literacy purposes. In the first week back at school after the Easter break, refreshed, enthusiastic and showing no more signs of anxiety, she put up a sign for everyone, to show what letter/sound connection we were exploring next (Dis, t2: w1). Lucy was writing constantly and spontaneously now in her play times. She demonstrated that she could sound out instruction words such as “run” and “hop”, and began to write signs for the climbing track set up outside (Obs, 4:20). She and Candice took clip-boards and wrote words on them as an outdoor activity. Candice copied Lucy’s words until she had the memory pathways to create her own, later in the year. This behaviour persisted for a couple of weeks, and others, including Edward, copied it. Peer mediation of literacy in play was a significant finding in the children’s case studies. As Vygotsky wrote (1978), the children were cognitively in each other’s ZPD and able to provide models which were within the grasp of their peers. Friendship supported these excursions into text, and play situations produced and sustained the friendships.

Lucy was very keen to compose messages for and decorate greeting cards. The genre resonated with her empathy with others, and required little scaffolding at the composition stage because of its familiarity. One of her early cards began, though it didn’t complete, a message which was intended to say: “I hope you have a wonderful day.” (Obs, 4:27) She had come for help with “hope”, and knew or copied “you” but found the message writing too laborious once she reached “lovely.” She wrote spontaneous cards to her mother, an idea reinforced by Charlie’s bush adventure and his card-writing solution for his loneliness, when he missed his mother (Obs, 5:9). She could sympathise deeply with Charlie’s sentiments. The drama of Charlie’s bush adventure elicited another comment from Lucy which may have echoed some home dialogue. Charlie the puppet had said that tying shoelaces was too hard. “You should try. You haven’t even tried,”
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Lucy scolded Lucy. Later she took Charlie on her own adventure with the tent and billy, along with Edward, and I heard her say in role as Charlie “I miss my mum.” The poignancy of Charlie’s vulnerability, expressed in his card to his mother, may have echoed her own.

Lucy could encode words to write, but could not yet readily access decoding skills in her reading. She had shown no substantial movement toward the stage of experimental reading when I conducted a reading running record in June. I began to focus more on reading, and on whole sentences in signs. In the drama mentioned earlier in Edward’s story, about the snake puppet which could be tricked when it searched for bunnies, the children, as competent supporters of the bunnies, had put up signs which read “I am not in here.” While Snake, manipulated by me, went around from burrow to burrow where children had their own bunny puppets lurking behind huge signs, Lucy was hopping tantalisingly behind me wearing a pair of bunny ears, and giggling softly (FT, 5:14). I stretched out the dramatic tension, as Snake read the signs one by one, wondering where all the animals could possibly be, then finally “discovered” the bunny hopping behind me. A chase ensued, and lots of children joyfully became bunnies as well, till Snake, exhausted, developed hiccups and gave up. Lucy’s involvement here was purely dramatic, and she did not hold up a sign for Snake to read. She was away on the day Ollie the Octopus found a message in a bottle from his friend Owen; consequently she missed the reading stimulus which had had such an effect on Edward’s attention to words in print.

Her creative activities around language, during that period from May to July, were, however, very varied, and constantly served as a catalyst for the literacy and play of others. As Kress wrote: “Children act multi-modally, both in the things they use, the objects they make, and in their engagement of their bodies: there is no separation of body and mind” (Kress, 1997, p. 97). Lucy composed and sang a ballad about a dinosaur adventure, after our palaeontologist drama, in which she had been a pterodactyl fossil (FT, 5:22). She was clearly visualising the storyline of the ballad as she composed it. She built the museum to house the dinosaur
bones after the drama, and consequently several people followed her into the play and made tickets and signs for it. Lucy carried on the role of vet after the drama about vets and sick animals, during “v” week. In the drama session each child had had a puppet animal to care for, and described a scenario in which it was injured. During the group play time, Lucy wrote a sign on the whiteboard near the surgery she established. It read: “Vet. I look after cocky” (Obs, 5:29). She composed the message, sounded out “vet” and then came to me for some help with the rest of the sentence. Several other children took on vet roles and made scribbled notes on their clipboards about their animals, or included real animal names, as James knew he could and did.

The test of alphabet and sound knowledge at the beginning of July confirmed that she had ready access to all the alphabetic information we had focused on in the first twenty weeks, plus some knowledge of long vowels like “ai”, which we had only discussed incidentally. All the letters, moreover, were embellished with smiley faces.

![Image](image-url)  

*Fig. 33: Lucy’s embellished letters.*

She could copy a complete sentence correctly, with word spaces, and compose and write short messages independently, all indicators of Phase B, or “experimental” writing.

Sometimes she wrote complete sentences backwards, and experimented with
words with their letters in square boxes, as she observed me doing during explicit teaching sessions, when I was scaffolding children’s auditory perception of the sounds in words, and their positions. She grappled with the concepts of word and sentence, skills that Kress (1994) defined as primary tasks when children are learning to distinguish writing from drawing and developing a sense of sentence as recorded speech utterances.

Lucy continued to believe that her creative impulse could be translated into song, dramatic play, art, and dance, as well as written symbolic form. She composed and sang another ballad, a mermaid one (Obs, 6:14), that was a little meandering and difficult to follow, but contained ideas from an earlier mermaid adventure with divers, sharks and treasure which we had improvised together during our under-the-sea investigations. The drama sessions set in the ocean supported her excursions into narrative via song, as it did those of Edward, Sally, Laurence and others.

It was she who suggested that the news which the beetle reporter heard about the robbing of the beehive by Edward the bee keeper, described in his case study, could be presented by the children in a written form. Her sense of self as a competent writer was very evident in this example:

Self as beetle reporter: Thank you very much. I’ll put all that information in my newspaper.
Lucy: Are you really going to do that?
Self out of role: I could, I could make a newspaper.
Lucy: How about we all help?
Self: What a great idea. And you could all draw pictures of what happened.
Lucy: And I could put words, ‘cos I’m good at writing words. (FT, 7:17)

A follow-up interview with her parents in July confirmed her ongoing and enthusiastic engagement with reading and writing, even though reading was still at the emergent, heavily scaffolded stage: “Lucy continues to draw, write and perform at home. She’s always asking everyone to help her sound out words and
messages to people. She loves coming, and seems to have good friendships” (Pl, t2:p.13).

“On Wednesday he ate through three plums…” (Carle, 1970): Discovering texts

Signs and cards, meaningful to Lucy because of their dramatic, artistic and emotional content, were text forms that Lucy related to well, once their possibilities for meaning were presented. By August she was trying her hand at other messages. She wrote up the day, date and weather sentences one morning:

“Today is fiday the 17c of ogust 2007. it is cldee.”
(Today is Friday the 17th of August. It is cloudy.) (L, 8:17)

There is an awareness of some orthographic conventions such as “ay” and “ee”, and the consonant blend “cl”. We read her message to the assembled group, and I pointed out that we need “ou” in cloudy and a “y” at the end (Obs, 8: 17). Other children, notably Kelly and Laurence, copied this model and wrote sentences about the weather as well, some on paper, some on the whiteboard.

That month she also wrote a thank-you letter to Santa after she found a Christmas card in the collage resources (Obs, 8:9). Now in her play time she was writing every day, generally single clausal comments or familiar greeting structures. She labelled the pictures of the objects she could hear in the playground, as Edward had done, on the day the student teacher took them on the listening walk. Like Edward, she wrote and drew with humour, playfully adapting dictated sentence content: “I am a fox with chickenpox” to create her own “poem”.

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The visual appearance of her texts was beginning to include some awareness of layout and audience. When she wrote a similar card to James she used a letter format, with a small picture of a rocket at the side (because James was interested in rockets). Empathy with her audience was present, and writing dominated drawing in this sample. She labelled her farm visit picture and each label was drawn in a sign box, like the signs I modelled in our dramas and dramatic play. (James, Kelly and Laurence likewise drew sign boxes in their pictures to indicate signs.) She was ready with a literary solution to the Squatter’s dilemma in a drama based on the song “Waltzing Matilda” and provided the format of the letter as well:

Lucy: Then you say ‘Please Mr. Swagman’ on a letter, ‘Please Mr. Swagman, don’t get my sheep, because we want the wool for woolly blankets.’
Self as Squatter: Okay, I’ll try that.
_I reach for a marker and a card to write on._
Self as squatter: What am I going to say, again?
Lucy, dictating slowly: Please Mr. Swagman, don’t get my farm sheep, cos I want them for woolly blankets and we want them to have babies. Get the sheep from another place and not ours. (FT, 9:6)

Lucy understood not only the visual layout of the letter, and its purpose as a genre for reconciliation and arbitration, but the appropriate literary language as well. There was no long period of incubation for writing, no traumatic hovering, as there
had been in Edward's literacy story. Lucy the writer had evolved easily from Lucy the dramatist.

**The butterfly emerges: as writer, composer and performer**

In the environment of an aesthetic pedagogy, Lucy the dramatist was continuing to develop as well. In fourth term, when we discussed the creation of a theatrical production from the “Elves and the Shoemaker” drama which been so satisfying to the cohort, Lucy came to school with a couple of pages of plans for the production. These included labelled drawings of costumes for the elves (different ones for girls and boys) and a stage set of the Shoemakers' dwelling.

![Fig. 35: Costume plans.](image)

![Fig. 36: A comment in role?](image)
The message: “The little elf loved dressing up.” (Obs, 9:19) may have referred to herself in role. The use of third person gives it a literary flavour as well, and reflects the progression into narrative form suggested by Kress (1994).

Lucy described to me the forest setting for the elves’ Christmas workshop which she could envisage and which she expected I could help her recreate. She saw it, apparently as a suitable dramatic play context for elves in which to create presents for Christmas, and as a theatrical feature of the end-of-year classroom production. She was visualising clearly and even “supposing” what else might happen in the setting, a level of imagining Cremin (1998) had observed in his research with older children (1998). I took up her idea of weaving the two elf situations together when I created the drama event with Santa, the elves and the shoemakers. Lucy often turned her creative images into art products, as well as into the ballads, dramatizations and eventually, by the end of the year, written description. Lucy’s ability to visualise, in her drama, art, song and dramatic play, had the clarity and vividness Cremin described in his research.

Fragility over home issues resurfaced in October, but often a fragile mood would disappear once Lucy was in a dramatic role again. One morning, after a teary start, she set up a show during play time, organised performers and invitations (to a “singing show tonite”), and compeered it exactly in the manner of an experienced and animated MC:

*Candice sings ‘Baa, Baa Black Sheep’ right through, at Lucy’s instigation, speeding up a bit at the end, and fairly close to the tune.*

Lucy: Now give her a round of applause.

*Some clapping.*

Lucy: Can’t hear you!

*There are more loud cheers and claps.*

Lucy: Right, our next item is …

*She has an inaudible conversation with her next performer.*

Self, observing the child’s hesitation: Are you doing an item?

Lucy: She’s doing the (inaudible)... give her a round of applause. (FT, 10:10)
Eager to support the flow of the dramatic play, and the literacy flowing from it, I adopted a co-player position by becoming one of the audience members. Tickets, signs and programme emerged from the pen of Lucy and her supporters as she went round recruiting participants, including Annie.

She included in her programme the activities of all the performers (names deleted):

