

**Recognition and support of children with
speech, language and communication needs:
knowledge, policy and practice.**

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Commentary in support of PhD by publication.

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Declaration

I declare that all the material which is not my own has, to the best of my ability, been acknowledged. The material in this thesis has not been submitted previously by the author for a degree at this or any other university.

Date 06/06/16

Signature

Abstract

The thesis considers how early years and primary teachers support children with speech, language and communication needs and how mentors might then support student primary teachers in advancing their understanding of language development. The study discusses how, in the process, teachers might draw on and interact with their own knowledge, the constructed reality of their work place and the wider imperatives that shape their day-to-day practice. These three interconnecting themes of knowledge, policy and practice are examined by drawing on a variety of research methods including interview, questionnaire and desk-based research.

The thesis proposes that the role of the teacher as a communicator needs to be placed much more in the foreground and is the central skill to be fostered as part of the very complex and demanding position held. Initial training and ongoing continuous professional learning should promote teachers' identification and advancement of their own communication skills. Prioritising these skills is crucial so that teachers can first recognise and then support the communication development of pupils with speech, language and communication needs, and the elaboration of these skills in all pupils.

The accompanying commentary uses two vehicles to reflect on the body of work presented: a structured analytic approach to analyse the papers presented and autoethnographic interviews to contextualise the author's research journey as a teacher-educator whose professional background is speech and language therapy and teaching.

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Introduction

The thesis considers how teachers firstly recognise and then support children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and secondly how specific activities provided by the university might enable mentors to support trainee teachers' (hereafter referred to as students) understanding of language development. It discusses how the three elements of: teacher knowledge, the reality of practice and the impact of policy might influence the identification and support of pupils with SLCN. The thesis uses a variety of research methods including interview, questionnaire and desk-based research. This commentary uses two vehicles to reflect on the body of work presented: a structured analysis of the papers presented and an autoethnographic interview approach to contextualise the author's research journey. The purpose of these tools is to add to both the reflexivity and the coherence of the commentary by applying the same reflective processes to all six papers. Further detail will be provided in chapter one.

Orientation to the thesis

This commentary begins with an introduction to myself as a researcher and presents a table of the papers under consideration. Within chapter one, I provide an explanation of the theoretical background to the research followed by a rationale and description of the approaches used to reflect on the papers submitted. Chapters two, three and four then go on to address the following research questions:

1. What do teachers understand about typical and atypical language development?
2. How is teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development shaped?
3. How might tasks set by the university enable mentors in schools to support student teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development?

The response to these questions draws on both empirical and theoretical evidence. The commentary reflects on my understanding of: what teachers in principle can access to support their knowledge of typical and atypical language development; what they may actually use; and what they may find difficult to engage with in practice. The commentary concludes with a discussion of how the research has informed my development as a teacher-educator and as a researcher, and the contribution of the thesis to our understanding of

how teachers recognise and support children with SLCN. Throughout the commentary I use the convention of referring to each of the papers by a number within brackets, with the most recent publication as (1) and the oldest (6). Where groups of papers are referred to, they will be ordered chronologically, from the oldest, to most recently published (6, 5, 4) unless there is a particular reason to alter this, which would be outlined in the text.

The person behind the research

My formal introduction to research began when, as a non-class-based teacher and SENCO, I studied for a Master's in Education between 1995 and 1997. However the original impetus for the work considered here began many years earlier. From 1987 – 1989, working as a speech and language therapist with a large clinical caseload of children with SLCN, I became increasingly frustrated at how little I could achieve, in the discrete amount of time I spent with each child, despite my best efforts at inter-professional working and 'training up' of parents and teachers. A career change later and I became a classroom teacher, with detailed knowledge of speech and language development and yet still I was perturbed at how little impact I was having on children with SLCN. Paraphrasing autoethnographic interview 1 (November 2013), I felt a real tension between what I perceived to be the specific needs of one individual against the general education of a class of thirty, some of whom were not recognised by speech and language therapists (SALTs) and/or other professionals as needing specialist or targeted help, but whose less well developed language was affecting their academic progress.

The initial platform for this research began in 2001 with the project 'Children's speech and language development: An investigation of the knowledge, skills and understanding of early years professionals', funded by the Nuffield Foundation (Mroz, Letts, Santer and Hall, 2002). At that point I had completed three years as a Lecturer in Education working principally in the education of PGCE students training to be primary and early years teachers. Over the next 14 years, that professional landscape changed significantly; teaching on the early years route ended in 2005 and there was a continued shift of the initial 'training' of teachers to be school-led and school-based. Earlier papers focused on early years educators and their understanding of speech and language, thus papers 6, 5 and 4 draw on this group. Latterly my research centred on my role as a teacher-educator and the developmental needs and understanding of primary teachers and pre-service teachers (students) in relation to

children's expressive and receptive spoken language development (3, 1). Despite the change in settings explored, the range of professionals included and the age group of children that professionals engaged with, the coherence of my research is demonstrated through the ongoing concern with teacher and student knowledge of typical and atypical language development, the interaction with policy and the impact on practice.