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Sing!
Show in
To hire
```

Fig. 37: An ad. for the show.

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Singing
Magic
Running
Fireworks
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Fig. 38: The show list.

The words “singing”, “magic”, “running” and “fireworks” were written beside the participants’ names. The first item may be “wedding”, “reading” or even “inventing”. James contributed a sign to announce when the show had finished. Her own song was a crooning lullaby without words, which sounded rather sad, perhaps reflecting the ongoing tensions at home. Again she was the catalyst for several pieces of spontaneous literacy in this sustained event, and for the development of the shared play world. She could envisage the events of the show
and describe to each participant their role in the proceedings. Candice copied her in making name-lists, this time for computer usage. Others made name lists for birthday parties, real and imagined. On another occasion, Sally presented a show, a puppet play. She enlisted Lucy to help. Lucy instantly took on a guiding narrator role, as she had seen modelled so often in the enactments of familiar tales, to cue the actors (Obs, 11:23). In Sally’s play, the story plot was the fireman rescue of the cat up a tree, which had surfaced in Edward’s writing, and appeared in the writing and play of others in the cohort. Lucy now clearly had the phase B writing indicator: “attempts familiar forms of writing, e.g. lists, letters, recounts, stories, messages”.

Lucy had periods of fragility, but the fairy tale world of “The Elves and the Shoemaker” and her immersion in imaginative roles supported her in developing resilience, and prompted her to write that term: “I like my school very much and…” (Obs, 11:7)

![Figure 39: Comment on school.](image)

Like Edward, Lucy made a Shoe Shop sign, employing bubble-writing to emphasize the title, and some advertising points for her customers: ‘Boots, dancing shoes, very good…ad.’ (L, 11:4) Beside the boots is a set of directions using not words but arrows and images, to direct the customer to the Prep shoe-shop. These include the zebra crossing to the school, the roundabout, and arrows to the Prep classroom. Lucy remembered the complaint I had made in role as a
customer, that I didn’t know where to buy some good dancing shoes because there were no signs up advertising them. Where adults might provide an address in their advertising, Lucy felt it was appropriate to provide a map, with the arrows and visual features already familiar to her.

Both Hall and Robinson (2003) and Cremin et al. (2006) had noted a strong sense of audience, and stance and purpose as a writer, when children write in response to a dramatic context. Hall and Robinson introduced literate problem-solving situations into children’s dramatic play and Cremin et al. used process drama. Lucy’s advertisement was a response to a drama, but dramatic play was strongly interwoven into the response because the shoe shop was a focal point of her play as well. The drama provided the authentic purpose for the literacy activity, just as Hall’s problems infused into the play garage had provided authentic play purposes for children to write.

Her dramatic contributions supported the play context of “The elves and the shoemaker” but also the emerging theatrical production. Lucy had the master dramatist’s intuitive sense of symbol and ritual, as well as dramatic tension. She composed a spell for the elves, in order to open the window to enter the shoemakers’ shop. It was “Alacazoo, alacadoo!” (Obs, 10:31). She suggested a swirling entry with scarves “as if we are going through a portal” (another piece of amazing visualising and descriptive language), (Dis, t4:7), and then requested a dance for the elves to celebrate the receipt of their new clothes. It became a modified version of the dance her older sister was performing in the school musical. When we enacted “Cinderella”, and a winter ball suddenly became important for the shoemakers and the rest of the cast, as a context for wearing their new dancing shoes, Lucy drew pictures from the story, which appealed strongly to her aesthetic sense. One of these included a snippet from a poem she began to write: “The little moon is asleep.”
The ordering of the words in the sky was rather dependent on the shape of the castle, so the second line sat above the first. Her moon was indeed asleep in the picture, as Cinderella rumbled off to the ball. She used present-tense to capture the visual moment in time rather than telling a past-tense narrative. Soon after, when we enacted “The Emperor and the Nightingale” adapted from a process drama “recipe” from Neelands (1984), and I became the penitent Emperor (or Empress) who agreed to release the nightingales, it was Lucy who led the birds, in singing me back to health, which they did very sweetly, in a moment of high dramatic climax. (Obs, 11: 21)

**Butterfly in the field**

Lucy, like Edward, could move from field to field intertwining play with drama and with writing, empathising and engaging fully with my purposes for literacy and learning, and mediating these to other children. She was also now able to maintain her elf role during her play, and write consistently in role. Her attempt at a guided “Who am I?” was in role, as Edward’s had been. Again, like Edward, she wrote some of her Christmas wish list in role as an elf, and some as Lucy the child.
She asked for “elf clothes, a Barbie, a gown, a teddy, an arrow and a horse.” (L, 12:4)

In response to the question: “What did the elves do after they got their new clothes?” she wrote, as nearly as I can interpret it: “The elves went back for their dinner and for their dinner they had our brekky (breakfast)”.

The response, which switches from third person to first part-way through the sentence, may suggest that creativity could not be engaged because of the combined demands of imagining, composing and writing. Perhaps there was another factor at work in her mind; perhaps she was grappling with the notion that
what was bedtime for the elves was morning for the people in the story, who would therefore be ready for breakfast.

She made other excursions into literary language after the poem about the moon. “One day it was Christmas and snowing. ‘Ho, ho, ho,’ said Santa. I like drama.” (L, 12:10). The latter was illustrated with a Christmas tree, a table with the traditional gifts left for the midnight visitor, and Santa himself at the window. Perhaps it is the little girl waiting for her present who mentions her love of drama.

![Lucy the storywriter](image)

A miscue analysis of the words indicates a focus on the most obvious sounds, while the use of familiar genre and simplified oral structures is typical of a phase B writer. The inclusion of a piece of written dialogue, with the “said Santa”, a practice repeated in some of her other writing samples, illustrates her growing awareness of the literary language of written text forms, which Kress (1994) tells us would increasingly shape her writing. She was now working consistently in Phase B as a writer.

**Summary**

Lucy ended the year confidently and competently exhibiting a secure social identity as a writer (and dramatist), with a symbolic repertoire which she could use in a variety of situations where she chose to write. She wrote short texts which resembled the lists, greeting cards, poems, and pieces of narrative with dialogue from the literary discourse into which she was being inducted. She was highly motivated to write, doing so at every play opportunity and at home for much of her
free time. Throughout the year Lucy demonstrated a powerful connection with drama, in her play, her writing and her growing sense of herself as performing artist. She certainly earned the right to the term “master dramatist” (Creaser, 1989). She carried the “six foot tall” confidence which Vygotsky had observed in children’s play, across into her writing and mediated it to others. She sustained imaginative worlds and invited others into them. Her joy in drama extended to every artistic form. She could retell long and convoluted fairy tales and had a rich command of oral language. More than any child in that cohort, Lucy demonstrated the integration of drama, dramatic play and literacy, and a whole-hearted joy in using a new cultural tool for her own purposes. Like Edward, she took in, little by little, the fruits of the literacy orchard, and like him, in time transformed it for her own purposes. Unlike Edward, who had hovered on the brink of reading and writing for a period, anxious to get words right, Lucy plunged in, rapidly and frequently producing messages and captions without any internal pressure to capture every sound or use every convention correctly.

The flight of the butterfly: epilogue

Lucy left at the end of the year, an exquisite butterfly soaring to new fields. I was not able to interview her in early 2008 to see how she was handled the transition to Year One. Reports from her father were that she continued to thrive, with her exuberant spirit active in the new school setting. My last memory of Lucy was on the night of the school musical, in which her brother and sister were to be performing. She stood with me on the stage, staring transfixed at the massive, moonlit trees which formed the set for the production. Was she longing to be a part of the magic of the scene? Would this colourful butterfly go on to fulfil her potential as an accomplished adult, dancing, singing and acting before large audiences, composing poems and ballads, delighting in the aesthetics of every moment as audiences would no doubt delight in her?

James’ story

The Caterpillar hatches

James was the younger of two siblings. His older brother was two years ahead of
him at school. Like Lucy, he had experience in the school situation because his mother had helped consistently in the classroom when her older son began Year one. During the 2006 school year he had read emergent texts alongside the Year one children his mother was supporting. His parents were professionals with tertiary qualifications. They provided a supportive environment in which literature, science and learning were valued. He had a February birthday, which placed him in the middle of the age range of the young cohort. At the orientation session he was an observer, interested, but too shy to speak. His mother told me afterwards that she had strong reservations about his interaction with a drama-focused programme because of his shyness and reticence to move and perform in front of others. Her goals for him, written (in bullet points) at the orientation session, were:

- Have fun
- Prepare for the rigours of school life
- Socialization
- Be intellectually challenged

He had a strong naturalist bent, and according to his mother:

He's very philosophical. He wants to know where things come from and where his brain will go when he dies.
His special interests are nature and animals. His favourite book is “The wild guide to Greater Brisbane”. We’ve had to have the cover laminated, he’s just read it so much. He loves animals. (PI, t1: p.28)

Here was a child who did not instantly match my teacher disposition towards the pedagogy of drama. I wondered whether he would find a niche in this aesthetic environment, or retreat. His case study forms a contrast to the two already examined, but his response is suggestive of the relevance of dramatic approaches among children of a variety of dispositions and abilities.
“On Monday he ate through one apple…” (Carle, 1970): Aesthetic engagement

On 30th January, James brought a card replying to my welcome letter. However, his response to dramatic stimuli was very hesitant. During the first puppet drama, while Edward and Lucy were enthusiastically leading the cohort into song, movement and dialogue, James sat with his head down, his demeanour serious, and his body turned away from the action, especially when we all stood up to move with the puppets. He was a non-participant, but he did eventually agree to join the group circle (Obs, 1:30). For the whole of the first week, he hovered on the edge, not singing or joining in the movement session, but increasingly observant of the puppet action. When Charlie the puppet drew a picture of Susie, as an overture of friendship, he lay back on the floor, as if disengaging from the activity, a non-participant again, and Peter copied him. But when the puppets went around the group asking who had brown eyes like them, he held up his hand quite confidently. The next day was his birthday, which was important enough news for Peter to share it with the puppets when they appeared, but James put his head down at once when the puppet wished him a happy birthday. He did, however, join in the actions for the puppet songs then, and again sat in the group circle watching intently (Obs, 2:5). The first sign of enthusiasm and animation came when I modelled making a card for Platypus, and asked if anyone knew how to write “to”. He put his hand up, smiling. He had literacy knowledge and was happy to show it and share it (Obs, 2:6). He was moving toward participation, slowly and shyly.

Even though reticent about involvement in directed group activity, he was more ready to become a participant in dramatic play within the play space, drawn in by Lucy, after the statue drama event. He began to help her rebuild the garden (Obs, 2:13) and a friendship was initiated, which later became a literacy partnership as well, as the garden and its emerging surrounds became the play context for many occasions. He followed up a dramatization of ants in a colony (Obs, 2:19) by building his own ant colony, and Martin, who copied his actions and began to build alongside him, became his companion. Another friendship developed. Reviewing the video sequence showing the arrival of Angela the swan, I noted that he put up
his hand to ask for a puppet, when children were being encouraged to participate in the circle action (FT, 2:20). I missed the cue on that occasion, an opportunity for him to enter fully as a participant in the dramas. When children mapped and then built the bird sanctuary, he joined in the dramatic play as a keeper making play-doh snakes for the kookaburra, alongside the group, but not verbally involved in the dramatizations which ensued (Obs, 2:22).

James was not yet showing animation or apparent connectedness in his demeanour toward drama, but his active connection with the content, particularly when it came from the world of nature, was soon revealed through his writing. Warner (1997) had described participant-observers as those who took time to process information, and engaged mentally rather than verbally with the imagined world of the drama. Their engagement could often be detected by their written responses rather than their behaviour or speech. James was a participant-observer because he gradually took on the action and occasionally even the scripted words of the dramas, but began at the same time to write and draw responses, in the security of his “office” at home. His mother brought me several samples of his office responses, many of which held clues to his high involvement with the literacy and dramatic tension of the live drama and puppetry events. I was intrigued to realise that literacy responses might begin at home, and that participation could be signalled, even in young children, by written responses before they were demonstrated in oral, and physically observable, ways. At no stage through the year did he demonstrate oral fluency, yet the snippets from home and the busy school play space began to reveal his tentative engagement with the pedagogy.

“On Tuesday he ate through two pears…” (Carle, 1970): Acquiring literacy
The consultation with him in week three demonstrated that he could name several letters including those in his own name, that he liked to read and write but still identified writing with drawing to some extent. He could also recognise several numerals. He didn’t like being read to, because, his mother said, he preferred to read to himself. In the reading running record consultation (RR, 2:2, L1) he read
the basal emergent reader front to back, with left-to-right sweep and one-to-one correspondence between word pointing and voice. He used picture cues and syntax to decipher the message of the words, as Lucy had done, but may have had some awareness of the letters and sounds, because he self-corrected ‘going’ to ‘climbing upstairs’ in the sentence ‘I am climbing’. No-one else in the cohort self-corrected.

It was important for his social status to be a reader and writer like his older brother, a sentiment he expressed to his mother, who passed it on to me. He wanted to bring home “homework”, and was disappointed on day one because we hadn’t done so. I began lending him basal readers, which he eagerly engaged with (Obs, 2:28). The rest of the cohort waited until April to take books home. Writing was initially much more difficult for him, however, than reading. In the second week he grappled with the task of scribing “I am James” (Obs, 2:5). He almost gave up, because his fine motor skills were not as good as his literacy knowledge, but he persevered, with encouragement, and was very proud of his achievement. This sense of accomplishment drove him to explore other writing activities, now that his fear of failure or his reticence about the difficulty of the task was gone. Like Edward, once he could do it, he did it, often, playing at a new skill that was very satisfying, and practising the fine motor component at the same time. His mother brought in a whole alphabet, which he had traced when his mother dotted the letters out for him, also as play “homework”. She noted then in his communication book:

“He loves drawing things and labelling them… I tell him the letters to write to form the words he wants…He has also been identifying the starting letter of a lot of the words he has been using” (2:28).
He had more literacy in his symbolic repertoire than anyone else in the class when he began, so by February he was already making connections between many letters and sounds, a skill which he was able to put to use long before others did. The same day that he wrote the alphabet he drew a picture of his house with words at the top which included “My family”, “is”, “the”, and his first name and surname (suppressed) (Dis, t1:4).

The ordering is reversed, capital and lower case letters are mingled, and word spaces are only present for “is”, but the words are discernible. The house features an attic with his brother and him sleeping side by side in beds, with a big bed in the next room. One of his parents is down below, with a letter which could be ‘m’ or ‘w’ alongside. Letters from his brother’s name are in the attic room alongside the sleeping children. This picture demonstrates that writing and drawing were beginning to have a complementary place in his making of meaning, with letters and words as labels to clarify the meaning of the pictures (J, 2:28). I had drawn a
house in the first week of school when we were doing activities designed to invoke connections with the world of home and kindergarten. Perhaps he was remembering this drawing. The same day he copied the title page of a favourite book: Richard Scarry’s “Funniest storybook ever” (J, 2:28):

![Figure 46: James copying environmental print.](image)

There is a clear awareness of layout and some understanding of word boundaries in the copying of the words and picture. He was already exploring the visual appearance of texts. He managed better with the letter symbols than the picture outline. Both artefacts were in his communication book, a book providing a connection with the world of school which he saw as important for his own use and not just for his mother to write me notes. Clearly he was engaged with learning, if not readily with the action and dialogue of drama sessions.

In the drama sessions, I was modelling presentation of written dialogue in a variety of ways. Most could not access these models at first, but James could. When I drew “The Little Engine that Could” and gave my toy clown in the passenger carriage a speech bubble, he insisted that his own picture have a speech bubble as well, and was specific about its message, which was different from mine (Obs, 2:27). I threw out these “hooks” modelling more advanced literacy, in case there were children who could use them. James caught these hooks eagerly because they were in his zone of proximal development and instantly accessible. Others would require several demonstrations in order to respond. The only incubation period for James was in relation to his entry into dramatic situations, where he found that his literacy skill could contribute to the emerging drama. On his own he
could already use the models I provided. The caterpillar was already a chrysalis, and transforming into a literary butterfly, while socially he adjusted to the aesthetic pedagogy of the classroom.

The caterpillar grows: developing identity as writer and performer

James’ confidence in himself as a writer and his sense of identity and inclusion in the play worlds of the cohort converged during March. The first tentative step was the making of a sign for his block building, as he had seen me do in the first puppet dramas, six weeks before. He read my aide the message. Her written anecdote on the artefact noted that each letter was the beginning sound of a word in the message. The significant event which interwove the fields of drama, play and literacy, occurred when Lucy constructed a hotel near her world of the garden.

James, who was building independently nearby, began to help her. Lucy wanted a sign for her hotel once it was completed to her satisfaction. Lucy composed the sign: “Hotel is open” and asked James, who had already shown his competence with sign writing, to write it for her. A sentence was a challenge to James’ literacy repertoire, so he asked me, rather shyly, to help him write it (Obs, 3:1). He went on to make another sign with both their names on it, for her building. Hoping that the play would continue to develop, I gave Lucy and James’s building a “Don’t touch” sign, when everyone was beginning to pack up. Several children came to read it and discuss its significance. A third sign from James that day said “12345”. The events in the extended dramatic play period on that rainy day started a spate of “Don’t touch” signs featuring the hand icon. The following week Lucy built the hotel again, a more elaborate affair that included a pool in the courtyard in the middle (Obs, 3:5). James again worked alongside her on the construction and again was the source of writing expertise. He wrote the hotel sign again, with a warning hand so no-one would knock it over.
He began to sound out “pool” but was stumped by the /oo/ sound, and asked for help.

Kress (1997) noted that children often repeat the message of the words in their picture, when first making signs and messages, as they forge the link between picture and symbol. On that same rainy day James began to coach his friend Martin to write his name on a building, and when Martin baulked at the task, he dotted out the letters for him, as his mother had done when he first began practising writing the alphabet, and as I did for children who couldn’t yet copy (Obs, 3:5). Martin agreed to write it. James seemed to see these signs, as I had modelled them in the first puppet dramas, as symbols not just of ownership but also of power, like the maps in Goodman’s
(1990) research. He made one to exclude his brother, which in real-life situations he probably could not do, due to their age, size and comparative status (J, 3:6).

His partnership with Lucy continued. He wrote the beginning of a message “pls” for Lucy, then asked for my own spelling of “please”. When I wrote it down for him, he copied it, then Lucy or he added other letters: “ASFT”. Other children added their names and other letters on the back, along with the “Don’t touch” icon (J, 3:9).

As Lucy mentored him into shared play, he mentored Martin into literacy. When he and Martin were security guards in dramatic play together, Martin attempted another power sign: “No entry”. He had trouble, and James again tried to help him, but this time the offer was rejected (Obs, 3:12). Martin used random letters instead. James had become a model and peer tutor during play as Lucy was, but his mediation was of the literacy, where Lucy had been the leader, initially at least, mainly through drama. Their relationship was mutually supportive: she guided him into play and the necessity for signs and messages suggested by the dramas, and he guided her into the mechanics of the alphabet to use on the signs.

James led the field when it came to sounding out longer messages, and continued to involve his friends in these events. On the rainy day with the longer indoor play time, he wrote the police sign which read ‘$100 to the judge” (J, 3:22)
He sounded out “Judge” as “GAG”, and already had the sight words “to” and “the”. There was a power dynamic in this message, as well, embedded in police play. Edward had been the catalyst for the sign, when he asked for a message fining people if they knocked down his building. James observed this message: “$100 fine”, and then composed and wrote his own. Another warning the next day began “Do not…$100” with a scribbled-out hand on the back. Still another had raised the fine to $200, alongside the crossed hand icon. Another read “No Entry” at the entrance of his building construction (Obs, 3:15). Police power and authority were demonstrated again in the set of notes he brought to me in role as a police officer. “These are the details,” he said. They featured a helicopter rescue, pictures of cars and buildings and some random letters and numerals. As with Lucy and Edward, the dramatic demands of the play sometimes resulted in literate behaviours at a simpler level than he was capable of producing. Still, he identified with the social position of a police officer, as a writer of notes.

Almost daily his mother brought in snippets of writing: words such as “crash”, (Obs, 4:18). Another was a picture of a figure above a jail housing another figure, with the message “Raymond has escaped from the jail.”
Chapter 5: The Children’s Case Studies

Fig. 51: A message from the police officer.

He was still in the police officer role. He had access to other symbol systems as well, such as maps of the playground, with recognisable layout, and mathematical operations copied from his brother’s homework. Another picture which came from his office was of people (one labelled the judge or “Gaj”) standing beside some shark-infested water where a sign on two sticks reads: “No swimming”. One of the people also has a speech bubble saying “no”, written back-to-front (J, 4:30).

Fig. 52: Another sign, from the judge.

This piece of writing correlates directly with the drama about the monkey who was warned not to swim in water infested with crocodiles (Obs, 4:19), a theme repeated in the several other drama events with monkey puppets (Obs, 4:24). He had suggested the layout and then made one of the signs to use during the drama event, and actively contributed to the resolution of the plot by holding up the warning sign when the puppets came to the river. This was probably the clearest evidence of his full participation with the aesthetics, as well as the literacy, of the
pedagogy. The status of the roles, their power, and his sense of agency as a writer and saviour of puppet characters, suggest a heightened awareness of the underlying themes of the drama. They were vivid in his memory and imagination as he worked away in his office at night, reflecting on the events of the day. The dramatic situations introduced at school were becoming as meaningful to him as his interests in police, nature and Richard Scarry books.

By now fully identifying with the dramatic programme, he supported our real-life classroom goals as well. When we planned the Mothers’ Day picnic together he put a sign up on the door advertising the event for the mothers, with the time: ten o’clock (written “01, o”). The sign included the word ‘people’ sounded out as ‘pepool’ (Obs, 5:1):

![Sign](image)

*Fig. 53: A spontaneous Mother’s Day sign.*

At the end of the term when I tested the letter-sound knowledge acquired so far by the cohort, he could name each letter as well as its sound (Obs, 3:20). Most of the rest of the cohort only gave the sounds. Adams (1990) and other literacy researchers have indicated that generally, in the development of phonemic awareness, children name letters of the alphabet before the sounds. Children in my class of 2007 often gave the sound rather than the name, because the sound was the first aspect of the symbol to which they were consistently exposed. James had, by the end of term one, all the indicators of a Phase A writer.
“On Wednesday he ate through three pears…” (Carle, 1970): weaving drama, play and literacy

He was regularly and actively involved in the daily drama sessions, though not a “talker”. He had, however, taken an individual role in small group enactments of the climax of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” (Obs, 3:15), speaking a scripted sentence without embarrassment. Scripted utterances had been suggested by Warner (1997) as a support to tentative speakers, and I had often used them in puppet re-enactments of familiar nursery tales. It was easy to transfer this model into live performances, though more confronting for some of the children. He was now ready for this exposure before other peers, and confident in his general competence within the cohort. He read, incidentally, the title of the book version, without picture cues, taking his cues from the beginning sounds.

He confidently took part in a shared enactment of “The Three Little Pigs”, joining in the familiar “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff!” (Obs, 3:20) He was part of another group drama when we were teaching Monkey the rules of the jungle (Obs, 4:18) and he and Martin built zoo cages for Monkey afterwards. As in his contribution to the crocodile puppet drama, and later in the reconciliation letter from the troll to the billy goats, he liked to be the expert who provided the literacy knowledge needed in the drama situations. He offered the /th/ sound for “thank you” during the forester drama event (Obs, 5:3), when the puppet animals enlisted the children to thank the forester for leaving the trees for the animals and birds. Literacy confidence transferred into dramatic, a curious twist on the pathway the other children demonstrated. When we had the drama session about the snake trying to find bunnies that were tricking it with misleading signs, he developed his sign further. He created a picture for the right hand side of his burrow as well as the message sign “I am not in here” which was on the left. The picture featured the snake trying to find a bunny, whose ear was sticking up out of the burrow (Obs, 5:14). Pictures and alphabetic symbols complemented the clear visualisation he had of the plot of the drama event. The humour of the situation, as well as its irony, did not escape him.
He was beginning to use his literacy to lead others consistently into literate play, besides supporting other key players with literate contributions. When Rabbit the puppet was bitten by Snake and had to be rescued by a helicopter and taken to the vet, James, like Lucy, carried the vet drama into dramatic play and wrote a doctor’s report, with “snake bite” as his “details” on a clipboard. This literary model was observed and copied by others in the play space. As a palaeontologist he fully identified with the role of scientist. He drew and described finding pteranodon remains in ash, with recognisable symbols for “pteranodon” and “ash”.

He took the literacy and the scientific role from the drama into dramatic play with another piece of palaeontologist note-taking, made later, which read ‘no ash’ alongside a footprint. He continued to experiment with writing the dinosaur names. This one was “triceratops”.

Fig. 54: Notes in role as a scientist
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Fig. 55: Sounding out “triceratops”.

His skills in and out of role probably assisted Martin who wrote part of “T-rex” during that drama. James then helped build the museum to house the bones they had uncovered during the drama (Obs, 5:22). He and Martin continued the museum theme for a few days, with James eventually making the sign for it, sounding out the complex two-syllable word, which Martin copied.

Fig. 56: The museum sign.

By June he was writing instructional signs outdoors for jumping, walking and running. I tested reading levels then. Most children were still “pretending to read.” But James had made the transfer to alphabetic use in his reading. He had all the indicators now for phase B reading. His letters for the assessment in July were presented as a list, and accurately portrayed his knowledge of all the sounds I assessed, though he still had a couple of letter reversals. His mother commented at the mid-year interview:
Chapter 5: The Children’s Case Studies

I’m really happy with his progress. He’s going so well, talking about words and spelling all the time at home, and identifying words everywhere. We’ve always had a good library at home, with really good books, and he’s rediscovering them at a new level. We’ve read with them since birth. He’s very competitive, especially with Ian (pseudonym). He was so pleased to get that sports award. They have very competitive arguments at home. (PI, t2:p.28)

“On Thursday he ate through four strawberries…” (Carle, 1970): Text shaper
In July he ventured further and began experimenting with typing and researching on the computer. He was bringing complete sentences from home, some written, some typed, some illustrated and some, particularly the typed ones, unillustrated. As Kress had observed, he was multi-modal in his approach, and each form served his play purpose to respond and comment on themes of interest with spoken utterance forms or written models observed around him. Some were comments on the drama events, some were linked to real-life, such as the day and date (J, 7:25). He could now, independently, connect his first interests, science and nature, to his emerging enthusiasm as a writer. After the drama of the “Wide-mouthed frog” (Obs, 7:13) which led to the construction of the frog life cycle as a flow chart, he typed:

“Is a frog a nice Animal yes it is a nice…” (Obs, 7:14).

Fig. 57: James begins to type messages.

He was probably supported with the spelling. In November he brought in two more life cycles he had drawn up himself, and labelled, using the flow chart modelled for
the frog: one was for beans and one for snakes (Obs, 11:12). The flow-chart model had been stored in his mind and came out of incubation months later. He brought to school a fully alliterative sentence, typed with adult support when we were exploring “w” (Obs, 8:7).

The next piece of writing, again in present-tense, without illustration, and with the same use of the entry key and capitals for new lines as the frog one, read:

“The snak is in
The zoo 2007.” (Obs, 7:24)

There is a suggestion of a factual written statement connected with an awareness of time (2007), as in the daily morning session statement about the date and weather. Perhaps he remembered the newspaper with a date we had composed together at Lucy’s suggestion, after the events of the bee-keeper drama (Obs, 7:17). The next message has moved away from direct present-tense, and sounds even more like a newspaper report. The zoo theme, which emerged and re-emerged in play whenever the exotic animal puppets were brought out, prompted the message:

“The jaguar has ascaieyp
From the zoo.” (J, 7:27)
The amazing spelling of “escaped” shows a careful consideration of the long sounds in the word and an attempt to harness them with the phonetic knowledge at his disposal. It is more sophisticated than his earlier attempt at the word while he was being a police officer. The next piece of writing has detailed illustrations of a dinosaur. “Here is a coelphisi” (written some time during July). He had three attempts at drawing it and labelled two of them.

Again he was using language which is more common in written than spoken discourse: the somewhat stilted sentence form of a basal reader or early factual text. His mother noted on the sample that his older brother was learning about dinosaurs and writing a project about one. James copied his brother’s “homework” with work of his own devising, perhaps in role as his older brother.
By now, nine other children had produced independent sentences. James was beginning to attempt longer genre, “books”, and to use his play time at school as well as his home office and computer. The first “book” had the title “Fish Book” (Obs, 8:29) and was written the same day that Edward wrote his lion book. One may have given the authoring idea to the other. James’s book reflects two drama events which had deeply influenced him, the zebra escape and the fish rescue in “Ollie the octopus”. One page continues the zoo escape, and on the next page he wrote “fish are in danger” with a fish drawing at the bottom.

He was grappling with the digraph /sh/ and orthographic spelling patterns such as “er”, “ar”, and “oo”, in writing these statements, and his attempt at “escaped” is very phonetic. Another connection with fish in danger had occurred when we dramatized a whale story and read about endangered whales earlier in August. Writing has definitely taken over from drawing in this sample and the sentence about fish is a generalisation typical of information texts. The day in which Edward and James wrote books together was, like the earlier long rainy day with extended indoor play, a time when I looked around the room during playtime and note that almost everyone was spontaneously writing. That day of drenching rain also prompted James to put up a warning sign in the playground to caution children to keep out of the mud and wipe their feet. Charlotte had written one the same day warning children to keep out of the puddles.
His social identity as a writer extended from doctor, vet, police officer, science reporter, and author, to strong supporter of concern for his own school community. But the shy, reticent little child still lurked behind the confident drama participant and writer. The next genre he attempted was a letter, directed to his mum, done at the writing table when the student teacher was doing her practice teaching. The play envelope has his name on it and is sealed with play stickers. Inside, the letter reads:

“To Mum
I want you to stay.” (Obs, 9:10)

The sensitive child who found it difficult to speak in front of other people could pen this poignant little note to his mother, during a period of uncertainty, perhaps, when I was sharing the teaching role with a student. There is an emerging awareness of
punctuation in the presence of the two large full stops, and he is fully aware of the purpose for writing letters. During the same month a farm visit and the singing of nursery rhymes provoked this attempt at writing a poem (J, 9:13). Again he was exploring the application of blends, digraphs and long vowel sounds:

Fig. 64: “Baa, Baa, Black sheep….goat”.

The butterfly emerges

By the end of term 3 James had demonstrated all of the indicators for Phase B (experimental) writing. He could write independent sentences of his own, with punctuation, and attempt a variety of genre, also independently. The fairy tale world of “The Elves and the Shoemakers”, despite his focus on nature and science, engaged him fully during fourth term. He began searching for all the stories we read, enacted, and discussed, amongst his own resources at home, and brought in his own Hans Anderson compilation to share (Obs, 11:14). His relationship with Lucy as another elf in the play context supported their mutual growth. When Lucy set up her show (Obs, 10:10) he assisted with programme-writing and made the sign afterwards to announce that the show was over.
He wrote his own “Thank you” letter in role as an elf to the shoemakers and their wives: “Dear mums and shoemakers, Thank you for the clothes and the shoes.” He brought his letter to the next rehearsal of the play.

The letter featured himself as an elf at the window waving farewell as he left (J, 11:2). Again the writing demonstrates engagement with drama as well as literacy. He was confidently attempting difficult words like “shoemakers”, including all syllables and the long sound /ai/ as well as using the full stop at the end. In role as an elf he made a series of pictures of elves at different activities (Obs, 11:6). They were possibly “details” of the story events, like his police and doctor “details” earlier. Like Lucy and Edward he was very much the elf character while he drew and wrote during dramatic play times and writing response sessions. He drew a
design of the shoe shop and a home for the elves (Obs, 11:21). He learnt the elf dance without qualms about movement and dancing. He performed his role as an elf confidently, including some of the shared dialogue, when the shoemaker and his wife left the elves clothes and shoes (Dis, t4:w10).

His final list to Santa (J, 12;4) shows the same confidence and independence with writing long and complex words, as in the “thank you” letter earlier that term. Unlike Lucy and Edward, however, he was himself during the writing:

![Image](image.png)

Fig. 67: James’s wish list.

Words like “remote control cars”, “nintendos” and “Mars machine” did not daunt him, and “books” was a request which, as with Peter, reflected the love he continued to have for knowledge and literature, and which the climate of the classroom had fostered. He showed Martin how to write some of the words on his list, so Martin has a similar, but not identical, wish list. Yet James’s mother noted a continuation of the separation anxiety I had seen a couple of times during the early part of term four. Perhaps the thought of moving on to a new classroom disturbed him. Perhaps there was some other problem he was too shy to share.

**The butterfly flies on to a new field: outcomes and outlook**

James’s butterfly hatched early from the cocoon and he achieved a high level in text use and symbolic repertoire. James probably made the highest literacy
progress of the cohort that year, showing some "early writing", or Phase C, indicators (Education Department of Western Australia, 1995):

5. experiments with words drawn from language experience activities
7. attempts to use some punctuation

He was writing three-or-four line reports about dinosaurs and other factual statements about nature. He had adopted the language of written discourse and no longer depended on drawings for his visualisation, though he continued to enjoy drawing as a mode of response and expression.

Epilogue
I interviewed James when he began Year One. This is the first time we hear his voice distinctly. In none of the film transcripts is there a clear improvisational contribution from James. At Prep, apart from requests for help or the occasional brief snippet of information, he had been very reticent to speak. At home his mother painted a different picture of his character, chatty and ready to question and interact. Because this conversation clearly demonstrates the confident voice of James, beginning not with my question but his own proud statement, I include the interview in its entirety:

James: I went to a library in (town name suppressed) and got "Captain Underpants" out. I can read it.
Self: That’s great! What can you remember about Prep?
James: Playing inside…you reading stories…the little chicks...doing the work, doing “s”.
Self: What was the best things you did in Prep?
James: The chicks.
Self: What things didn’t you like?
James: Nothing.
Self: What do you do in Year one?
James: Lots of work. We’re learning “a” and “i”.
Self: Do you like to write?
James: Yeah.
Self: What do you like to write?
James: Little books. My brother teaches me how to write.
Self: Do you like to read?
James: Yep. I can read level 14. I can read "Captain Underpants".
Self: Do you like reading or writing most?
James: Writing.
Self: Is there anything else you can remember?
James: Yeah. I liked doing “The Elves and the Shoemaker”…

He started looking away, perhaps feeling intimidated by continued questioning, so I stopped (CI, 08:5).

He was self-assured as a reader and writer, and happy in his memories of being a performer. He still followed the modelling of his older brother. There are indications that his sustained delight in writing was supported by the models I had given, and he was certainly finding great pleasure now in his reading. The memory of the live hatching chicks was obviously a connection with his love of all things natural, a love I had attempted to harness in many of the drama events and puppet plays. He remembered work and playing with pleasure, but could not explicitly name “drama” as an activity in the play space. I wondered in my journal at the end of the year:

There were children like James, Laurence and Jerry who would have responded well to an inquiry-based approach emphasising mini-beasts or sea creatures, but James and Laurence were very responsive in the drama as well…Perhaps I would have stimulated them more if I had done a straight science investigation but I would have lost a lot of other people in the process. (Dis, t4:w10)

Summary
James overcame an initial reticence with dramatic activity and was soon able to integrate the three fields. Like Lucy, he was able to lead others, such as Martin, across boundaries to new fields of learning. His transition to early reading and
writing was seamless and enthusiastic. Supported by his friendships, James could make use of dramatic social contexts to enter literate roles, which he sustained in quiet reflective settings such as his home “office”. He could peer-tutor his friends with the literacy that was at his finger-tips. He was never a fluent “talker” in drama sessions in the Prep year, but he processed everything, participated quietly, connected with all the themes we explored and strove to fly as high as his older brother. His story demonstrates that the privileging of drama and play was successful in supporting the writing development of one who was initially affronted by such an active and interactive approach. He became a strong participant in the world of the classroom, with all its practices and purposes.

**Martin’s story**

The final case study is very different again, the story of a child with some learning difficulties, and a visual impairment which was not diagnosed till the following year, who appeared to be empowered by the drama pedagogy during the span of the year even though, as a writer he did not become an independent soaring butterfly.

**The Caterpillar hatches**

Martin was a small stocky boy with a February birth date, which positioned him alongside James in the middle of the age-range of the cohort. He had three older brothers and at that time, one younger brother; another was born later that year and another in 2009. I don’t remember his responses to the “Three Bears” drama at the orientation day, except that he enjoyed the singing beforehand. His mother wrote several aspirations for his Prep year:

- Improvement with speech and language
- ability to recognise numbers and letters
- social development
- increased attentiveness
- interest in music and drama
- fine motor development
Hers was one of the most comprehensive responses to my “goals and aspirations” request. It indicated her strong commitment to her children’s learning and development.

On the first day of school, Martin resisted the introduction of rules and routines such as tidying up and sitting with the group on the mat at dismissal time. Cooperation with the rules and structures of the group ceased to be a problem after the first week; he adjusted to the expectations of the classroom and built up a good relationship with myself and my aide. The initial interview with his mother included a comment on behaviour; she had observed a change in the first two weeks:

Mum: There’s been a big improvement in his behaviour since he started here. I took him to the supermarket just now, and he didn’t throw any tantrums or pull things off the shelves. He’s really growing up.
Self: What were his growth milestones like?
Mum: He walked at fourteen months. That’s pretty normal. The speech therapist thought there was a maturational delay in his speech. That’s got better in the last few weeks as well. He loves music and dance and singing. His older brothers both learn piano. (PI, t1:p.26)

His responsiveness to music was flagged here, as well as the learning issues he might demonstrate, because he was already receiving speech therapy. Becoming a co-operative and responsible class member would be important for his engagement with learning in the new environment.

“On Monday he ate through one apple…” (Carle, 1970): aesthetic engagement
Martin was one of many who engaged immediately with the music and the action of the puppets. He was very responsive to the singing and joined in all the movement of the puppet songs, smiling as he did so. His immediate and enthusiastic cooperation within the context of the drama and music were in marked contrast to his initial reaction to authority in the real world. He was a full participant except
when the content became inaccessible to him, as when I introduced the writing of Wombat’s name during the puppet event in week one. He lost interest in the activity, even though some letters from his own name were involved. He demonstrated his animation and connectedness with the dramatic action by frequently affirming and echoing the puppet’s words and mimicking its actions. For instance, he stood up ready for action, when Vincent stepped into the drama to operate the Platypus puppet, who was ringing Wombat.

   Self as SFX: Ring, ring.  
   *Vincent moves immediately to help Platypus answer.*  
   Self out of role: Annie, can you help Platypus answer that?  
   *Vincent is already in role with the puppet. He takes the phone. Annie sits down again.*  
   Vincent as Platypus: Hullo.  
   *Martin gets up to help.*  
   Self as Wombat: Oh, Platypus, I was wondering if I could come over and have a cup of tea?  
   Martin, in role as Platypus: ‘es.  
   Vincent, in role as Platypus, holding phone: Okay.  
   Self as Wombat: What time?  
   Vincent as Platypus: Six o’clock.  
   *Martin is up on his knees, very close to Wombat, watching very intently.*  
   Self as Wombat: Okay.  
   *(FT, 1:31)*

After the next drama session, when the puppets Charlie and Susie were first taken into home corner (Obs, 2:1) Martin was one of the children playing there, alongside Lucy, Mary, Candice, Vincent and Sally. The puppets were fed porridge and developed sore tummies and chickenpox. Martin contributed the domestic action of stirring pots and distributing porridge, playing alongside other children, without verbal interaction.
In the puppet drama in which I drew a picture of Susie, Martin contributed a brief connected phrase:

Peter: Do you know what, Susie? It's someone's birthday, today.
Michael: It's James's.
Self as Charlie puppet: James's? Happy birthday, James.
Self as Susie puppet (on other hand): Happy birthday, James.
James hangs his head.
Self as Charlie: And how many is he?
Chorus of voices: Five.
Self as Susie: How old are all of you?
Mixed chorus: Four. Five.
Martin: Me four.
Self to puppets: Some are four and some are five. (FT, 2:4).

When the puppets introduced “Hide and seek” and Platypus said she was covering her eyes, Martin closed his as well, again identifying with and mimicking the action, in the manner typical of younger children, rather than watching and reacting to it, as most of the group were doing. The next time the puppets were brought to home corner (FT, 2:14), when I was encouraging the writing of a shopping list, Martin was there again, making porridge in a pot on the stove. I asked him what he wanted to buy for dinner, and he stood, undecided, with his hands in the air till Connor offered him some porridge to eat. He sat down beside me and the puppets and mimed eating porridge. He watched attentively when Candice wrote an “s” and some letters from her name on the list. Then he began to join in the dialogue:

Martin: Me want some bread.
Candice: Bread, okay.

She continues writing letters and scribble on her shopping list.
Self: Connor, put some porridge on Edward's plate. He likes it too.
Martin: And me want some too.
Candice: Anything else? (FT, 2:14)
He used the "me" grammatical structure most of the year, and once James and he began to play together, James affected the same dialect, much to his mother's consternation. Martin took note of Edward's switch to a police role later in the play but continued with domestic chores alongside Connor. His dramatic play was very connected to familiar domestic situations. Martin's engagement in the initial puppet dramas is evidence of the broad appeal the puppetry had, to the very able children who could contribute themes and dialogue to the improvisation, and to those with more limited oral skills. Martin often contributed a simple personal statement during or in response to the dramas, responses which indicated the connection the drama situations were having with his own experience.

He and James began to play together during the follow-up dramatic play after the ant drama event (Obs, 2:19). Martin assisted James in constructing an ant colony from blocks, for the ants they had made out of egg-cartons. The friendship became a significant support to both of them. Martin encouraged James by his example of participation in the drama sessions and singing, and James was often Martin's peer tutor in literacy tasks and literacy play.

Martin volunteered frequently for active roles with puppets, such as ringing up, bandaging sick animals, and drawing and making a crocodile cage for the Sanctuary where Angela the swan was to become an ailing resident. He became one of the birds in the sanctuary after the children had had the role of vets and park rangers, and flew about the room with play wings, without using dialogue (Obs, 2:22). He could tell me, though, that he was a turtle bitten by a crocodile, on the day that I asked everyone to describe the animal they were and the scenario which necessitated their vet visit (Obs, 2:26). He had James as his doctor partner that day, though they didn't swap roles as everyone else did. Perhaps James doubted Martin's ability to contribute doctor behaviours and dialogue, or perhaps he was reticent himself about taking a sick animal role. Perhaps he wanted the dominant position. Martin drew James into the "grab" game I used as a partner-finding warm-up for some of the drama sessions, giving James the confidence to join in the rest of the movement. From then on, whenever we played drama games he always chose Martin as his partner. Negotiating and discussing co-construction
of shapes in the grab game was beyond Martin's oral skills at that time, and he may not have been aware of how two people could form one shape together, but he watched my modelling with a partner and began to copy the ideas, alongside James.

Verbal negotiation proved difficult for Martin all year, but the drama situations gave him confidence to speak in role much more readily than in real-life contexts.

    Self: What animals might Angela meet in the Sanctuary?
    Edward: Ducks, 'cos usually we got to feed ducks.
    Self: Yes we do.
    Several voices: I've seen ducks at the zoo.
    Self: Vincent what do you think might be there?
    Vincent is stuck for words.
    Voice from the floor: Crocodiles.
    Martin, insistently: Me got crocodile. Me got crocodile.
    (FT, 2:21)

The oral language he mimicked flowed over into his dramatic play gradually through the year. He would describe his roles in simple “me”-prefaced utterances such as: “Me am the tortoise. Me am the tortoise” when we enacted “The Hare and the Tortoise” (FT, 2:28). Likewise, he insisted firmly: “Me a little pig. Me in the house” (FT, 3:13), when I asked children to choose roles for “The Three Little Pigs”. He was able to take on Father Bear’s role in the teddy drama in March (Obs, 3:14), following the action suggested by my narration, and could repeat the scripted sentences, “Someone’s been eating my porridge!”, “Someone’s been sitting in my chair!” and “Someone’s been sleeping in my bed!” As with James, the familiar words were accessible to him and did not stretch his oral confidence. They opened doors into wider dialogue as his language competence improved.

Every drama session ended with a password sentence which children had to repeat in order to open an imaginary boom gate which was the transition ritual into the “Munch and Crunch” (morning fruit) time. By the end of March, Martin could manage to repeat these sentences, which were generally fairly simple statements
in present or past tense, though he had difficulty if I added extra phrases and adjectives to stretch their memories and extend their expressive language. The “Noah’s Ark” drama (Obs, 3:1) resonated with his experience, clarifying and reinforcing a narrative with which he was familiar, so that he could paint a clearly representational response to it later, and go on to describe the features of his picture: the rain, rainbow, storm and boat shape. Drama situations were supporting his narrative comprehension and production and his fluency. They may have been helping him with his access to picture book language as well. But I wondered whether the pedagogy would lead him into literacy awareness and practice. It was a while before I saw demonstrations of alphabetic transfer, though play mimicry of literary behaviours was emerging.

“On Tuesday he ate through two pears” (Carle, 1970): acquiring literacy
Martin recognised at least the first letter of his name on the first day, because he confused his name with others starting with ‘M’, a sub-indicator observable in Phase A readers. Like Edward and James, he could not write his name. My interview with Martin indicated some other letter recognition (two letters from his name) but no numeral recognition, though he knew how old he was. He could turn the pages front to back in a basal reader, but did not point to the words, reading the pictures instead. He said he liked to read and write, however, like many of the children, he identified drawing with writing. A speech pathologist’s report later in term one confirmed that his oral language was delayed, in areas of both receptive and expressive vocabulary, grammar and speech sounds. He had been seeing a speech therapist while at kindergarten. Fine motor skills were immature, and it was a month before he could write his whole name, as capital letters, not lower case. Cutting was as difficult as writing and drawing, and he was very challenged by encountering “s” as the first letter the class were learning to shape. Numerals “2” and “3” were just as challenging. He persevered with these tasks very cooperatively and was excited when he could do them unaided.

A significant moment in literacy awareness came in early March when James was making signs during play time and persuaded Martin to write one with his own
name on it. Martin had made a sign before; he had taken up my “hand with a cross” icon, and put one on a building, and had also made a sign which read “iiioiott” (M, 3:5):

![Fig. 68: Martin’s first sign](image)

James wanted him to write his name on a sign to assert joint ownership with him in a structure they had built. He even began dotting out the letters for him, which provoked Martin into trying it on his own (Obs, 3:5). Martin began to show great interest in writing signs, at school and at home (according to his mother). The mediation of literacy through his friendship with James helped build a connection with the literate model of the puppet dramas.

He was often one of the children observed in the filming of dramatic play situations, busy with a whiteboard marker and a piece of card. His signs continued to feature “oioi” and letters from his name, which was very important to him once he recognised and could copy some of it (Obs, 3:12). One of the signs he attempted was intended as a “No Entry” sign for James, and as such he would not accept any help from his friend.