Within the commentary I use the term 'teachers' when clearly some of the earlier submissions draw upon data from other professionals, for example nursery nurses and classroom assistants (papers 6, 4 and 2). However, within the original Nuffield project, teachers were the largest professional group to respond to the questionnaire (35.4%, 294 individuals) and comprised 36% of the interviewees. Whilst there were some differences between professional groups these details do not impact on the broader response to the key thesis questions. I use the term 'educator' where professional groups beyond teachers are included. The term 'student' refers to pre-service teachers. Table 1 presents the titles of the papers and the percentage contribution.

	Publications submitted in support of this thesis	% contribution
1	Mroz M. (2014) 'Off the radar: the framing of speech, language and communication in the description of children with special educational needs in literacy'. <i>Journal of Education and Training Studies</i> 2; 3, 88-103	100
2	Mroz, M. and Letts, C. (2014) 'Early years education, language and social background'. <i>European Journal of Applied Linguistics</i> 2;1, 79-100	70
3	Mroz, M. (2012) 'Meeting the recommendations of the Bercow report on services for children with speech, language and communication needs in England: The challenges and the potential within initial teacher training'. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> ; 28; 309-324	100
4	Mroz, M. and Letts, C. (2008) 'Interview stories: Early years practitioners' experiences with children with speech, language and communication needs'. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> ; 24; 73-93	70
5	Mroz, M. (2006) 'Teaching in the foundation stage: How current systems support teachers' knowledge and understanding of children's speech and language'. <i>International Journal of Early Years Education</i> 14: 45-61	100
6	Mroz, M. (2006) 'Providing training in speech and language for education professionals: challenges, support and the view from the ground'. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> 22, 155-76	100

Table 1 Papers submitted in support of this thesis: the title of the papers and the percentage contribution

Papers 6, 5 and 4 drew on data gathered from Mroz M., Hall, E., Santer, J. and Letts, C. (2002) *Children's speech and language development: an investigation of the knowledge, skills and understanding of early years professionals*. University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Report submitted to the Nuffield Foundation (2002). Later papers, 3 and 1, relate to my role as a teacher-educator on a Primary PGCE.^{1, 2, 3}

¹ Forms detailing the agreed percentage allocations for jointly published work can be found in Appendix A.

² Full publications can be found in a separate document submitted with this thesis.

³ Abstracts for each paper can be found in Appendix B.

Chapter 1. Theoretical background to the commentary and the approaches used to support reflection on the research.

Introduction

The theoretical starting point of this commentary is that language development is determined by complex social and cultural constructs in which the expectations of others including family, professional groups charged with nurturing and caring for children and wider society, collude and compete. In parallel with this view of language there is a more positivist perspective from the discipline of speech and language therapy (SALT) that specifies what, within a range, may be classed as typical or atypical language development. Therefore, this commentary seeks to juxtapose these perspectives so that the recognition and support of pupils with SLCN is conceptualised as drawing on a disparate, yet connected body of educators' understandings, understandings of their interaction with their own knowledge, their practice in class and school, and the wider policy context. In order to frame facets of the thesis I have used Day, Stobhart, Sammons and Kington's (2006) well-established socio-cultural model which outlines the diverse aspects that contribute to the variations in teacher effectiveness (overleaf). I justify the placing of 'teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development' at the centre of the model as the place of language, especially spoken language, 'is the basis for at least five of the ten Teaching and Learning Research Programme's principles for effective teaching and learning' (Teaching and Learning Research Programme/Economic Social Research Council,) cited in Alexander (2010: p305). This project is the largest programme of coordinated research in teaching and learning that the UK has ever known and has been widely disseminated to practitioners.



Figure 1 Mroz (2014): Conceptual model of the ecology in which teacher knowledge of typical and atypical language is shaped and applied (hereafter referred to as the Ecology Model of Language). Adapted from Day, C.W., Stobart, G., Sammons, P. and Kington, A. (2006)

The model in figure 1 is understood within a socio-cultural view of teaching and learning in which communication, thinking and learning are processes that are shaped by the cultural context, where knowledge is shared and where understandings are jointly and severally negotiated and constructed. This socio-cultural perspective has arisen from the work of psychologists such as Vygotsky and Bruner who have 'redefined cognitive development as a dialogue rather than a process of individual discovery and growth' (Mercer, p.165). My views of teachers' knowledge of language development and the latter's central role in learning draw on the work of Vygotsky and his theories in relation to language acquisition, to learning and the links between these aspects. It should be noted, however, that the reading of his theories is reliant on limited translations of his original work from the 1920s and 1930s that were not widely available in the West until the 1970s and 80s. The translations are also based on an interpretation of his intentions and theories which the passing decades and new empirical and psychological research will have influenced (Bartlett, Burton and Peim, 2001). In addition Vygotsky's theories were founded principally on a one-to-one relationship between a child and their parent (see below). However this view is complicated as our expectations have changed, for example, about where and with whom language acquisition takes place as many children from a few months old are now in paid-for care such as nursery settings and childminders. Since the 1970s Vygotsky's theories, for example his central tenet of guidance within the Zone of Proximal development (ZPD), have been applied to very different contexts such as whole-class teaching in which the teaching-learning relationship differs markedly; the teacher: pupil ratios are higher than in a parent: child dyad; the detailed knowledge of each child more limited and the relationship between teachers and pupils more fragmented.