His stance as a play writer was strong. He was beginning to engage with the alphabetic symbols, particularly those from his name, a process Clay had observed (1975). When Nellie Nurse tested letter and sound knowledge (Obs, 3:19), he knew two of the sounds, which were also in his name, the ones he had recognised but not recalled in the first consultation in February. He began writing letters on the pavement in chalk, coached again by James, during outdoor play (Dis, t1:w9).
Martin could not keep up with word-blending activities when we embarked on them after the introduction of a number of sounds; he was still connecting letters with initial sounds (Dis, t2:w5). Nevertheless he copied other children’s effort enthusiastically, particularly those of James, when we began to blend words during some focused teaching sessions (Obs, 5:3). He copied Edward in constructing a cardboard computer with a keyboard labelled with letters, and was able and keen to shape several letters on it (Obs, 5:1). He could recognise colours and numerals to 5 when I checked this knowledge the same day. Martin was progressing into literate awareness, at his own pace. His friendship with James continued to be a significant support and catalyst to his learning. After a dinosaur drama which followed a storytelling session in which I used potatoes to stamp footprints, James made signs on his own story map: “river” and “volcano”. Martin tried to copy him and used some random letters to represent his signs. These observations demonstrated that, by April, he had all the indicators for Phase A reading and writing.

The mediation of expertise in the drama events was supporting his belief in himself as a writer, even if he often used random symbols. He saw himself as a competent writer in his play at home, as he did at school. His mother reported lots of name-writing and signs being made. He was demonstrating awareness of the alphabet in his play writing. He had begun to add a copied “Don’t touch” message to his hand icon signs. The next step into literacy was to ask for the sounds for a word he wanted to write: “eagle”. When scaffolded with a visual cue and action for each
letter, he wrote “egl” for a sign on his cage at the zoo jointly constructed by James and himself (Obs, 4:19). I have photographed it attached to the popsicle stick that held up the sign. Many of the children’s signs were made in this way.

The zoo was built after the drama event of “The monkey and the crocodiles”, when the puppets were left out for children to use. James helped build the eagle cage, and when Martin made the sign, James came to sound it out and read it. Again the drama session and the dramatic play involving a supportive friendship wove together to provide a context and purpose for Martin’s entry into literacy.

Other models of literate practice were gradually accessible to him. I had made a scaffolded and modelled card in the puppet/live drama about Charlie going bush, and the response seemed to incubate for a few weeks, finally coming out in his play. He attempted a letter to his mum (Obs, 5:22), though he found it difficult to track the letters when I gave him a message to copy. Another card was written to Edward (Obs, 5:29). It was a page of random letters and when asked, he wasn’t exactly sure what they said. Another piece of writing (Obs, 6:1) began as a “book” like the ones he saw Edward and James making, then became a set of instructions for Vincent’s snake, which was hypnotising monkeys after the puppet drama of “Monkey and the rules of the jungle”. There was a plentiful stack of small white cards which were used whenever I was modelling signs and messages. These were readily available to children. They were used constantly throughout the year, often with marker pens, and formed the basis of my daily written data collection after play sessions. Because I used the cards indiscriminately for so many
purposes, it was not particularly clear to children that I was writing in different text styles on the same materials. Martin and some of the other children found it hard to distinguish between a list, greeting card or warning sign.

Despite confusion about text forms, Martin was beginning to understand that alphabetic symbols were important in creating messages. My goal in the monkey drama had been to encourage meta-cognition about learning and memorizing, as Monkey laboured to remember and recite the rules of the jungle, making many errors along the way. Some of the children, particularly Vincent and Annie, took up this teaching-learning model for memorizing important rules, and mimicked it in their play with the puppets. For Martin it was the frequent repetition of the sign-modelling which was important in the activity.

The next piece of modelling which he was able to access and use immediately was note-taking, this time on A-4 paper on a clipboard, during the drama event of the palaeontologist investigation. Martin wrote “T-rex” as a label on his drawing (Obs, 5:22). I had guided the sounding out of the word, “thinking aloud” as I wrote it, in role in the drama. I had mediated the expectation of literacy competency as Miller did in her zoo modelling (2007) during drama and dramatic play sessions. Martin believed he was competent to write, in role, a label for the fossil he was discovering in the ash (M. 5:22) Perhaps he copied my written model as a scaffold for his own emerging knowledge of the letter/sound connections. Perhaps he copied one of the more competent children, not James this time, who wrote “pteranodon”.
Cremin *et al.* (2006) had identified dramatic tension, emotional engagement and incubation as three factors that are present when drama connects with writing. When the palaeontologists responded in role, there was no incubation period as there had been in most of the children’s writing responses up until that period. For the first time I was expecting them to write alongside me within the drama session itself. There was the larger-than-life expectation, that, with the high status of being a palaeontologist, one could do the things palaeontologists do, including writing observations. Carrying his role on into dramatic play, Martin was involved in the establishment of the dinosaur museum, confidently copying the museum sign James made (Obs, 5:23). In role in the “monkey tales” events, he could copy a whole sentence to warn animals to keep away from the crocodile:

![Image of a handwritten sign reading “it is not a log”]

*Fig. 72: Warning: “It is not a log”.*

He carried this new-found skill into the writing of signs for the obstacle course he
Chapter 5: The Children’s Case Studies

had helped to construct (Obs, 6:4). He could write the sounds he heard in a word, but needed help to read a sign back, because he found the visual connection difficult. Although he had the first insight that Stahl (2006) identifies from his own and the research of Chall (2006): the insight that writing needed to include alphabetic symbols, he did not quite have the second: the connection of the visual with the auditory, except for a few letters. The kinaesthetic and musical cues provided in the phonics programme I was using assisted his auditory memory, but visual difficulties impeded his progress.

When he participated in the drama event of Ollie the octopus (Obs, 6:5), he went on during dramatic play to copy his own message completely: “I am in a trap.” He read it back to me from memory, with pointing and forward sweep of his finger, not quite achieving one-to-one correspondence between the visual word and his voice. Again, the drama session, with the model of other competent children reading the message and saving Ollie’s friend, provided a powerful stimulus for him to believe he could read, as well as write, a whole sentence. He and James continued their own adventure, finding a useful message in a bottle, and rescued Owen from a trap of their own devising.

In the dramatic play after the underwater puppet drama of “Urashima Taro” in June, when the boys built a palace but excluded the girls, I had to help them negotiate, with a letter of request for inclusion. The boys finally agreed to make a door in their palace wall. Martin attempted to sound out a sign, “door” (Obs, 6:15), for the palace, coming to me for help with the letters. There had been no literacy modelling in the initial puppetry, but the drama session provided the play world context of a palace under the sea, which included nearly the entire cohort, and into which I stepped as a co-player delivering a purpose for literacy. A letter of negotiation might be outside Martin’s range of production, but he could certainly contribute a “door” sign above that important symbol of inclusion, to allow mermaids and princesses access into the play.

In July, when I tested sound knowledge for the first twenty letters, Martin could
write most of them, but could not produce the sounds or letter names when shown the image of the letter. His mother was, however, very pleased with his progress. She expressed this at the second interview:

He's just improved so much in behaviour at home. He's always drawing and writing. Everything is so much more peaceful at home. His grandmother noticed it. He writes letters he knows...
His speech is improving, he's sounding out the beginnings and endings of words. He even says "I..." instead of "me did it", sometimes. All my children started off talking that way. He's reading a lot. (PI, t2:p.26)

He was improving in oral language as he strove to communicate with James in his dramatic play as well as in his scripted roles in nursery tale enactments. McNaughton (2002) indicates the effectiveness of repetition and recitation of texts to increase comprehension and memory (p.146), and Martin certainly gained in confidence as he took on scripts that he remembered well.

"On Wednesday he ate through three plums..." (Carle, 1970): connecting with the visual appearance of texts
His first "book" had begun as a set of cards taped together, with lots of random letters on its cover and his name (M, 6:1). There were odd letters here and there on the other pages. On the back was a figure that may have been a robot or "Ben Ten", a media character. Martin showed some awareness that books have title pages, words and pictures. He was copying writing behaviours of James, Edward and Laurence, who were all making "books" in their play time. By July he could track some of his own writing, with one-to-one correspondence, on a poster he made of a lost joey, after the drama event of "The forester" (Obs, 7:24). The power of the dramatic rescue cued his memory of the written words. He did not transfer the same skill in tracking words to reading the basal readers. Like his mother, I was becoming quite hopeful about his progress. I made this comment in my journal: "Martin has moved beyond writing a string of letters to sounding out with support when he gives people messages or makes books" (Dis, t2:10). I was hopeful that the skill and confidence he exhibited in the drama events and dramatic
play would transfer over more consistently from the play world to the real. In play he “stood a head taller” but he would rarely attempt the same cognitive processes during prosaic real-world tasks. He was definitely aware now that literacy involved purposeful arrangements of letters to represent sounds and construct words. But he was not, as researchers of the progress of literacy have noted (Landry & Smith, 2001), consistent in the use of alphabetic principles when creating play texts, and his letter/sound knowledge was still shaky.

**Struggling with the symbolic repertoire**

After the holiday break, when given a word-building task, he reverted to writing random letters again, in both dramatic and real-world contexts (Obs, 8:7, 20, 22). He could not yet write a whole sentence from dictation and was unsure of word boundaries. He had demonstrated that he could track the beginnings of words, in a dictated word or sentence (Obs, 7:31). Making words with magnet letters seemed to help his visual recognition (Obs, 8:22) but did not transfer across to other reading and writing (RR, 8:8, L1) as it had with Edward. But in dramatic play he asked to sound out “Mum” and “snowman”, and made another card for his mum (M, 8:29) long after the Charlie puppet drama session. The same day he wrote a whole sentence with word breaks, with adult support: “Now I can fly.” Afterwards he could not tell me what it said. The written utterance was ironic for my struggling little caterpillar, because so much of the process into literacy was yet ahead of him before he could take flight as a butterfly.

His responses continued to elicit hope alternating with discouragement, for him, and for me as his teacher. In response to the student teacher’s stimulus of flowers in a vase, he made a picture of a sunflower and labelled it with help (Obs, 9:4). He spontaneously sounded out and then blended a word in a sentence he was reading (Obs, 9:12), and I began to anticipate a Eureka moment in literacy progress as there had been for Edward, Candice and Annie. But during fourth term there was a period of ill-health which resulted in long absences, and he seemed to go backwards in his grapho-phonic skills. He also began to have separation anxiety (Obs, 9:17, 10:8), which may have linked to the ill-health, to
James’s anxiety at the same time, to the dual teaching role I was sharing with my student teacher, or to anxiety about learning expectations.

He managed part of a sentence describing his role as one of the poultry in an enactment of “Chicken-Licken” (Obs, 10:9). He seemed to sound out words when the children drew and wrote about the pet parade. Perhaps he just adroitly copied James (M, 10: 11). I assigned him to a small group revisiting the basic letters and sounds and blending simple words, but there was no demonstrable progress. When Lucy ran her show, and James and Edward were involved in the programmes and ticketing, he wrote some random letters and then began to copy people’s names for the performance, as James was doing on his programme alongside details of their performance (Obs, 10:11). Again I was hopeful. Names were a good introduction to grapho-phonic understandings, and other children in the class such as Candice, had gone on from names to writing other words. When I attempted a “Who am I?” writing activity, which several of the children managed well and which some connected to their roles in “The Elves and the Shoemaker”, Martin would not even attempt to copy the sentences we had jointly composed (Obs, 11:8). The task was far beyond his comprehension and tracking skill and served no authentic purpose for him.

His elf sentence (M, 12:1), his letter to Santa (M, 12:3) and his wish list for Christmas (M, 12:4) all show evidence of improved fine motor skills and a beginning awareness of word spacing.
All are copied or heavily scaffolded, with individual child or adult support. He could copy and sometimes read back a sentence but not compose and then write. His wish list is not entirely copied from James, even though James offered to help him. It includes “Spiderman, war machine and kite”, as well as “books” and “Ben 10”. 
He was clear about personal choices for his list and persisted with long words such as “war machine” with adult support when the task had more authentic purpose for him.

**Waiting for the cocoon and the butterfly**

Martin finished the year still at emergent or role play writing level in relation to the developmental continuum. He did not make a transition to experimental writing even though he was highly motivated through the drama modelling and supported by his family, peers and other significant adults in the Prep. His demonstration of Phase B writing indicators was inconsistent from week to week. He had engaged fully with the dramatic pedagogy and knew that the writing he attempted had authentic purposes for his play and real life. But the mechanics were still very difficult for him and he did not achieve enough automaticity in the tasks of literacy that year to be able to read or create his own independent messages.

His friendship with James, which involved significant peer-tutoring, was instrumental in his progress into engagement and motivation as a learner, alongside his heightened sense of competence during the dramatic situations, including play. He saw himself as a real part of a community of learners in the classroom except when he was unwell or the tasks became too difficult. His
progress was steady, but the cocoon was not spun, nor the butterfly transformed, during that year. His mother was, however, encouraged by the progress he made, especially in his oral language and behaviour. “I'm so happy with his progress. He knows so much compared to his brothers who didn’t have anything when they started school” (PI, t3.p.26).

Martin gave me these succinct responses to the interview at the beginning of 2008. As with laconic James, I have given the interview in full, because his oral contributions to the drama improvisations during 2007 were difficult to capture:

Self: What do you remember about Prep?
Martin: Having fun…playing inside…it was raining…
Self: What was the best thing you did in Prep?
Martin: Playing…don't remember.
Self: What do you do in Year One?
Martin: Do work…draw pictures and write…
Self: Do you like to write?
Martin: Yes.
Self: What do you like to write?
Martin: To my buddies.
Self: Did you send them a letter?
Martin: Yes. He lives in the North Pole.
Self: Do you like to read?
Martin: Yes. Reading books. I can read your writing.
Self: Do you remember “The Elves and the Shoemaker”?
Martin: Yes. We sleeped and we waked and we maked shoes.
Self: Do you like year one?
Martin: Yes and I like Prep. (CI, 08:10)

Summary

Martin’s story illustrated the power of the dramatic pedagogies to engage and support writing in role. He wrote with enthusiasm during drama and dramatic play events. This confidence and enthusiasm occasionally translated into confidence in
out-of-role literacy tasks, but often he shrank from the mechanical demands of writing in these contexts. He had happy memories of his Prep year, even though he could not put many of his memories into words. Like all of the children, he remembered the drama sessions as “playing” together, merging seamlessly into dramatic play. He did not look with disfavour on formal schoolwork - he had made that transition comfortably - but as I watched his movement across the fence into the high-paced pastures of Year One learning, I did so with feelings of anxiety and foreboding.

**Key findings from the children’s case studies**

My focus in the four case studies presented above was to discover what happened to particular children’s writing development when a pedagogy privileging drama and dramatic play, supported by the explicit teaching of the discrete elements of writing, was applied. The analyses presented across this chapter outline the specific details of how these children progressed as individuals in response to this approach, to address the first research question:

*What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?*

These findings may be summarised as:

1. *Children became engaged and motivated writers*
2. *Children became productive, persistent and in most case, competent writers*
3. *Children became more competent with narrative comprehension and production*
4. *Children’s production flowed from one medium to another, supporting and demonstrating their narrative competence*
5. *Children became secure in roles and aware of audience in drama and writing*
6. *Children developed in their ability to visualise*
7. *Children’s oral language improved substantially*
In the section below, the findings suggested by the four case studies presented in this chapter will be examined in turn, with discussion of these supported by examining the relevant research literature. The last two findings, in relation to visualisation and oral language, while not directly correlated with writing production, are both necessary precursors to the active process of writing.

1. **Children became engaged and motivated writers**

   Engagement and motivation are related concepts and within this study, the cases reported here, together with the material outlined within the self-study, suggest that the children were engaged by the literacy modelling, puppetry and process drama approaches and as a result were motivated to write, frequently, and for some, almost obsessively, as they explored this exciting new cultural tool. Over and over again, the cases outlined here suggest that writing was an activity that was interesting, exciting and purposeful. They wrote programmes, warnings, labels, signs, tickets, messages, poems, certificates, snippets of stories and factual information. Children also wrote teacher-guided responses to drama sessions with enthusiasm, and for most, consistent confidence. Their motivation during that year constantly amazed and encouraged me.

   Engagement has been shown to be crucial for effective teaching/learning situations (Hattie, 2003, Kauchak & Eggen, 2007). In relation to early childhood classrooms, Neuman and Roskos (1992) and Morrow (1990) found that children engaged with considerable play literacy when this was provided in the environment, but more particularly when it was modelled by the teacher as co-player. The studies of Hall and Robinson (2003), and Dutton (1991), support the inclusion of child purposes and dramatic situations to engage children and motivate literacy in the early primary school environment. Confident and enthusiastic engagement with writing, within process drama, was also a finding from researchers working with older children, especially Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Cremin *et al.* (2006) and Marino (2012).

   In my pedagogy, I modelled literacy practice in puppetry and live drama sessions...
prior to play as well as modelling writing during dramatic play, in the co-player role. The play times I provided included the freedom to write and read: children considered these activities play, and frequently chose them. My project extends the scope of earlier research into writing in drama situations, by suggesting that the young children involved in this study demonstrated the same enthusiasm to write in role as older children, as long as the cognitive and literacy demands of the task were within their grasp.

Within the existing literature, Hall’s (2003) study had demonstrated high motivation to write and sustained play activity including writing, when adults infused the play with urgent authentic writing purpose, as I attempted to do through the guided drama sessions. Bruning and Horn (2000) had earlier indicated two significant factors in teaching which contribute to sustained writing motivation: enthusiasm for literacy modelled by the teacher, and the authenticity of purpose as an expressive tool provided by the writing experience. Taylor et al. (2003), Duke et al. (2006), Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) had emphasised motivation in relation to writing as crucial to literacy learning, as Gambrell had for reading (1996). My year of enthusiastic modelling of literacy as relevant, meaningful, and very useful for play purposes, through the drama experiences, translated into a sustained motivation to write for real world purposes for Lucy, Edward and James, and sometimes for Martin. My research findings therefore strongly supported those outlined in these earlier studies.

Interviews with the children in early 2008 provide further evidence of sustained engagement and motivation for writing, while feedback from one of their Year One teachers was: “These children just want to write and write, so I’ve stopped teaching them the letters and sounds and I’m letting them write!” Her prior experiences and expectations for Year one had not prepared her for a new Prep cohort with such skills and dispositions to be writers.

2. Children became productive, persistent and in most case, competent writers

In relation to the overarching theme of productivity, both volume and frequency
were important aspects. Tables 8 and 9 in Appendix C show both productivity and the connection between drama events and children's responses across the year. Table 9 suggests that while only James wrote independently and spontaneously before March, James, Edward and Lucy were frequently involved in this practice during the months that followed, not only because they had the tools, but because the drama events were providing a constant stimulus for their responses. Martin was writing less, but was still actively and regularly involved. The divergence of responses from Lucy, James and Edward after August most probably reflects their growing independence with the alphabetic tools, while the volume of responses and the frequency of their appearance was increasing. The frequency of spontaneous writing in play indicates the enthusiasm with which children employed their new-found symbolic repertoire for their own pleasure and purposes.

Children in my study, in dramatic roles as experts, saviours, and competent helpers wrote with a sense of inspired purpose and power which enabled them to persist to complete the important and even difficult tasks before them. Whilst writing in situations infused with dramatic tension, they might ask for help to complete a message, but they sustained their focus and rarely failed to complete the task. Sometimes, in role as authors during their dramatic play, they might only persist through the writing of an introduction or title page before the immense demands of the task taxed their emerging skills, as happened sometimes in James’ and Edward’s authoring. In this context they were taking on independent writing projects with little appreciation of the demands of the task, rather than imitating a modelled literary activity that I had chosen because it was within their capabilities. By contrast, children such as Martin gave up easily on more mundane reading and writing tasks that had no dramatic purpose for them. The comparison in persistence between these dramatic and real-word contexts suggests that persistence in writing is a key finding of the pedagogical approach used within this study.

Competence is another theme that flows across the four cases and the broader data of the quintain. Table 7 of Appendix B shows the writing phases of the
quintain at the end of the school year. Of the case study students, James sits high in the achievement levels with some Phase C indicators (Writing continuum, Education Dept. of Western Australia, 1995) while Edward and Lucy are in the middle, as Phase B writers using alphabetic symbols which accurately reflected phonemic connections and some literary conventions. Martin remained in Phase A, alongside one other child from the multi-case. Both had made some alphabetic connections in their writing. Of course, it is impossible to say what progress in writing these same children might have made when engaged in learning through alternate pedagogical approaches. It was not the purpose of this study to compare pedagogical approaches but to offer my own as a viable and successful attempt at a balanced pedagogy.

3. **Children became more competent with narrative comprehension and production**

The analysis of data from the children’s studies frequently suggested the strength of narrative connections, supported by the very visual, active and dramatically-charged world of the improvisations and puppetry. Many of the drama and puppetry sessions were based around familiar picture books and nursery and fairy tales. Children took up the narrative themes in both their play and writing. Lucy argued with the wolf antagonist during an in-role interview after the same story. Martin represented in his painting all the elements of the story of “Noah and the Ark”. Peter interpreted, manipulated and innovated on the plot of “The Billy Goats Gruff” and the forester drama, during follow-up dramatic play. Edward repeated the story of the fire fighter rescue and told a reporter the tale of his adventures with bees. Laurence, Edward, Sally, Charlotte and Lucy broke into ballads about mermaids and rescuers. James and Edward wrote stories about themes from the drama events. The narrative comprehension strongly assisted their access to and production of written text.

Baumer *et al.* (2005) observed the development of narrative comprehension among students when adults and children were in role together in drama, and Mages (2006) trialled a directed drama programme for children with challenging behaviours, and found that the programme developed their narrative competence.
Bredikyte (2000) found that puppetry enactments and interpretations of nursery tales led to narrative understanding, and along with it, increases in dialogue, characterisation and oral language. In Cooney and Kanel’s (1997) research connecting worlds of literature with drama there were also strong correlates between drama and narrative production. Narrative comprehension and vocabulary were noted as the most important features differentiating children’s reading performance after year four, in a study of Maori literacy progress described by McNaughton at a workshop I attended in 2008.

4. Children’s production flowed from one medium to another
The case studies outlined in this chapter support and develop research and socio-semiotic theories relating to “trans-mediation”, which refers to the transference of expression from one medium to another (Kress, 1997). Children in my class moved freely between drawing, constructing, writing, typing and lyrical composition, depending on what they saw modelled, what tools were available at the time, what skills they were investigating and developing, what the mood of the moment demanded, and what held significance. Johnson (2007) and Ehrenworth and Labbo (2003) are researchers who have explored connections between visual art and “flow” experiences into written and oral language but I have not discovered literature describing the phenomenon of lyrical flow from drama to song which I witnessed several times that year. Moga et al. (2000) noted correlates between arts experience and creative thinking but only in short-term gains. The outpourings I observed often emerged long after the events they reflected. They sustained and expressed the storyline and mood of the drama events, and perhaps reflected the regular inclusion of song and dance as warm-ups or pretexts before the main dramatic action of a session. They were significant as alternate avenues for narrative expression.