Vygotsky's view of language acquisition was that it was an active learning process involving interaction between a child and their parent and developed as a result of children using language to take part in the life of their community. He saw language as having two different but related functions. Firstly it is viewed as a communicative or cultural tool which enables humans to share, to interact with others and to develop the knowledge 'the culture' that allows us to exist in a social organisation. Secondly Vygotsky considered language as central to thinking and that from an early age it begins to be used increasingly as a basis for 'thinking

out loud'(Long et al, 2000); it is a psychological tool to reason, to organise individual thoughts, to plan and review our actions.

Vygotsky's view on children's learning was that it stems from their experiences with the individuals (usually parents) who interact closely with the child from an early age. Learning is seen as an active process which, whilst initially built on direct actions and experiences, leads eventually to more abstract and complex thought. Vygotsky believed that these earliest understandings arose from the support that resulted from their interaction with knowledgeable adults and he was particularly interested in the asymmetrical relationship between an individual who knows more than the other (Long et al 2000). Central to understanding Vygotsky's view of learning is the principle of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978 p.86). He proposed that the interaction processes of, for example, discussion and argumentation that take place between a child and more knowledgeable other (the intermental development) then become internalised as the basis for processes that subsequently occur within the child (intramentally). Vygotsky's thinking highlights the social dimension of learning and stresses the linguistic (and symbolic) aspects of early learning interactions (Bartlett, Burton and Peim, 2001). He also proposed the key roles of language in the development of thought and of talk as a learning tool.

Bruner's research and interpretations of Vygotsky's work led him to place an emphasis on structured interventions, such as those that might be planned for in a classroom, within communicative learning models. Bruner developed a theory of scaffolding of learning (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976) based on Vygotsky's ZPD. The scaffolding metaphor proposed by Wood, (1976) to describe Bruner's approach explains how the adult provides the initial assistance, allows the child to construct their understanding and then withdraws this support when the child is able to be independent. The help provided needs to be particularly sensitive allowing the learner to become more and more competent in order to eventually complete the task alone. A key role for the adult within this scaffolding process is to encourage the child into the activity, to demonstrate or model helpful behaviours and to maintain the child within the zone of proximal development using contingent tutoring. A

major tool to support the scaffolding process is that of language both from the teacher in terms of, for example, additional instructive steps or questions at appropriate points and from the learner in terms of their response to the language used (Long et al, 2000). As a class teacher this scaffolding can take place at all phases of learning whether in whole class teaching to ensure that explanations are well-matched or as part of feedback to individuals, groups or the whole class.

The overview of Vygotsky's work with its emphasis on social interaction and language as both a cultural and a psychological tool which can be employed in the zone of proximal development and the subsequent development of Bruner's ideas around scaffolding using language as the major vehicle for learning, provides an elaboration in support of having teachers' knowledge of language development and its role in learning as central to the ecology model. In order to scaffold 'just enough', the teacher needs to have a complex view of the multiple factors at play in language development and to relate that to the individual child. One could also make the argument that in order for the scaffolding to happen most effectively the teacher should also be aware of their own ZPD, for example to acknowledge where they might need further support to enable a child to learn. Fundamental to the theories of Vygotsky and Bruner are social interaction and cultural conventions, thus learning is viewed as developing through a socio-cultural lens; the context in which learning occurs, the social knowledge which learners bring and the nature of their dialogue and collaboration are critical. This complex view of learning sits well with teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development and refutes traditional views where learning is seen as development through discrete pedagogical activities. Clearly teachers do not gain understanding of children's language development in a linear and atomistic manner. The model presented suggests that the classroom within the school and the school itself are viewed as complex social settings. In these situations learning is jointly and severally constructed and created amongst the individual, other educators, learners, activities and tools.

The model above is framed within an interpretivist epistemology in that each of us constructs our world in a different way which is open to interpretation by ourselves and others. However my preparation to become a speech and language therapist in the 1980s was situated within a positivist view of knowledge; I was to identify individuals who had

failed to achieve a certain level of competence on, for example, a test score. The formal testing we conducted had right or wrong answers and the standards that determined whether a child's development was typical or atypical were verified against other children of similar age. When it came to 'treatment' interventions there were, to some extent at least, solutions to key areas of difficulty, for example a verbal dyspraxia programme suitable for children thus identified and the Derbyshire 'two words together' programme for children who remained at the one information carrying word stage beyond an agreed chronological age. For me as a speech and language therapist there was both a body of knowledge that I needed to understand in terms of the typical development of various aspects of language and how I then identified this in my child client group. There was a sense of certainty about what a typically developing two year old's language would look and sound like, for example, whilst acknowledging some variation within. Even at the earliest stages of writing the original Nuffield bid I retained this positivist stance essentially seeing teacher knowledge of speech and language development as at least partially a problem of finding out what teachers already know and then 'filling in the gaps' in that 'body of knowledge'.

As I wrote my PhD through publications this meant that I did not set out with a clearly defined framework derived from prior theory or research which then went on to clarify the key research questions and determine the best solutions. In contrast the development of my conceptual framework was more of an organic process arrived at from reflections on already published work which had a research framework implicit within but which was not fully articulated. Over the course of writing the papers and drawing together my commentary there was a considerable shift in my world view resulting in my subsequent arrival at a position that was more aligned to interpretivism. However, despite this change I do still see a place for a positivist perspective for teachers who at some point, whilst acknowledging and accepting the variation in children's language, will need to use their knowledge, skills and understanding of language development to ensure that children are referred to speech and language therapy for further investigation. Equally for teachers who might have a 'deficit view' of the language of their communities (an assessment that the language used is somehow of inferior quality or value compared to, for example, the language of the school) the enduring value of either a test with standardised scores and/ or information on developmental norms, can prove very useful to challenge unsubstantiated

perspectives, as exemplified in Fisher and Larkin, 2008. The important consequence of such a challenge should be that teachers would then have high and appropriate expectations of the children with all of the attendant impact on progress and outcomes.

An interpretivist stance implies that we are interested in people and how they interrelate, what they are thinking about, how they form ideas and how their worlds are constructed (Thomas, 2009). An interpretivist perspective is more complex than a positivist one, because it acknowledges that understanding is constructed by each of us in a different way. Thus, for example, how teachers learn and their knowledge of language development is very much dependent on their prior knowledge, their context, the interactions with other professionals, pupils and parents which will differ amongst individual teachers. The interpretivist stance also implies that I am a participant to some extent in my research situation and comprehend it as an insider –thus, for example, my prior experiences and understandings as both a teacher and speech and language therapist were important to the questions I framed to early years practitioners and how I interpreted their responses. The interpretivist paradigm underpins the methodological approaches of the research conducted, for example the ‘naturalistic’ narrative interview approach was used based on the belief that narrative is central to human behaviour. Whilst all interviewees were presented with the same four core questions, the interpretivist stance acknowledges that each interviewee may have understood the questions differently and that this would result in very different answers. The interest in perceptions, in thoughts or actions as described threads through the empirical publications. The structured, yet relatively open nature of the core question of each teacher’s ‘story’ of working with a child with a language difficulty, supported the view that learning is jointly constructed i.e. the teacher expressed their thoughts and the interviewer facilitated the ‘telling’ so that she understood and in doing so potentially helped the interviewee to clarify their thinking.

I align myself to an interpretivist stance because it allows the researcher to not just acknowledge the variation in perspectives but to seek to understand these. The benefits of this comprehension and the greater insights into how people view the world is that it potentially enables researchers, policy makers and others to have a richer understanding from which to act. I do acknowledge, however, that my own background and experiences will continue to present a tension - the interpretivist and socially constructive perspectives are in dialogue with more positivist views throughout various aspects of my work. The key to

the differences in my position relates to the issues of pragmatism i.e. I seek to do research which has a real world impact. Thus, for example, it was useful to know the percentage of teachers who were unable to recognise the language difficulties of a case-study 'child' within the age group they taught as it provided some sense of the scale of the problem. Similarly it was beneficial to comprehend what teachers understand about their role in relation to pupils with language difficulties and how they identify and support them. Whilst the latter will be different for every individual professional the interviews still present the range of possible responses and the key issues that arise for many. If I consider, as a reflexive professional, my own zone of proximal development this will continually be challenged and developed based on the interactions I have with others who are more knowledgeable in a particular sphere. My awareness of the tensions in perspective is a strength as it serves to support my understanding and communication between the different professionals and individuals with whom I work.

The model presented above does not exist in a vacuum but rather is subsumed into a societal view of definitions of typical and atypical language, how teachers learn and importantly, what it means to be a teacher of early years and primary pupils. The development of the model is a culmination of my considerations of what teacher learning in relation to language development 'looks like' and how it is fostered. As stated my original understanding conceived that teachers could acquire a set body of knowledge which, if incomplete, could then be remedied by 'filling in the gaps'. This approach drew on a positivist view of learning where there was set, measurable and accountable knowledge to be attained. Through experience, discussion, reading and reflection this simplistic knowledge acquisition model was revised and the analysis of interviews in particular were instructive in confirming my shift to the view that learning is a joint and several construction between individuals within their particular contexts. The development of understanding by teachers as individuals is highly situated within their own context; the practices they engage in, the ethos of the organisation and on their own values and belief systems. Thus, for example, whilst Government may insist on particular approaches to developing early reading, teachers whilst appearing to conform to expectations, will use their understanding as developed with others over space and time, to re-construct a vision of their reading practice.

The model above provides an overview of the factors that might impact on teachers' knowledge of language development, however it does not detail their multifaceted role. Murray and Passy (2014) summarised the changing nature of the teacher role and its increased demands from the period 1974 to 2014. They concluded that the first expectation was that teachers 'have a responsibility to engage all pupils with curricular learning; lesson planning, observation and evaluation all focus on the types of learning that should be achieved by pupils, with the result that lessons can be highly differentiated' (498, 2014). Secondly teachers are now required to respond to and address the ways in which education can perpetuate inequality. However, the introduction of compensatory approaches, Every Child Matters (HM Government, 2003), Extended Schools (DfES 2005) and Pupil Premium (DfE, 2010) may then lead to extra work for the teacher. In addition teachers are now working with increased numbers of children who speak English as an additional language which requires that they develop an understanding of different cultures alongside their ability to develop inclusive and innovative curricular approaches. Finally teachers are now expected to have a deeper level of knowledge of child health and welfare as a result of attempts to integrate education, care and health services. Coupled to the role changes are the increased demands related to accountability procedures of a target and performance oriented system (Ball, 2003) both through external bodies such as Ofsted and the publication of school league tables but also through closer monitoring by Local Authorities as they try to meet Government targets. The changes in society and in Government policy mean that expectations of what is entailed in being a twenty-first century teacher are potentially boundless. I would argue, from both from my theoretical stance and my background experience, that the key to potentially meeting the many and varied role demands is to highlight and promote the place of language at the centre of the education process as both the means to communicate and as the key tool for teaching and learning. The ability of a teacher to fulfil their central classroom role in areas of lesson planning and differentiation for increasingly diverse groups is underpinned both by acknowledging the importance of suitably tailored language from teacher to pupils and between pupils and by ensuring the appropriate development of pupils' language. The power and influence of an individual teacher is crucial as fundamentally how children's language development is supported rests