5. Children became secure in roles and aware of audience
Once my hungry caterpillars had independence with the alphabetic repertoire and a sense of role, they confidently wrote in role within dramas which gave them an authentic purpose. They then took the roles and the writing on into their play, as
older children had done in their response writing. Lucy, James and Edward wrote in role as elves and shoemakers, even when they were supposedly writing as themselves. Pre-schoolers in Neuman and Roskos’ (1992) study, Reception/Year one children in Hall’s (2003) garage experiment and Kindergarten/Year one children in Miller’s (2007) study all wrote in role, in their play, some at the role-play level, and those with alphabetic skills, at the experimental or phonetic level. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) observed fluidity of role transference between the drama and writing situations, among his subjects after process drama sessions, as did Cremin et al. (2006) in their longitudinal study.

Children in my study wrote with a clear stance toward their audience. Lucy created her advertising poster with an accompanying map, sensitive to the needs of a visual guide for prospective customers; she wrote caring messages to people she loved, and a message to James by a rocket illustration, which reflected his interests, not her own. Edward wrote many artefacts with particular audience in mind: his mother, friends, and to me as teacher. Martin wrote instructions for Raymond, and James wrote and delivered his thank-you letter in role as an elf to the shoemaker. Audience awareness as a finding was noted by Hall (2003) in relation to children’s responses in role as garage workers to their clientele, and by Miller (2007).

This stance toward audience connected strongly to the sense of purpose for the writing but it was also a corollary of relationships that had been built between the characters in the drama contexts. The drama and puppetry events introduced characters to the children, characters who often became the children’s friends. Friendship was a vital issue at that period in the children’s social development. As a defender of their friends, children could read a forester’s sign with horror, argue the animals’ cause, and sign a petition to the forester to protect their homes. Privileging drama meant privileging human relationships, relationships in role that were carried on into their play and writing responses. As Lindqvist (1995) wrote: ‘More than anything else, the adults’ characters have persuaded the children to
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enter the fiction...The literary characters dramatized by the adults step out of their literary texts and invite the children into the world which they represent.” (p. 209).

6. **Children developed in their ability to visualise**

In this study, four year olds responded to very concrete props, characters and settings as they developed themes and literacy in the dramas, but by the time they were five, they worked more independently in their literacy practices, and composed stories and ballads from remembered dramatic themes and from other sources. This change in children’s responses perhaps reflect growth in ideation and language and was further demonstrated in their move away from visual illustration for their writing, particularly in the products of Laurence, Kelly, Edward and James. Visualisation was evident in children’s artwork in response to the drama pedagogy, but also in their dialogue during the improvisations, as they envisaged trolls going fishing, snakes hiding in treasure caves, mermaids coming to rescue trapped fish, magic portals assisting elves in entering shoemaker shops, scenes below clouds on which they were floating, and potential settings for future elf dramas. Narrative awareness in both playing and literacy supported their access to the literary language of story books.

Studies by Dupont (1992), Cremin (1998), O’Toole and Dunn (2002), Peter (2005), and Mages (2006) had described the positive effect drama had on children’s visualisation and imagining at a variety of ages. Vygotsky (1978) believed that props were pivots for the child’s developing imagination. In the Turkish study of children developing narratives, Ilgaz and Aksu-Koç (2005) had noted that children of three and four needed concrete props to play with in order to create a narrative, whilst five year olds, with their increased memory and powers of visualisation, did not. Even among older children, props and costumes were found to be important in stimulating quality dramatic play (Dunn, 2000) despite Warren’s advice (1998) that drama activities with young children should depend on the imagination, not perceptual cues. In a culture with a highly visual focus around screen viewing, however, the presence of props, sets and costumes which children could take on
into their play, seems warranted, supporting their growing imagination and
development of dramatic themes, rather than detracting from them.

7. *Children’s oral language improved substantially*

Reading and writing build on a broad base of fluency and comprehension
connected first to oral language and play worlds, even as they introduce children to
new forms of de-contextualised language. Oral language development was
particularly evident in Martin’s story. Martin clearly developed in oral language
competency and fluency as he engaged in the drama and puppetry experiences.
His progress was dependent on a variety of oral language contexts, but the drama
and dramatic play pedagogy certainly motivated him to contribute dialogue
confidently and use language models different from the immature “me did”
utterances with which he began the year.

Several studies I reviewed affirmed a correlation between oral language
development and dramatic activity (Paley, 1981, 1984, 1988, Podlozny, 2000,
Bredikyte, 2000, Turner *et al.*, 2004 and Peter, 2005). Others were more
ambivalent. Mages’ review of research (2008) gave mixed findings for correlates
between drama and language development in early childhood, perhaps due to
problems she noted with research design and the difficulty of isolating variables.
Fleming *et al.* (2004) found correlates with maths, self-confidence and oral
language, but no significant correlates with written literacy, in their study of
improvements in performance after drama activities, among second language
learners.

**Conclusion**

This discussion, based as it is on the four case studies, supports much of the
earlier research into the efficacy of dramatic pedagogies for progress in written
literacy and narrative competence. In addition it suggests that dramatic pedagogy
can be as efficacious for beginning writers as it is for older children, who already
have a good grasp of the alphabetic code. In the final chapter, the findings from
both chapters four and five are synthesised, and their significance for teaching
theory, practice and curriculum development is discussed. Together, these will be used to argue that the pedagogical approach employed within this study encouraged significant writing development. It will suggest that by spending a year in a classroom where dramatic pedagogies were privileged, they became players in contexts which were complex, shared and sustained; they became engaged, confident, persistent, competent, and productive writers.
Chapter 6  
Conclusions, implications of the key findings and future possibilities

This research project began when I taught a whole preparatory year of schooling with an approach to written literacy which privileged drama and dramatic play whilst simultaneously offering explicit and systematic instruction in the discrete elements of the alphabetic code of the culture. I believed that a balanced early childhood approach could and should provide both aspects, and that literacy was a wonderful gift that I as a cultural expert could share with the apprentices in my classroom. To understand what was achieved through the dramatic pedagogies, I developed case studies of five participants using a multi-case study approach. Stake (2005b) suggests that a focus on a few selected cases will illuminate the workings of the whole “multi-case”.

I created drama events with embedded literacy purposes and models. These included signs, lists, messages, letters, posters, labelled maps and diagrams, clues for treasure hunts, and other short, accessible genre. Each session was charged with dramatic elements, with the intention that the teaching should be exciting, purposeful, engaging, meaningful, and memorable. After each session children were given the props, sets, puppets and costumes from the drama event to carry on into their own dramatic play, along with the literacy tools I had used to create the modelled texts.

Many of the drama sessions, and some of the ensuing dramatic play sessions, were filmed, and written artefacts from the play times were collected, as well as photocopies of other written responses from the children. Parents, children and the year one teacher for 2008 were interviewed. Children’s literacy progress was plotted against a developmental profile and I kept a reflective journal of the year’s events and their implications for myself and the children. To give direction to my examination of the data of the year, I developed the research questions:

What happens to young children’s writing development when drama and dramatic play are privileged?
What understandings of drama and dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy are revealed when this approach is used?

I sought answers to these questions by examining my own reflective story and the stories of the literacy progress of four of the participating children.

In the self-study (Chapter Four), which introduced the quintain, I examined my own teacher professional development story. From this study a number of key findings emerged which addressed my second question. They were summarised as follows:

1. My developing ability to manage key aspects of dramatic pedagogy supported children’s growth both as dramatists and writers.
2. The dramatic modelling of writing in context stimulated and supported the children’s writing.
3. Sustaining the dramatic context supported the flow of dramatic play and writing.
4. Resources introduced within the drama opened up new possibilities and built connections between drama and dramatic play.
5. The specific discourses used within the dramatic contexts assisted children’s learning.
6. The approach adopted provided opportunities for the children to exercise agency and voice.
7. The agency built within the drama and dramatic play contexts supported children’s confidence when engaging in real world tasks.
8. An active triune stance that was simultaneously early childhood, drama and early literacy focused was vital to the success of the approach.

In Chapter Five, to address my first research question, I examined the literary products and oral responses of four children to trace their unfolding development as writers. The outcomes in terms of writing development, along with other findings described at the end of that chapter, confirm the findings of earlier studies.
Chapter 6: Conclusions, implications of the key findings and future possibilities

of drama and play-related writing, oral language and cognition, as well as those from Chapter four. These were summarised as follows:

1. Children became engaged and motivated writers.
2. Children became productive, persistent and in most case, competent writers.
3. Children became more competent with narrative comprehension and production.
4. Children’s production flowed from one medium to another, supporting and demonstrating their narrative competence.
5. Children became secure in roles and aware of audience in drama and writing.
6. Children developed in their ability to visualise.
7. Children’s oral language improved substantially.

The evidence for this progress came from the responses of the four case study children in Chapter five, supported by the tables of entry and exit writing levels, and the tables showing productivity and drama/play/literacy correlations for the whole quintain and the selected children (Appendix C3 and 4). The description and analysis of the twelve key events described in chapter four, the discourse analysis of the three film transcriptions, vignettes from other film transcriptions, interview responses of parents and children, and anecdotal comment from the year one teacher at the beginning of 2008 offer further support for the claims for the quintain.

With all of this work completed then, the story of discovery reaches its climax. The two previous chapters have shown that the tiny caterpillars who began the 2007 year alongside me, transformed into literary butterflies, while the pugnacious observer on the mushroom was able to uncover some important and very relevant pedagogical understandings. Within this chapter, these two sets of findings will be brought together in order to provide a synthesis of the research as a whole. These combined findings, like those offered in the earlier chapters offer much to confirm the existing research, but also make a unique and substantial contribution to
Chapter 6: Conclusions, implications of the key findings and future possibilities

several fields. Most importantly, it offers rich insights into the potential of a pedagogy that sits at the nexus of drama, dramatic play and literacy.

1. A proactive teaching role can build the complexity, dialogue, narrative and relationships of early childhood dramatic play.

A number of play researchers have previously suggested that much of the dramatic play of early childhood lacks cognitive complexity, dialogue, and sustained narrative and relations. Smilansky (1968, 1990), Sylva, Roy and Painter (1980) and Meadows and Cashden (1988) have all observed and commented on unguided play achieving few if any developmental goals. In addition, Roskos and Christie (2001) have noted that researchers and other educators have tended to romanticise children’s play as always valid, self-directing and worthwhile, and to justify many activities as play that might otherwise have been excluded. Like these researchers, I as an educator in the classroom setting had questioned the non-interventionist approach, even while I respected the dignity and creativity of the children, and was very aware of our relative status and power.

I had been searching for active ways to intervene effectively in children’s play – seeking a legitimacy for an active, dialogic and didactic role, which would not be seen as intrusive or directive by the children, but one in which their agency and voice were strongly maintained. In the dramatic pedagogy outlined within this thesis I found it. Through scaffolding of thought with adult language, creating play spaces where exciting narratives were developed, offering roles within the drama events that gave children status, developing tension and providing dramatic play situations immediately following drama events, I had orchestrated shared play environments where complex and sustained play, rich in dialogue and developing narrative, flourished. I had shown that this pedagogical approach provides unique and significant opportunities to enrich children’s play without being intrusive, whilst still extending it in innovative and creative ways.

Moreover, I had demonstrated that educators do not have to wait for the children to generate contexts and themes for play. As in all areas of learning, teachers
through drama can provide themes and plots, dialogue, characters and contexts that, although they may sometimes take time to emerge in play, can be authentic and meaningful to the children. By introducing rescue, discovery, healing, service, reconciliation, conservation and sustainability issues in lifelike settings such as zoos, veterinary surgeries, hospitals, Australian rainforests, shops, factories, museums and archaeological digs, as well as imaginary crystal palaces under the sea, and the worlds of traditional folk and fairy tales, I could encourage dramatic play with ethically sound purposes and outcomes, whilst enhancing and sustaining the dramatic tension and emotion which sustain and vitalize the play.

I have already described in Chapters four and five research by Smilansky (1968, 1990), Lindqvist (1995), McCabe (2012), Broadhead and English (2005), Baumer et al. (2005), and Dunn and Stinson (2011, 2012). These researchers introduced themes of their own that led to complex and sustained dramatic play. My case studies support these practices by showing that a proactive teaching role is possible without being intrusive or overwhelming the initiative of the children.

2. **Adults in drama and dramatic play situations can be mediators of learning – a conduit of active socialisation through interactions. They can be mediators of the tools, attitudes and dispositions of their culture.**

In addition, this study shows that when drama and dramatic play are woven together with literate practices foregrounded in the dramatic contexts, these cultural practices, with their accompanying attitudes and dispositions, become reinforced on the children’s own terms. Through this process, the children in my case studies created a play culture where writing was valued and the models I had demonstrated were put to active but not necessarily identical use. Rogoff (2003) had written: “Children work out the scripts of everyday life - adult skills and roles, values and beliefs - as they play” (p. 298). I reinforced her belief, and that of Vygotsky (1978), Lindqvist (1995), Bredikyte (2000), Miller (2007) and Dunn and Stinson (2012), that in dramatic adult-child interaction, drama and play could lead development and that teachers could orchestrate the social contexts in which the learning could occur. Like Miller, I could show how the adult could deliberately
become the catalyst and conduit for the process of cultural induction. My on-going reflections on my practice extended research on this process by leading me week by week to new possibilities for cultural interaction.

The unique contribution of my research approach was to demonstrate how a teacher may systematically and purposefully contrive dramatic social situations for the literacy teaching. In the situations contrived throughout the year, I gradually and responsively increased the complexity of the language and literate activity used in the interactions, and replaced some of the scaffolding of objects with words, images and moods from music or poetry. By regularly connecting drama and dramatic play, I enabled the conduit of learning to flow from one context to the other.

3. **It is possible to achieve a balance of adult and child purpose, power and voice.**

In my study, the pedagogical approach used made possible a balance between adult and child purpose, power and voice. There is a sense from the data that the approach adopted here generated a more appropriate balance than my earlier teaching had done. In typical classroom dialogue the Magistral stance described by Cheyne and Terulli (1999) tends to dominate discourse (Christie, 2002). Taking this stance, the teacher explains and questions students about their knowledge. In Socratic dialogue (Cheyne & Terulli, 1999) a more active and empowered voice for the student is possible, and sometimes even a questioning and resistance to the constraints and authority of the voice of the accepted culture. Perhaps to avoid Menippean or antagonistic dialogue, teachers prefer the security of the Magistral position. I made the deliberate choice to move toward Socratic dialogue situations, to provoke thought and expression, even though the research of Rowe (2009), Kauchek and Eggen (2007) and Ellis (2005) all support the Magistral stance in teaching literacy. Their research showed that all children require a considerable amount of direct and explicit instruction in order to become literate. I contend that explicit instruction can be contrived in situations where it appears incidental, and that the model of the teacher explaining and directing learning from the front of the
classroom is not the only avenue for carefully planned teaching of the alphabet sounds, symbols and uses.

The issue of child choice and agency in relation to adult direction was an ongoing tension in my pedagogy, as it was for the early childhood teachers observed by Bennet et al. (1997), who believed in giving children freedom to express themselves, but in practice directed most of children's activity very tightly. Lofdahl (2005) had observed the shared, purposeful meaning-making in her study of dynamic processes in the dialogue of children dramatic play as Kress (1994, 1997) had seen when children were drawing and writing. When I analysed three drama transcriptions I observed shared thematic contributions, ideas and suggestions, statement and argument, affirmation and explanation, all of which were demonstrating the children’s own voice and active agency in the dramatic contexts. My project has made a unique contribution to research literature by showing that the contexts of drama and dramatic play allow shared roles, status and voice. By using the mantle of the expert as a preferred drama strategy I had allowed children to achieve agency and become confident and responsible citizens in dramatic settings. This confidence flowed on into real-life contexts in which purpose and power could continue to be shared.

4. Engagement and motivation is enhanced when authentic purpose, power and voice are balanced.

Engagement and motivation are described in relation to each of the children in the case studies and are demonstrated further in the tables of productivity (p. 295) and the analysis of discourse in Chapter four. Children wanted to write, and adopted the purposes suggested during drama events, as authentic play purposes for writing. The dramatic tension of saving a character, communicating a grievance, greeting or apology or preventing a disaster, enhanced the urgency of writing tasks, and drove their motivation. These themes were accepted as compelling reasons to overcome the enormous difficulties of shaping letters and combining sounds to make words and longer utterances. The ease with which young children moved between the worlds of reality and fiction enabled them to take advantage of
play purposes without being perturbed by or particularly aware of their situation in imaginary spaces. The balance of power and status achievable through the dramatic pedagogy supported the confidence and sense of agency of the children so that they found it easy to believe not only in the authentic play purposes of the writing, but their own skill in executing the tasks.

As described in the research literature in Chapter two, a great deal has already been written and researched in relation to engagement and motivation in learning, and in particular the learning of literacy. My discussion of the findings in chapters four and five have summarised the contributions of many of these researchers, including Neuman and Roskos (1991), Morrow (1990), and Hall and Robinson (2003) from the field of early childhood, as well as Morgan and Saxton (1987), Neelands (1984, 1992), Warner (1997), Cremin (1998), Simpson (1999), Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Bundy (2003), Cremin et al. (2006), Dunn and Stinson (2012) and Marino (2012) from the field of drama. Carlson (1993), Custadero (2005a & b) and Gallagher (2005) describe engagement and motivation in relation to the arts more broadly, and Dutton (1991), Gambrell (1996) and Taylor et al. (2003) emphasise its importance in relation to literacy. Hattie (2003) found that effective pedagogy in all areas of teaching depended on engagement. My research builds on these contributions from the research literature by demonstrating that in the special situation of connected drama, dramatic play and literacy, engagement and motivation are consistently high across a year of schooling, and that they can indeed be sustained into later schooling.

5. The aesthetics of the pedagogy are crucial to its success.
Children were offered opportunities to engage regularly with aesthetic experiences that involved them cognitively and emotionally. This was achieved through my growing expertise at managing the elements and strategies of drama. When I could achieve contexts of intense emotional engagement, children went on to remember vividly the moods, plots and climaxes, their own roles and contributions and could carry these on into their play. As they became skilled in the symbolic tools of their culture, they could use these as a vehicle of aesthetic expression. They could remember as well the literacy models imbedded in the aesthetic
moments, because emotion supports memory. When I employed the mantle of the expert effectively children were further engaged, as capable and responsible citizens whose contributions in writing were crucial to the resolution of dramatic problems.

Bundy (2003), Davis (2005), Eisner (2005), McCaslin (2005), Custadero (2005a and b), Gallagher (2005), Johnson (2007) and Dunn and Stinson (2012) had all written about the importance and power of the aesthetic elements in drawing out a response from children that included strong emotional involvement. Carger (2004), Ehrenworth and Labbo (2003) and Johnson (2007) had observed the power of arts experiences of different types to motivate and stimulate creative written responses.

My contribution to this significant body of research on the aesthetic in education is to illustrate again the power of emotional engagement through aesthetic experience and how this can be harnessed not only to enhance children’s development in use of the art form but in the cause of early literacy. By combining the artistry of drama with the strategy of the mantle of the expert, it is possible to connect the aesthetic “flow” experience Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1992) described, with the disposition of the capable author.

6. The approach enables the teacher to support students in overcoming the many hurdles of the literacy task.

I had helped my hungry caterpillars find very relevant, exciting and authentic play reasons to use the complex symbol system of our culture with confidence and competence. The tasks of understanding and interpreting symbols, employing them correctly, composing messages and other texts might seem insurmountable without adult support. These tasks were observed and described extensively by Clay (1966, 1991) and Kress (1994, 1997, 2003a). McCutchen (2000) had noted the cognitive overload many children experience when grappling with too many aspects at once. The essential role of the adult to mediate the literacy process and support the child’s progress has been emphasised particularly by Yates (1988, 1990, 2005), Ellis (2005), Kauchek and Eggen (2007), Westwood (2008a, &b) and Rowe (2009). Their research supports my proactive position in adopting a
pedagogy that could assist children in overcoming the mechanical and cognitive hurdles involved in writing. Like Cremin et al. (2006) I was able to demonstrate that drama pedagogy eminently served this purpose.

However, most of the drama literature linked with literacy motivation has come from the contexts where children were already familiar with the alphabetic code and employing it competently in other situations. Even Hall and Robinson’s research (2003) is situated in a classroom where students could already read and write sentences and short messages. I demonstrated in my research that children still emerging from role play writing with alphabetic symbols could adopt drama and dramatic play as avenues for writing without shirking the mechanical and cognitive demands of the tasks, particularly when the mantle of the authoring expert was bestowed upon them.

7. **Dramatic skills lead writing.**

In my study the children became expressive and capable dramatists, aware of roles and audience. They had vivid memories of dramatic events quivering with images, emotion and meaning. They could employ their dramatic skills to contextualise their writing, to give them a perspective within new roles, roles where writing as responsible, literate citizens was important. They could recall techniques of word-building and shared message construction from within the drama events that might be useful to them in their writing production. Once they had these tools of narrative comprehension and production, the mechanics of writing, and an understanding of contexts where different writing practices were appropriate, they could mimic these to relive the roles and events they had enjoyed. They could take the roles much further, into other play spaces and social contexts, including the real world. All this was possible when supported by careful and systematic teaching, discussed further in relation to the next finding.

Dramatic writing in role, along with audience awareness, had been described in the research of Crumpler and Schneider (2002), Hall and Robinson (2003), Cremin et al. (2006), Ewing (2006), Miller (2007), Dunn and Stinson (2011, 2012) and Marino (2012). My contribution to this field has been to show the significant
benefits in terms of sustained productivity, motivation and skill, along with these important aspects of role, audience awareness, oral language, and visualisation during writing activity, when this approach was privileged over a year of learning in early childhood, and to demonstrate further the place of drama pedagogy in leading writing development.

8. **An approach that balances constructivist and instructivist approaches is not only possible, but beneficial.**

By demonstrating writing in dramatic contexts whilst teaching the mechanics of writing production, I had balanced the implicit with the explicit, the constructivist with the instructivist perspective, the directed with the facilitated, whole-class teaching through the guided drama situations with small group support for children learning phonetic skills at different rates. Westwood believed that a balanced approach could be achieved “retaining the motivation and authentic elements of whole language while at the same time ensuring that decoding skills and comprehension strategies are directly taught and thoroughly practised” (Westwood, 2008b, p. 8). His research was supported by studies by Juel, Griffith and Gough (1986), Baumann *et al.* (1998), Emmitt (1998), Adams (2004), Justice and Kaderavek (2004), Xue and Meisels (2004), Bickley (2004), Stahl & Yaden (2004), Center (2005), Christie (2005), Mesmer and Griffith (2005), Stahl and Murray (2006), Stahl and McKenna (2006) and Dombey (2010). All of these researchers advocated balanced approaches in early childhood, where phonics and explorations of whole meaningful texts are both important (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005) and where the experiential is balanced with explicit explanation and demonstration, despite the claims of Kirschner *et al.* (2006) that such instruction could not succeed.

Preserving and building the play contexts that I believed were vital for children’s explorations of the symbolic cultural tools helped to achieve this balance. The recognition of play as a vital pedagogy and of children’s autonomy of purpose can easily become lost under the pressures for standards and results. These pressures often drive long periods of explicit teaching and practice in discrete
mechanical tasks that may seem to hold no authentic purpose for a child. The significant contribution of my research has been to show that such a balance can be maintained over a year of schooling in a classroom where explicit teaching is expressed and received in a manner seen by students as authentic and meaningful. Direct skills teaching can be viewed by students as the mastery of skills necessary in order to achieve desirable cultural activity. Practice sessions can become a part of the children’s own free choice activity when they are given the play time, tools and space to carry them on into dramatic play. Children can become the agents of much of their own practice when they acquire a disposition of responsible authoring citizens.

9. *Peer mentoring is a key ingredient in supporting the pedagogy.*
Throughout my case studies I observed the support children gave one another in their growth and development as dramatists and writers. There were several components of this. I modelled roles, demonstrated writing methods, built social contexts for literacy and aesthetic situations to make the learning vivid and memorable. I interacted with them in playful ways that established our friendships and supported learning, the approach that Stone (1995) Cooney *et al.* (2000), Scully and Roberts (2002) and Soderman *et al.* (2005) had advocated. Children made friends with me and with one another as they interacted during drama games and improvisations. “Master dramatists” such as Lucy and Edward (Creaser, 1989) took the themes of the dramas on into dramatic play, fostering and sustaining play. Others such as James and Patrick remembered the literacy features of our drama events and guided friends into repeating them and using them in new roles. Others like Vincent, Raymond and Annie remembered the teaching methods for shaping letters and teaching rules. They repeated these in role as teachers when playing with their friends. These mentoring roles continued to build the culture of a literate community in the classroom, particularly as children developed in oral language and sustained social interaction. Friendships nurtured by the drama activities supported the learning occurring in all the classroom contexts.

Precedents for these results in the literature I surveyed were sparse. Mentoring of
peers and mimicking teaching discourse seemed to reflect the adoption and reflection of cultural practice Rogoff (2003) described in her intercultural studies, and Lindqvist’s (1995) findings on friendship. Creaser and Dunn had observed the efficacy of the master dramatist (Creaser, 1989) or “super-dramatist” (Dunn, 1996) role as a catalyst for sustained and complex play. My research makes a valuable contribution to research in peer mentoring by demonstrating how the dramatic pedagogies provide a particularly relational situation where this valuable process can flourish.

Implications for teachers in early years classrooms and others involved in policy making, curriculum design and teacher education.
The findings synthesised above offer exciting pedagogical possibilities to classroom teachers and the network of researchers, policy makers and teacher educators that support them.

A balanced approach
The balanced approach made possible by combining dramatic pedagogies with direct instruction in the mechanics of literacy provides teachers with a playful teaching model that retains intellectual rigor. Teachers can timetable lessons modelling the shaping of letters, and activities making connections between letters and sounds such as I “spy”, word games and sentence scrambles alongside sessions similar to those in Appendix D, which includes the lesson plans I made for the key drama events of Chapter four. They can timetable drama events so they directly precede dramatic play sessions where the tools of literacy, and the props and costumes that remind children of the drama, are immediately available and where a supportive teacher is ready to take a facilitating role. Teachers can become the master dramatists who, as co-players in role, responsively support and extend the dramatic play, or children themselves can rise up to take these roles. Both occurred in my experience of the year.

Teachers can employ in their early childhood pedagogy language connected to concrete objects and particular characters and situations that will build on their
understanding of the particular and relational with new interactional models. They can introduce within dramatic contexts discourse that includes questions about information, statements, explanations, generalisations and classifications, as children demonstrate the ability to use and respond to these. In this way, teachers as experts are operating in the shared zone of proximal development of their apprentices. Co-players can interact, use writing tools, wonder and comment aloud about how to put words together or about discoveries they make, ask extending questions and read out and mediate the necessity for certain written documents. In the stance of coaches from the side they can also use extending questions and “think aloud” comments, ask open-ended questions and suggest extra uses for costumes, tools and props. As stage- and costume-managers they can produce extra resources such as money, keys, scarves, construction material, envelopes and maps that may contribute new pivots for the imagination. They can introduce other literate cultural roles into a character mix, such as bankers, librarians, shopkeepers and curators.

When planning tasks to build fine motor skills or knowledge about particular issues and themes, teachers can suggest to children that these objects, tools and pieces of information will be needed in the drama that is timetabled immediately after the activity. Thus every activity can have an authentic play purpose, not an arbitrary one to achieve a teacher’s developmental goals. Teachers establish long-term literacy goals that can be implemented in a variety of instructional settings, and allow children to practice in conditions of free choice. The choice of literate cultural practice with alphabetic symbols can be stimulated by engaging children first through drama or puppetry, and making the symbols very desirable and necessary for exciting, powerful and relational purposes like warning signs, personal letters, stories, and texts that instruct and inform significant others. A teacher can make use of children’s friendships and emotional needs and responses to support their memories, and not rely solely on rote practice of discrete literacy elements for memorization.
Supporting young writers

Dramatic pedagogies have enormous potential to assist the writing development of young children, giving them the confidence and the authentic child-centred purposes to try new skills and discover their own competence to use them. As I have shown they support children’s oral language and visualisation through providing avenues for dialogue and imaginative settings where narrative is enacted in front of them or by them. This active exploration, alongside immersion in the aesthetic elements of mood, emotion, time and space, tension, symbol, and even irony can build children’s sense of role, plot, setting, climax, audience and perspective-taking. The roles and stances described in the previous section can become part of the teacher’s repertoire to support children as they access the mechanics and purposes of written discourse. The mantle of the expert can be bestowed on children, instead of the teacher always being seen as the expert, and teachers can take lower status positions to empower children to take responsible authoring roles. They can assist them in believing in their own agency and voice as writers.

When teachers plan systematically the social contexts and elements of literacy they will include in their drama plans, they can support young writers in moving from insight to insight in the ongoing development of their skills and understandings. They can model discovering and using these insights in a dramatic context where children’s focus is riveted on the action and language, and where the emotional stakes are high. Teachers who deliberately plan to include dramatic play in their classrooms, who collect costumes and other resources, have them readily available and demonstrate their usefulness by wondering what to wear and what to use for a drama purpose, will spark the imaginations of their young players and provide many opportunities and possibilities for writing. When teachers explicitly and clearly give children the discrete skills to use in their play, and small samples of written text to read and use, rather than long scribed lists of plans and detailed genre exemplars, they will support them in overcoming the mechanical tasks of writing and set them free for exploration and self-motivated practice.
Chapter 6: Conclusions, implications of the key findings and future possibilities

There are wider implications for my findings. If children in my cohort could make sustained and effective progress in writing in an approach that privileged drama and dramatic play, so might children from a variety of other social and cultural backgrounds, providing that the social issues of the drama interventions resonate with their own prior learning, interests and cultural contexts. There are possibilities here for researchers to trial the pedagogy and its strategies among indigenous children who may not have had exposure to European traditions of picture storybook language or discourse models, or children from other language groups who need active scaffolding for their English oral as well as written language. In all of these situations the connection of action, language, props, dramatic features and above all the mantle of the expert, may assist engagement with, and understanding of, the literate tools of our culture.

Policy Making and Teacher Education
There are serious implications from my research in relation to policy-making in early childhood curricula. Recent trends (2011-2013) have been to crowd the curricula of all school classrooms in Australia with teaching in distinct domains and with lesson models that focus on explanation and direct instruction. Dramatic play times become crowded out of the planning models, and replaced with guided investigations in English, Science, Mathematics and History. My research has demonstrated the very valuable place drama plays in the engagement phase of learning and teaching, and the equally valuable place dramatic play can have in the exploration and consolidation process. It is imperative that aesthetic pedagogies and play times and spaces are scheduled into learning, and also that activities that weave together learning across contexts and philosophical, social and cultural boundaries, are encouraged. Teacher educators can play a significant role in assisting with the preservation of this focus and provision by encouraging pre-service teachers to look for these features in their observations in real classroom during practice teaching and to include them in assessable curriculum planning and implementation.

Experiences with puppetry modelling and the extensive range of its applications in
dramatic contexts modelling literate practice may support both pre-service and inservice professional development. In practice this means inviting puppeteers and actors into teacher lecture halls and schools, to demonstrate and run workshops, so that teachers have experience and skills in trialling their methods and mastering the elements of the aesthetic forms. Regular drama sessions, modelling the mantle of the expert approach and the purpose of games, drama techniques and pretexts, and the building of shared play contexts with embedded literacy models, may further support pre-service and experienced teachers in developing their use of dramatic pedagogies. Pre-service teachers need support in techniques for managing behaviour in these settings, and experience also at improvising and using strategies such as the mantle of the expert. It is evident from my own case study that the understanding and effective use of drama strategies and lesson “recipes” takes energy, time, good models, workshop experiences, reading, reflection, the development of good classroom management and some degree of risk-taking. My understanding of theory came as I reflected on practice, and adopted and adapted good recipes. Modelling by drama mentors visiting classrooms has also been shown to be effective in supporting teachers embracing drama practice, in the research of Parsons et al. (1984) and Lindqvist (1995). Exploring teacher perceptions of dramatic pedagogies and identifying their views on how best to support them professionally in applying the pedagogies in the teaching young children, are themes for further research in the area of teacher professional development.

The process of embracing change was a positive one for me because I had prior experiences in drama, theatre, puppetry and early childhood teaching which provided me with modes of teacher talk and stance upon which I could build. My case study as an early childhood teacher with a particular view of children and learning, establishing a teaching model in a new institution, could illumine research into adult learning and institutional change, generally, during an era of rapid cultural transformation. I embraced drama teaching as an extension of a passion that would be potentially useful to me as an early childhood teacher of early literacy. I embraced it because the hurdles to achieving competence seemed to be
within my grasp. Teacher educators could use the findings from the self-study to assist in devising post-graduate courses that build on teacher experience and connect it to new theoretical understandings in ways that will effectively scaffold teachers in their early and on-going professional growth.

**Discourse analysis**

Research into early childhood teacher discourse is sparse. My own tentative explorations here demonstrated the language of the implicit, personal and particular that characterised my dialogues and teaching. The differences between this and primary school discourse reflect the growing capacity of children to comprehend generalisations, explanations and interrogations of knowledge. Adults may begin their teaching and interaction with young children unaware of these distinct differences, and the cognitive assumptions their discourse makes. Clarifying such differences through further analysis of teacher discourse can then be used to assist beginning teachers in communicating with young children, in understanding their thinking and expression, and in supporting the language of the children as they move toward the cognitively more demanding discourse of the primary school classroom. The findings from this area of the study may support researchers and educators generally in understanding the linguistic adaptations many children have to make as they enter the classroom. A whole vista of linguistic research into early childhood teacher discourse in other contexts may be valid here.

Dramatic pedagogy, with its potential for oral language modelling and imitation supported by action, as well as its focus on the personal and particular, supports oral language comprehension and production, as researchers such as Podlozny (2000), Bredikyte (2000), Turner *et al.* (2004) and Peter (2005) have found. Research examining the linguistic challenges of different sentence structures across cultures is of great value to second-language teachers. With the provision of the triune connection of drama, literacy and dramatic play, children developing proficiency in English have the opportunity not only to take on oral discourse models, but the disposition to be writers that was so significant a finding from the
study. Further discourse analysis of drama will illumine the distinct language and
interactive processes that characterise the art form, and uncover further potential
to harness this dynamic in other domains of learning as well as in building the
artistry of the form itself.

Comparative studies
Another area for further research could be the development of comparative studies
where, for example, the outcomes achieved through the use of aesthetic
pedagogies are compared to those gained through an inquiry teaching model.
It was never my intention in this study to make these comparisons, since I was
interested in adding eclectically to my arsenal of teaching strategies, not comparing
my methods with other equally valid approaches. As well, comparative studies
among human subjects can be fraught with difficulties in terms of control measures
and isolating variables. Perhaps more helpful for teachers, who generally prefer
that eclectic balance of many pedagogical strategies, may be case studies of other
approaches in action, so that teachers and researchers can sample effective
teaching models across a variety of research and theoretical perspectives, and
benefit from the insights and findings of each.

Conclusion
The story has no ending. Vistas of unexplored research and practice lie open for
educators in the fields of early childhood, literacy and drama pedagogy, especially
at the nexus of the fields. Perhaps the observing caterpillar ousted from his
position on the mushroom will return after a suitable period in his own cocoon to
continue the saga alongside other tiny hungry caterpillars, hatching in other
wonderlands of literacy learning.
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# Appendices

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</tr>
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Appendix A – Administration and Correspondence

A1: Application to Conduct Research in Queensland State Schools

Expurged for reasons of confidentiality
A2: Permission from Principal

Expurged for confidentiality reasons
A3: Letter Extending Permission From Next Principal

Expurged for confidentiality reasons
Research Information Package

Research Topic: Drama Strategies in the Prep Classroom
Researcher: Annette Harden
Email: standavid@bigpond.com

Supervisor: Dr Julie Dunn
Ph:
Email: j.dunn@griffith.edu.au

What is the purpose of the research?

This year I will be developing an action research project in the area of drama education, as part of a Master of Drama Education degree I am currently studying through Griffith University. This research has been approved by Education Queensland. The research is aimed at investigating the value of using drama within the Preparatory Years classroom to develop positive dispositions in children toward written literacy. One of the reasons for the development of the prep in Queensland education has been to improve the literacy outcomes for our children, through providing them with a strong base to their learning in early childhood. This study aims to document drama activities linked with children's dramatic play, and to assess their effectiveness in developing children's attempts at writing and their enthusiasm for literacy activity. This is within the play-based learning model of the prep curriculum.

What will my child’s involvement be?

I am requesting permission for your child to be filmed and photographed as he/she engages in drama activities and in writing tasks and dramatic play, and for this data to be used for the purposes of the study only. I am also asking permission to collect samples of your child’s written work for analysis and inclusion (anonymously) within the report. In addition, I hope to interview your child briefly about their attitudes to reading and writing at the beginning and end of the study. I will also elicit children's consent for the interviews and explain to them the reasons for the filming and interviews.

What else is involved?

In addition I am seeking permission to conduct short ten-minute interviews with you as parents, some time during the first term of the prep year to discover your aspirations for the prep year, and at the end of the study, to identify your feelings about your child's progress toward literacy.

Privacy and Confidentiality

It is important to note that neither you nor your child is under any obligation to participate and even if you should agree, you may withdraw consent at any time. Children who are not participating in the research will still be active participants in the learning environments. The
only difference for them will be that they will not be interviewed and any of their involvement that is captured on video will not be included within the data set.

All data will be treated confidentially, stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed five years after completion of the study. The video tapes will be erased following transcription and analysis. The school will not be identified in the study and all participants will be anonymous. No risk is involved in this research project, since it is part of the normal functioning of the prep classroom.

Feedback to you

You will be provided with multiple opportunities to access information during the research and are welcome to make contact with the researcher at any stage of the study. On completion of the written dissertation, you will be provided with a summary of the research and have the chance to respond to the document before its submission for examination.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3875 5585.

Ethical Conduct of the Research

This research is conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3875 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.
A5: Initial Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

“Drama Strategies in the Preparatory Years Classroom”

I have read the attached Information Package and understand that:

- This research is to explore the effectiveness of drama strategies in the prep classroom.
- My participation in interviews, and that of my child, is voluntary and that I may discontinue my participation at anytime without penalty or explanation.
- Any reports or publications from this study will be reported in general terms and that all participants will remain anonymous.
- The video tapes will be erased following transcription and analysis and other data will be kept confidential at all times and in a locked filing cabinet for a period of 5 years before being destroyed.
- A report about the study findings will be made available to me.

I therefore give consent for:

1. My child’s participation in this study including the use of video to capture any play, literacy or drama episodes he/she may be involved in that are relevant to this study.
2. My child to participate in a short interview.
3. Samples of my child’s literacy work to be included anonymously within the report.

I am willing/unwilling (please circle) to participate in a brief interview both at the beginning and end of the study.

I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction/I would like further details about the study before committing.

Child’s Name:

Parent/Guardian’s Name:

Parent/Guardian’s Signature:

Date:
A6: Letter to Parents to Extend Scope of Research to PhD study

Expurged for confidentiality reasons
A7: Informed Consent from Parents for Extended Study

Expurged for confidentiality reasons
Appendix B – Data Sources

B1: Sample Transcription From Parent Interviews with Introductory Statement.

These interviews typically began with:
“Tell me about reading and writing activities your child is involved in at home.”

7th February

Annie’s mum: We buy her books all the time, I guess because her daddy is a librarian.
And for special occasions.
And we write messages in them.
Like when she started Prep we bought her a special book for that milestone. Books are a part of all their milestones, birthdays and Christmas and anything special. We use them for celebrating.
And we encourage the grandparents and other relatives to do that too and to write messages in them, too.
Annie likes to cook, so we bought her a book called “Honey Biscuits” and it tells you the recipe and all the process behind all the ingredients.

Self: I’d love to see it. Maybe she could bring it for show and tell some time.

Annie’s mum: Yeah, we could do that.
She tries to write to Nan and Pop in Gladstone, sometimes I write the words in for her and sometimes she tries to do them herself. She always has plenty of pens and colours and paper around.
Any time she wants to be creative.
I try to make literacy fun. So we might make a letter in the playdoh and say S for snake.
My mum read to me a lot and I guess we pass on what really mattered to us. We have a routine at night, Dad reads to her first and feeds the goldfish, then it’s my turn. So she always gets about four books.
She’s very creative and imaginative. We try to encourage a bit of sport, but she really likes to tell stories and sing and dance. She loves her garden, strawberries and sometimes a vegie garden.
She’s very loving to her baby brother, and very helpful. She made friends well at Kindy. She didn’t want to leave. She remembers friends and misses them.
She was a bit shy at first, and timid, but she’s getting more confident.

Self: Yes, she’s getting braver with going to the toilet and going out in the big playground.
B2: Sample Questions for Initial Child Interviews

I used a standard set of questions for each child at the first interview:

Q. 1: Which letters on this page do you know? (I asked this question as I indicated several random letters).
Q. 2: What is that letter? (I indicated the first letter of their name).
Q. 3: Can you write some numbers?
Q. 4: Can you count for me?
Q. 5: Do you like to write?
Q. 6: Do you like to draw?
Q. 7: Do you like to read?
Q. 8: Do you like Mum and Dad to read to you?
**B3: Table 4: Checklist of Initial Literacy**

Consultation early February

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Pseudonym</th>
<th>Likes reading</th>
<th>Likes to be read to</th>
<th>Likes to write</th>
<th>Likes to draw</th>
<th>Recognizes/names first letter of name</th>
<th>Knows other letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names it</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Recognizes</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Recognizes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Recognizes a few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not so much</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Recognizes a few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Yes-sometimes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Recognizes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B4: Table 5: Checklist of Concepts of Print From First Reading Running Record

**Early February**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child pseudonym</th>
<th>Print has meaning</th>
<th>Left-to right, reading</th>
<th>One-to-one correspondence, reading</th>
<th>Initial sound reading cue</th>
<th>Uses picture cue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Front to back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>f-to-b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>f-to-b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## B5: Table 6: Checklist of Alphabet Knowledge After Semester One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Letter knowledge</th>
<th>Sound knowledge</th>
<th>Use of capitals or lower case</th>
<th>Reversals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>All letters taught</td>
<td>Sounds of all</td>
<td>Some capitals</td>
<td>Some reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>All letters taught and z, w, v</td>
<td>Sounds of all</td>
<td>one capital</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>All letters taught</td>
<td>Most sounds</td>
<td>Three capitals</td>
<td>Three reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>All letters taught</td>
<td>Several sounds-</td>
<td>No capitals</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>All letters taught and j</td>
<td>All sounds</td>
<td>Two capitals</td>
<td>No reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>All letters</td>
<td>All sounds</td>
<td>No capitals</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>All letters taught-</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>Letters not taught</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and illustrated with faces, v, w, x, y, z and ai,</td>
<td></td>
<td>were capitals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>All letters taught and j, v, w, x, y, z</td>
<td>Sounds taught</td>
<td>Letters not taught</td>