on the way in which an individual teacher, as a communicator in the classroom, frames how the development of children's spoken and receptive language is perceived and addressed.

Whilst the representation above presents a clear and, on the surface, quite a simple model of teachers' learning of language development in reality each aspect is more complicated as revealed by a focus on the nature of school-based professional learning. Schools may, based on Stenhouse's (1975) approach to professional development, enable individual teachers to research and ask questions of their own practice and then collaborate with others within and beyond school to impact on both their own teaching and pupil learning. The potential is then to scale up this research across contexts such as clusters of schools. However the ethos, structures and support needed to maintain such an approach have been severely compromised in the last twenty years or so (Richards and Alexander, 2010) by political, organisational and financial constraints within the English education system. These restrictions have militated against genuine enquiry into a teacher's own practice and to collaborative learning.

Political influence in the form of top-down involvement from the Government has tightened both the agenda and form of continuous professional development (McNamara, Brundett and Webb 2010 cited in Alexander et al. 2010). Richards and Alexander, 2010 (cited in Alexander et al. 2010) document the reduction in the number of courses of advanced independent study since 1997 (the year that coincided with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy). Courses available to teachers were then largely rooted in training and consultancy related to the expectations of the National Literacy and Numeracy programmes. Leadership programmes were presented as a means of furthering Government policy (raising standards, school improvement) and so the potential for individual enquiry in to practice or exploration of curriculum areas not central to the development of the new curriculum were severely constrained. The training related to Government policy and new initiatives has not been based on a model of collaboration either with or within the workforce but much more on a transmission model of information to be received and 'rolled out' within school. Perhaps the most extreme examples of such a model of continuous professional learning took place during the dissemination of the National Numeracy and

Literacy strategies and later curriculum development (1996 – 2008) where whole schools within an authority would receive the same ‘scripted’ training with very few opportunities to question, collaborate or to interact with the materials or with the trainers.

The rapid pace of change in curriculum areas over the last twenty years in English schools has impacted on the conditions for collaborative working and opportunities for teachers to discuss, question and share good practice have been curtailed in response to the need to explicitly and largely exclusively focus on performativity (Ball, 2003). The attendant focus on school development plans has also reduced the choice of training opportunities as schools identify broad areas for the whole staff to invest in rather than responding to the individual needs and interests of teachers (McNamara, Murray and Jones, 2013).

The financial support for teachers to develop Masters level qualifications has also had a significant impact on the range of courses available (market forces dictating which survive) and the numbers of teachers who are able to take part in continual professional learning (Bailey and Sorensen, 2013). In order to attempt to reduce costs to schools courses are increasingly run as twilights or at weekends which impacts on the working and personal lives of the profession and again serves as another means to place limits on those who can participate in professional learning (CPL) beyond the statutory training days.

The system remains broadly the same in 2016 with perhaps pockets of independence in newly formed school alliances who can negotiate to some extent about the future direction of CPL. Thus, whilst I believe that teachers can and do work together to advance their own practice and to ensure the further development of pupils’ learning, I am also very conscious of the many role demands placed on them as explored above and the impact this can have on opportunities and time to engage in collaborative practice.

Similarly, whilst the model presents all components as discrete and as having equal weight and influence, this is not our current understanding of teaching and learning. Rather, I acknowledge the complexities and recognise that there is not a direct relationship, for example, between policies and practice on the ground or on teachers’ personal subject knowledge and their understanding. I recognise also that there is overlap between each of the four domains and the varying influences they will have on each other. There is also a

state of constant tension between the four factors, for example where teacher knowledge (personal) of an individual pupil's needs may cause them to challenge policy or practice.

Having explained what the various aspects of the model mean, it is also important to acknowledge the controversy about definitions used to describe children who are struggling to develop typical language (see Bishop, 2014 for a review); a history fraught with the number and range of diagnoses or descriptions that might be offered to 'label' what is, in fact, a heterogeneous group of children. Of particular relevance to my thesis is that issues of definition are then compounded when one works across different professions. Thus, while I am a teacher and my role is in the education of teachers, I recognise the tensions of trying to marry SALT and teacher perceptions about who is recognised as having a SLCN and then to consider what role one takes in addressing this.

Pragmatically, I have adopted the term SLCN (from Bercow, 2008):

The term speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) encompasses a wide range of difficulties related to all aspects of communication in children and young people. These can include difficulties with fluency, forming sounds and words, formulating sentences understanding what others say, and using language socially.
(p13)

However, the later papers (3, 2 and 1) more explicitly include children whose language is a concern in terms of attaining higher educational standards but who may not all be recognised by SALTs as having a clinical diagnosis.