<td>Two reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>All letters taught</td>
<td>Sounds of all</td>
<td>No capital</td>
<td>Three reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>All letters</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>Two capitals</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Could scribe from action but not recognize</td>
<td>Some sounds</td>
<td>Two capitals</td>
<td>No reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>All letters taught and z</td>
<td>Sounds taught</td>
<td>No capitals</td>
<td>No reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>All letters taught and x, z, j</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>One capital</td>
<td>Two reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>two reversals(not letters taught)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>Began copying about halfway through the list</td>
<td>Some sounds</td>
<td>One capital</td>
<td>One reversal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>All letters taught</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>No capitals</td>
<td>No reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Away for assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>All letters taught and J</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>Letters not taught</td>
<td>Two reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Started copying about halfway through</td>
<td>Some sounds</td>
<td>Several strange shaped letters</td>
<td>Two reversals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>All letters</td>
<td>All sounds taught</td>
<td>No capitals</td>
<td>No reversals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B6: Phase A and B Descriptors From the Writing Continuum

The indicators for the writing continuum for Phase A, or role play writing, are:

1. assigns a message to own symbols
2. understands that writing and drawing are different
3. is aware that print carries a message
4. uses letters or approximations of letters to represent written language
5. shows beginning sense of directionality

The attitude described here includes enjoyment and imitated behaviour: ‘the student “writes” for self rather than an audience.’

The indicators for the writing continuum for Phase B or phonetic writing are:

1. reads back own writing
2. attempts familiar forms of writing, e.g. lists, letters, recounts, stories, messages
3. writes using simplified oral language structures, e.g. ‘I brt loles’
4. uses writing to convey meaning
5. realises that print contains a constant message
6. uses left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation of print
7. demonstrates one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word
8. relies heavily on the most obvious sounds of a word

The attitude for Phase B includes “writes spontaneously for self or chosen audience”. When children have all indicators for phase B they are said to be “operating in this phase”.

____________________________________

15
B7: Table 7: Table of Writing Phases at end of School Year
(Class list does not include 5 children who came mid-year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s name</th>
<th>Writing phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Left mid-semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Phase A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>Phase A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Children must have all indicators of a phase in order to be said to be operating in that phase. The key differentiation between A and B writers was the ability to sound out some words and use these in attempting a variety of simple genres. For C level writing, children needed editing and planning skills, and text with variable beginning sentence structures.
I finish singing and enacting Wombat’s song, with children beginning to copy the actions.

Then, Self: Wake up Wombat.
Child: Wake up Wombat.
I sit up quickly. Children sit up.
Self, chuckling: Did you all wake up too?
Self to Wombat: Where are you going to live, Mr. Wombat?
Self as Wombat, in slow, deep voice: Oh, somewhere very dark I need.
I put my fingers on my chin as though contemplating a suitable site.
Self to cohort: The block over there?
Chorus of voices: Yes!
Self to Wombat: Do you like a big high place, Mr. Wombat?
I choose a block from the stack at the back of the mat and hold it ready.
Self as Wombat, sleepily: No, low down.
Self to Wombat: Okay, what if I put it here like that? Is that good, Wombat?
Voice murmurs: Yes.
Michael is standing up beside me. He seems to be hovering on the brink of action with the blocks as I make my puppet peer down at the home I have created.
Self as Wombat: Not dark enough!
I put my hand to my mouth in consternation and look around the room for other possible useful play equipment to add to Wombat’s home.
Self: I know…I know… I know…I know!” (I run to home corner and return with a dress from the costume rack.
Self, muttering: …cover it over
Self: Cover it with a dress. Is that all right Wombat, if I cover it with a dress?
I call down into his burrow.
Self as Wombat: No!
I stand up looking toward home corner.
Lucy: A blanket.

*I hurry back to home corner, collecting one probably from a doll bed. I stand in front of the burrow holding it ready.*

Self: Wombat, is that alright if I cover it with a blanket?

Self as Wombat: Yeah.

Self: Think he just went to sleep.

*I cover him with the blanket then hurry back to my chair.*

Self: Let's get another puppet.

Voice from floor: Another puppet!

Self: Now what shall I get next?

*I contemplate a basket full of Australian animal puppets, finally choosing Cocky.*

Self: This is Cocky. She likes to sing an echo song. She sits up really high in a tree.

*I hold her at arm's length above my head. I sing the words and response. I indicate features of the bird with a touch of my free hand as no particular action is suggested by the words.*

Self: Does anyone have a biscuit?

Self to Cocky: Do you think any of these children have a biscuit?

*I model holding out a flat palm. Children respond to the cue by holding out their hands. I make the cocky squawk loudly as she pecks imaginary grain off their hands.*

Raymond: Got no food for Cocky.

Raymond says he doesn’t have any food for Cocky but others offer their hands.

Self: He’s so fat he can hardly fly. Where are you going to live, Cocky?

*I am flapping the puppet slowly around above the children.*

Self: Would he like a nice low box like that, do you think?

Cocky is flying near Wombat’s burrow.

Chorus of voices (laughing): No!

Self: Where do you want to be?

Self as Cocky (falsetto): Up high

Michael: Look at the high...(inaudible)

He is standing. *I position a block upright above wombat’s burrow.*
Self: Is that a good place?
Self as Cocky: Yes.
Self: Do you want a tree or something?
Self as Cocky: Yes.
*I put another block on top.*
Michael: High.
Self as Cocky: Want a nest!
Self: A nest…
*I look around again as if finding something to represent a nest, and Edward puts his arms out and shrugs dramatically.*
Self: Like this nest, Cocky?
*I hold up a hat.*
Self as Cocky, falsetto: Yes.
*There are chuckles at my choice. I put the hat inside the block and put the puppet in it.*
Michael: What! You’re supposed to put the nest up really high, up there.
*He indicates the top of the block.*
Self: Up there?
Self to Cocky: Do you want to live up there?
Self as Cocky: Yes.
*Lucy chuckles.*
Child: That’s going to fall on me.
Self: Do you think it will? I’ll move it back a bit.
*I slide the top block back further, on the one below.*
Self to child: That be safer?
B9: Questions from Year One Child Interviews (2008)

Q.1: What do you remember about Prep?
Q 2: What was the best thing/s you did in Prep?
Q 3: What things didn’t you like?
Q 4: What do you do in Year one?
Q 5: Do you like to write?
Q 6: What do you like to write?
Q 7: Do you like to read?
Q 8: Which do you like more, reading or writing?
B10: Sample Transcription From Year One Interview 2008

Teacher: What can you remember about Prep?

Annie: When we went to the farm and when we made the turtles…

Teacher: Do you remember the story we did about the turtles?

Annie: No. I remember when we played outside. And we had library days on Tuesdays. And computers…

Teacher: Do you remember any things we did on the carpet?

Annie: Played games

Teacher: What was the best things you did in Prep?

Annie: Playing after we did our work. Playing in home corner.

Teacher: What things didn’t you like?

Annie: Nothing.

Teacher: What do you do in Year one?

Annie: We do work. We’re learning one letter every day. We’re up to “g”.

Teacher: Do you like to write?

Annie: Yep!

Teacher: What do you like to write?

Annie: Stories.

Teacher: Do you like to read?

Annie: Yeah. I can read books that aren’t even on levels…I’ve read to my brother.

Teacher: Do you like reading more or writing?

Annie: I like reading.

Teacher: Do you remember any other things?

Annie: When we had the chicks, and making the blanket, and playing with the blocks. I remember the special spell when we did the “Elves and the Shoemaker”. I liked doing plays. I’m doing a dance show on a real stage.
Appendix C – Data Analysis Materials

C1: Sample Observations From Journal

A day in September, where I was tracking writing behaviours.

Observations: Today’s drama was outstandingly successful in terms of enjoyment and engagement. Ch1 and R were observed by my aide to lose engagement when they moved off centre stage, and the hammers for the cobbler were a little distracting. But generally speaking the children got into the dialogue, and following the action, and the setting of the mood with day time and night. L4 and A2 got into role and maintained it throughout, as did N3 for the first time. Making elves later was very popular, and we left writing about them for tomorrow. We talked about making it into a Christmas production, and they were very keen. Our password was “I was a…” but everyone added a sentence telling me what they liked in the play. Their answers were quite varied and covered all the exciting bits of the story.

I’d like to develop the drama tomorrow with a re-enactment firming up partners, and a role play or interview to explore the themes…maybe a thank-you letter from the elves to the people or from the people to the elves.

There were two interesting pieces of writing in the last two days from J2 and L2. J2 wrote several sentences giving factual data about various different dinosaurs, in the mode of a report. L2 wrote in a similar mode on shells, which were set up on the science table. “Shell are pretty and you can paint shells then you can ?” The last word was indecipherable.” These two snippets of writing suggest an awareness of factual genre writing, which they were attempting to emulate. They are ready to move into the cycle of simple genre writing.

M3 and A1 wrote day and date sentences yesterday and today, and m3 wrote a weather sentence as well.
C2: Sample Weekly Discussion

Sample scanned weekly “discussion” where I reflected on the learning of the week. Four different coloured highlights tracked reference to the four case study children. Underlining indicated reference to my own development as a drama teacher.

**Discussion, Week one, term four.**

I’m only teaching half time at the moment as my student is doing her internship, so there isn’t as much drama direction or directive teaching. She majors on music, but that is a good balance for the children.

The most interesting things that have happened in literacy and drama this week are:

- T has begun to write independently and make connections in her reading.
- Ch2 is remembering sight words and sounding out words.
- L1 has shown some amazing performance initiative and requested performances for every good story we have read, but has been a bit fragile at other times.
- M2 is play-writing everywhere, also writing names and sometimes writing words with recognizable consonants.
- R is writing sentences as one string utterances and showing only the most prominent consonants.
- C, N1, S, P, E, L2, L3, L1, J2, J3, Ch1, M3, A1, T and W have all written spontaneous sentences this week and Ch2, M2, Sh and L4 written them with support. N2 and N3 are needing the most coaxing, and M1 writes fairly easily when asked to but not of his own volition.
- The office theme linked with the show has produced a lot of dramatic play linked with literacy.
- The chicks have been a good stimulus and produced some farm dramatic play.
- The children don’t really understand the purposes of farms.

Goals for the weeks ahead include

- Helping A2, N2, N3, M2, L4 and Ch2 to the use of independent reading strategies.
- Support them in developing enough phonemic understanding to have confidence at composing and writing a sentence.
- Developing the “What am I?” genre to the point that we can write one.
- Developing the dramatic and literacy possibilities of The elves and the Shoemaker.
- Develop their dramatic use of postcard, mantle of the expert, freeze-frames, characterization and mime.
## C3: Table 8: Table of Drama/Play/Literacy Connection for the Whole Cohort (including the four case study children)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Drama session</th>
<th>Embedded literacy</th>
<th>Play response, Immediate directed response, Immediate spontaneous response</th>
<th>Delayed written response (dated), continued play responses</th>
<th>Writing related to other stimuli (date at beginning of row)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30, 31 Jan</td>
<td>Wombat finds a home*</td>
<td>wombats in dramatic play</td>
<td></td>
<td>signs on buildings, Mar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Feb</td>
<td>Wombat sends platypus a thankyou card</td>
<td>copying card, messages</td>
<td>teacher-directed cards</td>
<td>cards (Ray, Annie, Kelly, 18 Feb)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Feb,</td>
<td>The alliterative spell for the statue*</td>
<td>alliterative spell using 's'</td>
<td>establishment of shared garden play world</td>
<td>alliterative spells as passwords outdoors (Lucy, Candice, 14 Feb)</td>
<td>book cover (James) bottle label (Laurence) random letters (Ray)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Feb</td>
<td>Angela the swan moves into the garden</td>
<td>Modelled &quot;Don’t touch&quot; sign</td>
<td>Hotel added to garden</td>
<td>2 Mar sign for the hotel, &quot;Don’t touch&quot; signs copied 5 Mar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Feb</td>
<td>The bird sanctuary</td>
<td>modelling labels for cages</td>
<td>continued use of the play space, doctor and bird play, little literacy</td>
<td>doctor play as responsible carers, charts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Feb</td>
<td>The animal sanctuary</td>
<td>labels on cages</td>
<td>doctor play, paired in-role drama</td>
<td>labels on animal cages-May/Aug</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Feb</td>
<td>The little engine that could</td>
<td>speech bubbles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>Inky gives Angela an invitation</td>
<td>invitations</td>
<td>Hotel play, signs (James)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13, 14 Mar</td>
<td>The wolf and the three little pigs*</td>
<td>sorry card from wolf</td>
<td>Lucy’s letter as pig</td>
<td>Sally sleepover message 13 Mar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 Mar</td>
<td>Goldilocks makes restitution*</td>
<td>sorry card, written and read</td>
<td>sorry cards as directed activity</td>
<td>sorry card for bear from Lucy, 22nd Mar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Mar</td>
<td>Nellie Nurse doing eye checks</td>
<td>Testing letters and sounds</td>
<td>children testing and peer teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21, 22 Mar</td>
<td>The Bear Hunt*</td>
<td>‘m’ for maps, icons, labels</td>
<td>improvisation in cave map making outdoors</td>
<td>map of countries (20 Apr, Peter), map and book of drawings (Ray), labelled maps (Laurence), &quot;$100 to the judge&quot; (James, Mar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>17, 18 April</td>
<td>Monkey &amp; jungle rules</td>
<td>Peer teaching rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>19, 24 April</td>
<td>Monkey and the crocodile*</td>
<td>Rules, memorizing, building of zoo and labelling cages, signs by James on sign</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1-4 May</td>
<td>The forester *</td>
<td>Forester play in play space, sign for Mother’s day picnic, signs on lists</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>Charlie goes camping, sends his mum a card</td>
<td>Writing mother’s day cards, bits of cards written, camping items</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>helicopter rescue using labelled map</td>
<td>Mother’s day cards with maps, police details (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>The bunny and the snake</td>
<td>I am not here: sign to trick the snake, all class make signs in role</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>The snake bite and rescue</td>
<td>Doctor details, James writes details in role, get well card, doctor play</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>Visit to Japan</td>
<td>Making of menus, restaurant play</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21, 22 May</td>
<td>The palaeontologist investigation*</td>
<td>Museum theme carried through with signs, all week</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>The Dragon’s tears</td>
<td>Birthday parties, hospital for sick animals, and vet sign (Lucy), 29 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-31 May</td>
<td>The Three Billy Goats Gruff*</td>
<td>‘g’, signs about trolls, innovation on story ending, conflict resolved</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>Ollie the octopus*</td>
<td>Writing and reading messages, signs on the tennis court</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14, 15 June</td>
<td>Urashima Taro</td>
<td>Narrative, mime, new ending, mermaids and divers, song ballads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17 Jul</td>
<td>Bee story interviews, newspaper</td>
<td><strong>shared newspaper pictures and labels</strong></td>
<td>Day and date and weather sentences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Jul</td>
<td>Vege Soup creating a recipe</td>
<td>shop play</td>
<td>sentences from seven children</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, 9 Aug</td>
<td>Wombat Stew wombat stew recipe, warning sign for Tassie devil, thankyou letter from Wombat</td>
<td><strong>Christmas card (Lucy), cards (Mary), sentences (live ch), signatures (Ray)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Aug</td>
<td>x marks the spot, treasure hunt</td>
<td><strong>magnet sentences about fox</strong></td>
<td>Star Wars book (Peter), sentence on computer (Kelly)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16, 17 Aug</td>
<td>Gingerbread man narrative, and innovation on ending</td>
<td><strong>computer sentence, dinosaur book (Laurence), fire book (Ed), random letters (Martin), signs, (Charlotte, Annie)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>20, 21 Aug</td>
<td>Fire brigade rescue a cat safe fires and “stop, drop, roll”</td>
<td><strong>Raymond, sentence fire and rescue play, including police</strong></td>
<td>puddle sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Aug</td>
<td>Jolly Swagman and the fire that got out of control formal sentence-making, safe fire rules</td>
<td><strong>spontaneous fire messages, compositions (James)</strong></td>
<td>planet book (Ray)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Aug</td>
<td>Zoe the zoo catcher* ‘z’</td>
<td><strong>zoo set up, labelled cages</strong></td>
<td>writing centre</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Aug</td>
<td>zebra escapes z, labels, lists of food</td>
<td><strong>zoo play developed and zoo writing in the writing centre</strong></td>
<td>writing breakthrough for Candice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Sept</td>
<td>Jolly Swagman squatter signs</td>
<td><strong>response sentences in role sentences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Sep</td>
<td>Elves and the Shoemaker sh</td>
<td><strong>response sentences dinosaur sentences (James) details for costumes, stage set (Lucy)</strong></td>
<td>shell description (Kelly)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Sep</td>
<td>An elf wants to thank the shoemaker letter of thanks</td>
<td><strong>sentences about elves</strong></td>
<td>James brings card on 2 Nov for use in play</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 11 Oct</td>
<td>Chicken Licken ch, rhyme</td>
<td><strong>responses to the chickens</strong></td>
<td>holiday recount (Ned), chicken sentence (Simon invitations to Lucy’s show, ticket office (Candice), program (James), postcard (Ed)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Writing Types</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>24, 31</td>
<td>Devising “The Elves and the Shoemaker”</td>
<td>Writing in elves’ shop, and counting money</td>
<td>Laurence fireman book with rules for fires</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-31 Oct</td>
<td>Negotiation in the shoe shop, other shops</td>
<td>Shop play and writing orders</td>
<td>Food orders for shop</td>
<td>Fishing sentence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Retelling and revising the Elves and shoemaker</td>
<td>Development of the improvisation for parent presentation</td>
<td>Peter, adding a ball at the end which finishes at midnight</td>
<td>Elf houses, elf pictures (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Letter to student teacher (Ed),</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6, 7</td>
<td>Disaster in the leather factory</td>
<td>Process in a factory, manufacturer complaint letter</td>
<td>Factory play, leather orders at James (Candice)</td>
<td>School message (Lucy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Nov</td>
<td>Shoes for the ball</td>
<td>Signs and ads to advertise one’s wares</td>
<td>Cards (Ed), life cycles (James)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13, 14</td>
<td>Cinderella goes to the ball</td>
<td>Invitations to the ball</td>
<td>Pictures and writing about the ball (Lucy); set of invitations to ball (Peter, 27th)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>20, 21</td>
<td>The Emperor and the Nightingale</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Pictures and sentence responses, song compositions</td>
<td>Congratulations certificate (Ed), holiday sentence (Michael)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Nov</td>
<td>Cinderella’s ball</td>
<td>Letter of apology from step mother</td>
<td>Letters and cards (Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Dec</td>
<td>Toys for Christmas,</td>
<td>Using Santa’s list</td>
<td>Zoo play redeveloped, letters to Santa (lists and letters in role)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Colour coding:**
- **Green:** dramatic play contexts emerging from guided dramas
- **Red:** immediate spontaneous writing connected to guided dramas
- **Magenta:** immediate teacher-mediated writing
- **Yellow:** delayed spontaneous written responses
### C4: Table 9: Table of drama/play/literacy connection for Edward, Lucy, James and Martin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Drama session</th>
<th>Embedded literacy</th>
<th>Immediate play and written responses</th>
<th>Delayed written and continued play response</th>
<th>Writing related to other stimuli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30, 31 Jan</td>
<td>Wombat finds a home*</td>
<td>wombat needed a sign for ownership</td>
<td>puppets in dramatic play</td>
<td>signs on buildings. Mar (James, Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Feb</td>
<td>The alliterative spell for the statue*</td>
<td>alliterative spell using ‘s’</td>
<td>establishment of shared garden play world</td>
<td>alliterative spells as passwords outdoors (Lucy)</td>
<td>book cover (James)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Feb</td>
<td>Angela the swan moves into the garden</td>
<td>Modelled “Don’t touch” sign</td>
<td>Hotel added to garden</td>
<td>2 Mar sign for the hotel, “Don’t touch” signs copied - James, Edward, Lucy, Martin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Feb</td>
<td>The bird sanctuary</td>
<td>modelling labels for cages</td>
<td>doctor and bird play, Charts</td>
<td>doctor play as responsible carers, charts (James)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Feb</td>
<td>The animal sanctuary</td>
<td>labels on cages</td>
<td>doctor play, paired in-role drama</td>
<td>labels on animal cages; James, Edward, Lucy, Martin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Feb</td>
<td>The little engine that could</td>
<td>speech bubbles</td>
<td>James copied buble</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>Inky gives Angela an invitation</td>
<td>invitations</td>
<td>Hotel play, signs</td>
<td>(James)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13, 14 Mar</td>
<td>The wolf and the three little pigs*</td>
<td>sorry card from wolf</td>
<td>Lucy’s letter at end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16 Mar</td>
<td>Goldilocks makes restitution*</td>
<td>sorry card, written and read</td>
<td>sorry cards as directed activity</td>
<td>sorry card for bear from Lucy, 22” Mar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Mar</td>
<td>Nellie Nurse doing eye checks</td>
<td>Testing letters and sounds</td>
<td>children testing and peer teaching</td>
<td>James, Edward, Lucy and Martin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21, 22 Mar</td>
<td>The Bear Hunt*</td>
<td>‘m’ for maps, icons, labels</td>
<td>improvisation of cave map making</td>
<td>Maps (Lucy) &quot;$100 to the judge&quot; (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Relevant Documents/Actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>19, 24 Apr</td>
<td>Monkey and the crocodile*</td>
<td>warning sign, thank you card from Cocky</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>building of zoo and labeling pages, signs by James on 24th</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>warning sign for Raymond (James, Apr 30th), cards (Lucy)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sign for letter of the week (Lucy),</td>
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<tr>
<td>1- 4 May</td>
<td>The forester *</td>
<td>writing petition in role, thankyou letter</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>forester play in play space.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sign for Mother’s day picnic (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>Charlie goes camping, sends his mum a card</td>
<td>writing mother’s day cards</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bits of cards, written, camping theme</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More cards to mums; (James, Lucy, Edward, Martin)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>helicopter rescue</td>
<td>labels, icons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>police details (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>The bunny and the snake</td>
<td>I am not here: sign to trick the snake</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All class make signs in role</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>children reading signs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>The snake bite and rescue</td>
<td>doctor details</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>James writes details in role, get well card, doctor play</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hospital for sick animals, and vet sign (Lucy), 29 May, signs outdoors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>Visit to Japan</td>
<td>Recipe, greetings in Japanese</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>making of menus, restaurant play</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading menus, more menus (Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21, 22 May</td>
<td>The palaeontologist investigation*</td>
<td>note-taking and recording observations</td>
<td></td>
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<td>museum and dinosaur signs, enactment of volcanic eruption</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>museum theme carried through with signs, all week (James, Lucy, Edward, Martin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>The Dragon’s tears</td>
<td>birthday cards, narrative and dialogue</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>birthday parties, fish, card making</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>continued card making (James, Lucy, Edward, Martin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-31st May</td>
<td>The Three Billy Goats Gruff*</td>
<td>‘g’, signs about trolls, innovation on story ending</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>conflict resolved with writing of card, building of bridges with signs, roll play, fishing by the river</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>writing in the play space constantly, and play space following up several themes simultaneously, incl. zoo with signs (1 Jun) (James, Lucy, Edward, Martin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Focus Area</td>
<td>Teachers/Students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 June</td>
<td>Ollie the octopus*</td>
<td>‘o’, rescue message in a bottle</td>
<td>writing and reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>messages, most of class</td>
<td>more rescue and bottle</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>messages, signs on the tennis court</td>
<td>messages (James, Edward)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14, 15 June</td>
<td>Urashima Taro narrative</td>
<td>narrative, mime, new ending</td>
<td>Bermaids and divers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bo sign (Martin), thankyou letter</td>
<td>song ballads (Lucy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Bee story</td>
<td>interviews, newspaper</td>
<td>shared</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>newspaper pictures and labels</td>
<td>Lucy, James, Edward</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentences (James)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16, 17 Aug</td>
<td>Gingerbread man narrative</td>
<td>narrative, and innovation on ending</td>
<td>magnets</td>
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<td>sentences about fox</td>
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<td>Fox sentence (Lucy)</td>
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<td>Cat sentence (Edward)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>day and date (Lucy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20, 21 Aug</td>
<td>Fire brigade rescue a cat</td>
<td>safe fires and “stop, drop, roll”</td>
<td>Raymond</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>sentence, fire and rescue</td>
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<td>play, including police</td>
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<td>fire book {Edward},</td>
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<td>random letters {Martin}</td>
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<td>puddle sign (James)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 Aug</td>
<td>Jolly Swagman and the fire</td>
<td>formal sentence-making, safe fire rules</td>
<td>spontaneous fire</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that got out of control</td>
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<td>messages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>compositions (James)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sentence (Edward)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Aug</td>
<td>Zoe the zoo catcher*</td>
<td>‘z’</td>
<td>zoo set up,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>labelled cages</td>
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<td>Signs, letter and card</td>
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<td>writing, (Lucy, James,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Edward)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Aug</td>
<td>zebra escapes</td>
<td>z, labels, lists of food</td>
<td>zoo play</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>developed and</td>
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<td>zoo writing in the</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>writing centre</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>zoo books (Ed, James,)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Sept</td>
<td>Jolly Swagman squatter signs</td>
<td>response</td>
<td>Comment Edward</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentences in roll sentences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Sep</td>
<td>Elves and the Shoemaker</td>
<td>sh</td>
<td>response</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>sentences</td>
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<td>dinosaur sentences</td>
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<td>(James)</td>
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<td>details for</td>
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<td>costumes, stage set</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Devising and developing the</td>
<td>ch, rhyme</td>
<td>Writing in the shop, and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>play</td>
<td></td>
<td>counting money</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Edward, James</td>
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<td>invitations to Lucy’s</td>
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<td>show, program (James),</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>postcard (Edward)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Developing “The Elves and shoemaker” unit</td>
<td>development of the improvisation for parent presentation</td>
<td>Cards (Edward), life cycles (James), pictures and writing about the ball (Lucy), song compositions (Edward)</td>
<td>letter to student teacher (Edward), School message (Lucy), Congratulation certificate (Ed), Poems (Lucy and James)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dec</td>
<td>Toys for Christmas, using Santa’s list</td>
<td>lots of toys, play in toy factory, own lists for Santa, cards</td>
<td>zoo play redeveloped, letters to Santa (lists and letters in role, Edward, James, Lucy, Martin )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Colour coding:**
- **Green:** dramatic play contexts emerging from guided dramas
- **Red:** immediate spontaneous writing connected to guided dramas
- **Magenta:** immediate teacher-mediated writing
- **Yellow:** delayed spontaneous written responses
Appendix D – Drama Plans from Key Events

D1: Table 10: Key event one: “Wombat Looks for a home”

30th - 31st January

Session one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To focus attention and encourage participation</th>
<th>Greeting song, name song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puppet songs</td>
<td>To build setting as homes of Australian animals and show children the potential of the available play equipment</td>
<td>Sing each Australian animal's song encouraging children to join in actions and offer suggestions by modelling suggestions from puppets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy event</td>
<td>To encourage children to recognise that names indicate ownership</td>
<td>Label each puppet’s home after or during the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up</td>
<td>To connect puppet labels with our own name signs, and encourage children to draw own homes</td>
<td>Sing about a house and draw it as we go, then add my own name sign over the door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session two</strong></td>
<td><strong>Warm-up</strong></td>
<td><strong>To focus children and direct energy, learn names, encourage individual responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puppet songs</strong></td>
<td><strong>To continue to develop puppet character and children’s empathy with them</strong></td>
<td><strong>Puppet songs from yesterday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puppet drama</strong></td>
<td><strong>To enhance understanding of importance of written names</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wombat bumbles into Platypus’s home by mistake and knocks it down. Platypus is most upset and the children are enlisted to solve the problem, hopefully by suggesting names be written on puppets’ homes.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy event</strong></td>
<td><strong>To explore how to write a name</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discuss the sounds of Cocky’s and the other puppets’ names, using the alphabet song to help, and the beginning of the children’s names. Get children to help write the names</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warm-down game</strong></td>
<td><strong>To read our own names</strong></td>
<td><strong>Find the matching pair, discuss the picture and beginning sound on their cards</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**D2: Table 11: Key event 2: “The alliterative spell for the statue”**

**13th February**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>to settle children in and connect with learning about /s/ yesterday</th>
<th>Alphabet song and jump up for their letter, Choose people to point to the letters.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game pretext</td>
<td>To introduce the statue drama</td>
<td>Statue game, freezing in interesting positions. Unfreeze when I say or point to “s”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretext</td>
<td>to set the scene</td>
<td>Set up a garden using blocks, rocks, scarves and flowers, with a beautiful statue in the garden (aide). Introduce puppet Susie and Charlie to explain in a narrative style that the statue is under a spell by a wicked witch, so she can’t talk, till a counter-spell with alliterative /s/ sound is used to release her. Enrol the children as helpers to devise the alliterative spell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue drama</td>
<td>process drama with puppets</td>
<td>In role as gardener ask for help to break the spell on the statue so she can speak. They must all say the spell together at the stroke of midnight. Now the children are enrolled as animals in the garden who sneak out at night to eat lettuces. At midnight they chant the spell together on cue from gardener and statue comes alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-down</td>
<td>to calm down and reinforce learning</td>
<td>Animals go to sleep and wake as children to go to play when their name is whispered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D3: Table 12: Key event 3: “The wolf and the three little Pigs”

13\textsuperscript{th} March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To connect with the narrative read last week</th>
<th>Sing Peter Coombes “The three little pigs” using the feltboard story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enactment</td>
<td>To reinforce language and plot</td>
<td>Enact with children choosing group roles and setting up shared homes in drama space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot-seat interview</td>
<td>To encourage children to explore perspectives and resolve issues by discussion</td>
<td>In role as wolf with burnt tail answer questions about motives in chasing and eating pigs. Use aide to support questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy event</td>
<td>To understand use of written messages to say “sorry” when resolving conflict</td>
<td>Still in role ask for help to write a message on a card from the wolf to the pigs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D4: Table 13: Key event 4: “Goldilocks makes restitution”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm up</th>
<th>To focus and connect with previous experience with the story, and ordinal understanding to three</th>
<th>Children help set up stage with table, chairs, bowls, spoons and beds of three different sizes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enactment</td>
<td>To revisit the plot and dialogue, encourage confidence with peer audience</td>
<td>Enact story with three children manipulating three different-sized teddy bears and a Goldilocks volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama event</td>
<td>To encourage investigation skills</td>
<td>In role as Mother Bear find shoe tracks, and wonder if Goldilocks has been here again. Find other clues, a flower, golden curl, and note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>To encourage reading and writing letters of apology for unkind acts</td>
<td>Goldilocks’ letter says sorry for breaking the chair and coming in the house, and invites bears to picnic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Variation on plan above (what we actually did)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm up</th>
<th>To focus and connect with previous experience with the story, and ordinal understanding to three</th>
<th>Children help set up stage with table, chairs, bowls, spoons and beds of three different sizes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enactment</td>
<td>To revisit the plot and dialogue, encourage confidence with peer audience</td>
<td>Enact story with three children manipulating three different-sized teddy bears and a Goldilocks volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy event</td>
<td>To reinforce literacy from previous day’s drama</td>
<td>Help Goldilocks write apology letter developing spelling of “sorry” and inviting bears to picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution drama</td>
<td>To build tension and resolve conflict</td>
<td>Goldilocks returns with letter, leaves clues behind her and tiptoes away. Bears read the letter and realise that G wants to make friends. All go for picnic together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D5: Table 14: Key event 5: “The Bear Hunt.”

#### 21st March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To focus energy</th>
<th>Enact the bear hunt as a choral chant around the room or outdoors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretext</td>
<td>To develop tension</td>
<td>Set up a cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srama</td>
<td>To develop imagination</td>
<td>Wonder what might be in the cave and ask for a volunteer to go check it out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax and conclusion</td>
<td>To develop improvisation</td>
<td>Follow the children’s lead and scaffold an adventure based on what they decide is in there. Involve as many as possible using the space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D6: Table 15: Key event six: “The Monkey and the crocodile”

19th April

| Warm-up game | To develop body control and silence | Play “Sleeping lions” as “Sleeping crocodile” with a child as croc covering head, surrounded by puppets which people have to secretly sneak up and rescue |
| Prettest | To connect with yesterday’s tale of “The monkey and the rules of the jungle” | Read “The monkey who didn’t believe in crocodiles” |
| Literacy event | To revisit sign-making | Enlist children to make signs to warn monkey |
| Drama event | To practise reading signs | Take monkey puppet to river and have him read the signs and decide to leave before the crocodile awakes |
D7: Table 16: Key event 7: “The forester”

2nd to 4th May

Session one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To connect with Australian bush theme</th>
<th>Sing and introduce Australian puppets from earlier events, and set up their homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>To discover conservation issues</td>
<td>Come in role as a forester who is about to cut down trees, and puts up a warning sign notifying people to keep out of the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal response</td>
<td>To encourage reading for meaning</td>
<td>Puppets return and wonder what the sign says. Children help read it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion</td>
<td>To encourage thought and discussion</td>
<td>Discuss what to do about the sign, and lead into petition writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>To re-establish setting</td>
<td>Puppet songs and children set up trees and homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretext</td>
<td>To connect with the theme from yesterday</td>
<td>Come in role as the forester and read the petition handed over by one of the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>To look at the effect of the decision on the environment</td>
<td>Think aloud about changing his mind and removing sign Puppets return and are overjoyed that sign is gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>To encourage visualisation</td>
<td>Children lie on a cloud over the bush and listen to the animals describing plan to thank the forester. They imagine them returning to their homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>further literacy link</td>
<td>To encourage another writing activity</td>
<td>Children write shared thank you letter on behalf of the animals, and set up mailbox to post it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Session three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To connect with the theme</th>
<th>Return to class as animals moving in different ways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drama pretext</td>
<td>To reread the message</td>
<td>As forester discover Cocky’s letter on behalf of all the animals and read it aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>To develop imagination and improvisation</td>
<td>Walk in the bush seeing the animals and photographing them. Discover that a wallaby is missing her joey and follow children’s cues to find it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-down</td>
<td>To revisit experience</td>
<td>Set up a camp-fire and discuss the events of the day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D8: Table 17: Key event 8: “The palaeontologist investigation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To connect with dinosaur theme</th>
<th>Dinosaur songs and dance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story pretext</td>
<td>To discover facts about dinosaurs</td>
<td>Read “Dinosaur Bones”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>To explore being palaeontologists</td>
<td>Improvise finding fossils with half being investigators and half being fossils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>review</td>
<td>To develop understanding of process</td>
<td>As curator, question children about discoveries and draw their discoveries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alternative improvisation and follow-up (what we actually did)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>drama</th>
<th>To explore being palaeontologists</th>
<th>In role as chief lead scientists finding bones and model recording and drawing discoveries as we go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>To continue flow into play</td>
<td>Take bones to the museum, and set up dramatic play centre identifying, labelling cages, and developing the centre to include other sections of wild-life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 18: Key event 9: “The three billy goats gruff”

**29th May**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Action/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up game</td>
<td>To encourage active participation</td>
<td>Action song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“everybody do this, then moving at different pace with different drum beats as in different drum beats for billy goats crossing bridge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative circle</td>
<td>To refresh and strengthen story line</td>
<td>Magic stick points to different people to enact a chunk from the story as it is told round the circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>To introduce need for signs</td>
<td>In role as smallest billy goat worry about troll coming back, and suggest signs to warn other billy goats, which children make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation</td>
<td>To develop their ideas and lead into action</td>
<td>Draw what they think happens next, with dialogue included as speech bubbles, then have children in small groups enact the event. Choose one group who would like to present their development to the rest of the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D10: Table 19: Key event 10: “Ollie the Octopus”

**5th June**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>To focus energy and theme “under the sea”</th>
<th>Octopus blues song/dance and mermaid song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretext game</td>
<td>To connect with ‘o’ and lead into drama (it has a rescue using a riddle of opposites)</td>
<td>Ollie likes the opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>To focus on reading as crucial literacy event</td>
<td>Message in a bottle from his friend Owen to say he is caught in a trap. Follow children’s lead as to who has trapped him and where. Find and rescue him with the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-down</td>
<td>To restore calm</td>
<td>Starfish floating song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alternative drama and ending (what we actually did)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>drama</th>
<th>To focus on reading as crucial literacy event</th>
<th>Message in bottle from his friend Owen to say he is caught in a trap. Follow children’s lead as to who has trapped him and where. In role as divers and mermaids find and rescue him with special key and rope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>To flow into play</td>
<td>Provide bottles and paper for children to pair up as rescuers and rescued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## D11: Table 20: Key event 11: “Zoe the zoo-catcher”

### Session One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene setting pretext</th>
<th>To introduce the zoo</th>
<th>Sing zoo songs then invite children to set up African forest scene with trees and rock pool. Invite children to settle in as animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy event and character introduction</td>
<td>To introduce lists and the protagonist</td>
<td>Zoe comes in with a list of animals she needs for her zoo and reads it out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drama</td>
<td>To develop tension and issues around conservation</td>
<td>She begins to “catch animals and load them in her truck” (mime) but is intercepted by a warden (another adult) who argues against animals being taken from the wild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resolution</td>
<td>To problem-solve and resolve issues fairly, and to discuss animal needs for food, water and hygiene</td>
<td>Zoe is convinced to go to another zoo. She rings up and asks to buy animals there. The zoo keeper asks if she can provide for them adequately. Children become the animals at Melbourne zoo with the second adult taking the role as zoo keeper there, negotiating sale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Session Two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dramatic play</strong></td>
<td>To establish zoo with animals imported from Melbourne zoo</td>
<td>Children become either keepers or animals coming in cages by plane from Melbourne and having a suitable enclosure with food and water and shelter set up for them (then swap)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy event</strong></td>
<td>To label cages and other literary features of zoos</td>
<td>Label cages, add warning signs and feeding time clocks, tickets for entry to zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drama event</strong></td>
<td>To develop play flow and tension</td>
<td>A cage is discovered empty and tracks are followed. Slow up resolution by deciding how a zebra can be caught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Possible Resolution or debrief&gt;</td>
<td>To calm and focus and develop language of narrative</td>
<td>Story board or discuss what happened in role as reporter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: we didn’t do the debrief but allowed the play and literacy to flow on into dramatic play
**D12: Table 21: Key event 12: “The elves and the shoemaker”**

Weeks 3-10, term four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit outline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this unit students will explore the world of the fairy tale and aspects of the narrative through dramatic and literary activities. They will have opportunities to engage with lists, posters, ads for shops, retells and written recounts, letters of thanks and invitations, and a “Who am I?” to develop character understanding. They will work together with the teacher to devise a presentation piece from the original improvised enactment of the story, with dialogue, including the language of shopping negotiations, and costume, sets and props from our own play resources. The piece should include dance and song. Children will engage with craft suggested by the play world, including sewing and making shoes. Dramatic play centres will include a shoe shop, bank, post-office, leather factory, ball, and elves workshop. Stories from the fairy tales of the era will complement the exploration of the original tale, especially those of Hans Christian Anderson. Elves stories will connect in to Christmas activities at the end of the unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence: Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enactment of “The elves and the shoemaker” with follow-up play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of plans for the unit and fairy tales they know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning activities, including dramatic play and guided drama events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drama introducing suggested Thank-you letter to shoemakers from elves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe shop with play money and pairs of variety of shoes, shoemaker tools, sewing equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama introducing need for ads and posters and signs so people know about the shop when they need shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather factory process, viewing then enacting the process of curing leather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic play around factory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing clothes with wool and card and large needles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making shoes from card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up a bank and grocery shop to understand flow of goods,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
services and finance.
Post office and process of sending and receiving mail.
Read and dramatise “The Ugly Duckling”, “The Emperor and the Nightingale”, “Cinderella” and other fairy tales children bring in to show.
Learn dance and song to include in performance.
Devise scenes for performance gradually over a few weeks and develop role groups as customers, wives, shoemakers and elves.
Present as a puppet play as well to enhance knowledge of dialogue then provide puppets for further exploration.
Take different roles in the drama to develop dialogue and characterisation alongside children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present “The Elves and the shoemaker” to parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film it and review performance to see if they have developed any critical awareness of features of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama sending elves to assist Santa in Christmas presents and cards since the shoemaker and wife no longer need their services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social learning about wider community of shops, purchase, needs and service providers, and the interconnection between these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths connections: time, day and night, yesterday, today, tomorrow, counting pairs (in twos) of shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English: language of written texts: fairy tales, letter format and content, critical literacy of signs and ads and how to make them effective (bold, bright, uncluttered, clear message), story shape-introduction, body, ending, with climax and resolution, message of fairy tales.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix E – Participant Summary

#### E1: Table 22: Attendance list showing arrivals and departures of participating children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Arrival in prep class</th>
<th>Departure from school</th>
<th>Continuing at school to end of 2008 *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>After 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>April 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Repeated year one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*repeated Prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>Jan 2006, as preschooler</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: # Three other transient children who came in mid-year were non-participants in the PhD extension of the original Master’s study because their whereabouts could no longer be traced by 2008.
**E2: Table 23: Table of Background information on the entering children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age at 29th January, 2007, # in years and months.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position in family at time of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Eldest of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>5:2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Youngest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>4:7</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Youngest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>5:3</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Eldest of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>4:8</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Eldest of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Youngest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>5:2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Younger of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>4:8</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Youngest of four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Elder of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence</td>
<td>5:1</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Eldest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Youngest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Third of four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Only child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ned</td>
<td>4:10</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Elder of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>4:9</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Younger of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Elder of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>5:3</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Elder of two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>5:2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Youngest of three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>4:8</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Third of four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>5:0</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Second of three</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: # Children were within an eight month age range.