Throughout the commentary, the term 'language' relates to expressive and receptive spoken language, not to reading and writing. I also deliberately chose to include the terms typical and atypical language development within the thesis questions because the original Nuffield Foundation funded project (Mroz et al., 2002) addressed both, although I recognise this presents a positivist view of language development. The inclusion of both typical and atypical development was also intentional due to my awareness of how tacit knowledge of one can support understanding of the other.

Reflection and reflexivity: The researcher positioned within and 'outside' the research

Whilst the coherence of the research is demonstrated through the on-going themes of teacher knowledge about language development and the factors that might influence teacher understanding, I was conscious that the papers are disparate in terms of historical context, method and of detailed subject matter. The reflection was thus conducted to provide another means of adding to the coherence of the body of work presented and I used two main approaches to achieve this. The first used an analytic approach employing a rubric which viewed each paper in a fresh light through 'second look' (Crabtree and Miller, 1992). Appendix C provides the outline for the original cues used to interrogate the papers. The second used an autoethnographic interview approach which yielded a rich narrative that was used to reflect on the broader landscape of my research career before focusing on the specifics of particular papers. I chose the combination of approaches in order to provide both critical rigour and to acknowledge that the research I do is embedded in the story of who I am professionally and personally and that what drives my inquiry impacts on the epistemology, ontology and the methodology of that inquiry process. The amalgamation of both approaches results in both a reflective and a reflexive view of the research conducted.

Structured analytical approach

The critical analytic framework adopted was one of argumentation (Habermas, 1984), which drew on McClean's exposition of argumentation within the context of a doctoral thesis (Thomson and Walker, 2011) and was used for a number of reasons. These were: first, to re-read papers that, in some instances, were distant in time and in educational landscape and second, to read as a critical reviewer, safe in the knowledge that the work had already been published. One significant aspect of the systematic critical approach was that it allowed for an interaction between the thesis questions which were determined both prospectively, based on the initial research (Mroz et al., 2002), and retrospectively, on revisiting the papers. During the critical 'second look' (Crabtree and Miller, 1992) and beyond, I was able to hone the thesis questions and to produce a qualitative weight of evidence in relation to answering each. As such, the framework acted as a bridge linking the sometimes particular concerns of the individual papers to the wider picture to which the collective research contributed. In addition, the critical-analytical framework was used to demonstrate linkages between the papers and unity across the body of work. Coherence of the commentary was

further reinforced as each paper, though disparate in content, audience and method was subject to the same analytic process. The process of working with the systematic critical approach is presented in Appendix C.

Autoethnographic interview approach

The second vehicle I used to reflect on the research was an analytic autoethnographic interview approach (Anderson, 2006), in which a colleague interviewed me. The transcribed interviews were then analysed using structured coding (Saldana, 2013). By this process, I wrote myself into the story of the research and in doing so, consciously paralleled some of the research methodology employed from Mroz et al. (2002) by using personal narrative interviews as these had been enlightening in terms of accessing the rich professional lives of the teachers. I adopted this autoethnographic approach for a number of reasons. First, I was conscious that the research journey for a PhD by publication is a personal one, that spans a considerable length of time and in which there are influences on one's research from an academic context but also, inevitably, from one's life beyond work. Thus I wanted to make use of the abundant data I possess as a result of my experiences as a SALT, as a teacher, a parent and as a teacher-educator; essentially the meanings I ascribe in responding to the questions are based on who I am and how I research. Second, in discussion with my supervisor, we envisaged that there were aspects of my researcher-self that would be revealed more readily through an interview and story-telling approach. Pragmatic motives were also important and these related to having an academically safe place to explore and revise my conceptual framework and to investigate and rehearse the coherence of my research story. Finally, the process of completing the interviews ensured that I brought to a close my thoughts about what the research might mean or was contributing to the field of knowledge at that particular point in time.

The autoethnographic interview method drew on Bahktin's (1981) work on multi-vocality (cited in Mizzi), although I aligned myself to Mizzi (2010), who asserted that 'the narrative voices encounter and build upon what each is saying and, through this process, they situate themselves either in agreement or contradiction with each other' (p7). Critics of autoethnography, such as Delamont (2009), question its purpose and in particular the focus on privileging the researcher over the researched. Furthermore, she queries the distinction between reflexive biographical writing and, for example, analytic and evocative

autoethnography. I justify using Anderson's (2006) method with its focus on self-reflection and the telling of a story within an analytic approach as the interviews focused mainly on my professional identity and did not deal closely with my emotions as a researcher. The interviews were not autobiographical however, as their intention was to bring to life my experience as a researcher and an engagement with the research I do; to consider 'the particular contexts and circumstances that I lived with and to reflect on knowledge, understandings, experiences and to build to some degree subjective and situated knowledge' (Dillow, 2009 p1341). The interview process was labelled as autoethnographic because the agenda and the interview questions were set by me. Whilst there was flexibility within the interviews, the overall expectation was that I would: 'tell the story' of my development as a researcher to a colleague within my changing context; explore the coherence and links between the papers written and reflect on my positionality. The process for carrying out the interviews is presented in Appendix D. Excerpts from the interviews are presented within the text either verbatim or paraphrased and are numbered chronologically: 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d in parentheses from first to last completed.

The reflexivity of the interview approach was important, acknowledging Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), that the researcher's orientations are influenced by the socio-historical locations within which they operate and which themselves confer particular values and interests. This perspective resonated with the applied research I conducted whilst teaching in an applied discipline; I could not nor did I attempt to, disassociate my professional and personal selves from the research and teaching that I carried out. The intention of the autoethnographic interviews was to promote self-reflection on the interaction between my role within the institution, the research I undertook and the process of becoming a researcher.

A thread running through the three interview phases was the search for the professional and other voices which informed my research and my journey as a researcher. The analysis of the interviews was intended to elucidate the theoretical perspectives that underpinned my body of work and to clarify my own conceptual framework. Reflexivity on my work is demonstrated through the preparation for, completion and analysis of the interviews.

Chapter 2. What do teachers understand about typical and atypical language development?

This question most closely aligns to the work within Mroz et al. (2002), the impetus for which stemmed from my longstanding frustrations in a variety of professional roles, as a speech and language therapist, teacher and SENCO.

The motivation to do this research was definitely me... the idea of what the teachers or what the professionals know about kids' language development and what do they do, how do we help these children and that was definitely what do these people know in the first place? Because if we don't know what they know, how can we possibly give them what they need to do, what we expect from them? So that was me that kind of drove that (Autoethnographic interview 1, p10)

The motivation here was essentially pragmatic, i.e. to understand what was known by this group of educators (which included teachers, nursery nurses, classroom assistants, crèche workers and play workers) in order to then have an impact on how pupils with SLCN could be more readily identified and supported. The question became more pressing due to the swiftly changing educational, social and political context in the early 2000s. In short, childcare was rapidly expanding, the role of health visitors in screening for SLCN ceased (Hall and Elliman, 2003) and early years practitioners were required to identify and support children with SEN and with SLCN. As a consequence of this, the aim was for inter-professional working to become normalised (Every Child Matters, 2003) leading to the overall expectation that 'parents and pre-school professionals who are well informed about child development in all its aspects will be effective in identifying problems and judging when specialist evaluation might be indicated' (Hall and Elliman: 357).

The term 'understanding' is complex; we cannot know all that teachers understand about typical and atypical language as I reflected in terms of what teachers' knowledge is:

I think we probably can't get there completely because particularly with something like speech, language and communication, it is so slippery at one level, so contextually bound, it is so dependent on how one communicates with the child in the first place (Autoethnographic interview 3b, p5)

We do know that a teacher's role is multifaceted and that they have expertise in a number of areas that interact directly with the research question, for example the importance of classroom communication, theories of how to teach and perceptions of how learners learn. In order to discuss the term 'understanding', I consider two inter-related aspects. These are: first, teacher perceptions of their own knowledge and understanding, drawing also from evidence related to confidence and coverage of content, and second, indicators of how teachers might demonstrate their knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1987, 1995).

The response to question 1 sits partially within the personal biography aspect of the Ecology Model, which recognises the importance of individual teachers' prior knowledge and initial training. Teachers perceive that the coverage of typical language development on initial training courses was brief in most areas and that 70% had received no information about atypical language development (5). Low levels of post-qualification training were also reported (5). It is possible to critique the research methodology of these papers (6, 5 and 4) due to their reliance on teacher memory. Alternatively, one might find that teachers' perceptions of limited input in many aspects of their initial education may be related to the complexity of a teacher's role and the crowded and contested context within which they work (Ellis and McCartney, 2011).

If 'training received' is considered a proxy for understanding of language development, one could infer from the data above that teachers' knowledge might be limited. However, there are other sources for knowledge beyond direct training (Mroz and Hall, 2003), such as private study, professional and personal experience and all forms of tacit knowledge. There is a proviso, however, that tacit and contextual knowledge are sensitive to bias (Brice-Heath, 1985) and so what is 'typical' for a particular context, for example a particular school catchment area, might be viewed as atypical elsewhere.

The second area considered within teachers' perceptions about their understanding is confidence. Teachers had relatively high confidence (compared to all early years educators) about various aspects of language development and, in general, perceived depth-of-coverage in both initial and post-qualification training closely mirrored confidence. However, there was no direct correlation found between perceived confidence measured by the questionnaire responses and its translation to using knowledge-in-action in an evaluation of the case studies (Mroz et al., 2002).

I now turn to understanding which relates to knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1987, 1995) measured through the 'case examples' provided to professionals which detailed the speech and language skills of three children aged 2:6, 3:6 and 4:6. Professionals were asked to determine whether the child described was typically developing or required assessment by a SALT. The responses to the case example section of the questionnaire (5) demonstrates that 86% of reception teachers and 95% of nursery teachers had an understanding of atypical language development which led them to correctly identify whether a child in their taught age group required further assessment implying, overall, good levels of understanding. High accuracy was found where the age of the child was within the daily 'lived experience' of the teachers but was not present for the youngest child aged 2:6. This finding may imply that knowledge and understanding is very situated within the context and not embedded in a broader appreciation of the developmental sequence.

Methodologically however, there are issues with case study materials being used as a proxy for real-life behaviours; there may in fact be no direct link. The issue of fidelity (Farmer, 1999, cited in Beaubien and Baker, 2004) of the case studies is important here, i.e. the extent to which the cases presented match a real-life system. Given that the case examples were devised by a multi-disciplinary team of teachers and SALTs, one could argue using a multidimensional model of fidelity (Rehman, 1995, cited in Beaubien and Baker, 2004) that the environmental and psychological aspects of the case examples were high. In addition, the survey questions promoted fidelity both in terms of the subject matter, assessment, (which is strongly embedded in a teacher's professional role) and the background framing, which asked the teachers to envisage their own workplace when responding. It is equally possible that the outcomes provided a more positive picture of teachers' knowledge-in-action as the assessment information provided clear statements within the case studies about a child's 'performance', such as number of words spoken ("The child has a spoken vocabulary of 500 words"), or mean length of utterance, ("she uses one word sentences e.g. 'bike' meaning 'I want the bike/that is my bike"). This embedding of assessment is in contrast with the evidence that 29% of teachers used no strategy to assess speech and language development (5). In revisiting the case studies, I am struck by the hints given in the non-neutral language of the scenario for the child aged 4:6 which suggest that there is indeed a problem with this child's language ("if you give your instructions to a group of

children he will try to comply, but if you talk to him individually you may need to repeat your instruction”) (Mroz et al., 2002, p105).

Paper 4 drew on interviews with educators who responded to the question, ‘Think of an individual child that you know well who has had a speech and language difficulty and, starting when you first met the child, ‘tell the story’ of your personal experience of working with the child’. This research adds to our understanding of ‘knowledge-in-action’ as most respondents (47 out of 50) were able to talk about speech and language in a way that enabled the interviewers to have a sense of a child’s difficulties. For example, whether the child struggled to comprehend, or to express themselves or to be understood due to atypical speech sound development (4). These narratives demonstrated that the educators involved had a sense of what was atypical (as 15 of the 50 had been solely responsible for identification). Whilst it was not stipulated that the ‘interview child’ should be formally labelled as having SLCN, the quality and depth of interviews confirmed that the children described belonged within this group. Further evidence in support of the educators’ understanding found that most of the many and varied strategies the educators used to support the children were appropriate (4:85, 87).

The final indications of what teachers know about typical and atypical language development derive from empirical evidence around perceived training needs (5 and 6), i.e. whether, what and how training should take place. Just over half of the teachers (5) had some training needs and 24/25 educators (17 of whom were teachers, paper 6), despite 13/25 having received training in the last three years. A key area for training, within varied individual profiles, was the identification of children with SLCN (76% of teachers from paper 5) and around 50% of school-based educators (6). I acknowledge the small, but rigorously selected, sample within paper 6 and thus details about course delivery (6) need to be treated with caution, however, course content findings are supported by the wider questionnaire data (5). Thus, in response to the question ‘what do teachers understand about typical and atypical language development?’ the answer would appear to be, from their perception, ‘not enough’. However, one could argue that the educators’ desire for further training is, in itself a very positive response and may arise for a number of reasons. For example, children with SLCN are not a homogeneous group and each class may present children who have new and differing needs thus making regular, on-going and more specialised training highly desirable.

Training requests also indicate the educators' motivation to fulfil expectations, i.e. to identify children with SLCN (Hall and Ellimann, 2003).

The conclusions drawn from the papers cited are that training needs to be focused on identification of children with SLCN and on typical language development. Paper 4 highlighted the essentially ad hoc nature of the identification process which may be working well in certain situations but which may also mean that 'accurate identification of children's needs at this stage is dependent on someone being available who is concerned and/or knowledgeable enough to draw attention to the children's difficulties' (4: p87). In the early 2000s, there were other sources of information available about typical and atypical language development (Mroz and Hall, 2003), yet teachers needed and wanted to discuss individual children in a supportive atmosphere (6) and are reliant on professional discussion with colleagues, SALTs and parents (4).

What does the research mean now?

The issue of teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development remains important. There continues to be a call for timely and accurate identification of children with SLCN (Bercow, 2008) due to on-going research which adds to previous knowledge of the impact on these children psychosocially (Clegg et al., 2005), behaviourally (Lindsay et al., 2007) and academically (Law et al., 2009). The importance of well-developed language is now presented as part of a much wider concern of social justice (2), recognising the links with child poverty (Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 2010) and the need for early intervention to improve life chances (HMI, 2011). The increased focus on communication, language and literacy in the early years (Department for Education, 2013); the monitoring of results on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (Teaching and Standards Agency, 2013) and the importance of early parent-child social interaction (Hart and Risley, 1995; Rowe, 2008; and Song, Spier and Tamis-LeMondam, 2014) are crucial in the landscape of teacher understanding of language development. Furthermore, the formation of the Communication Trust (2007), created by the amalgamation of a number of charities and other organisations working within SLCN, has increased the persistence and potential reach of key messages about identification: "Despite internationally accepted prevalence figures of 7%, only 3% of the school population is ever identified as having SLCN" (Communication Trust, 2013 p14). However, there are arguments that question figures related to children's language

development based on the model used, whether clinical or social-educational, and also the measures themselves (Letts et al., 2013). Furthermore, Murray and Passy (2014) suggest that as Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has become less and less developmentally focused following the introduction of the National Curriculum, then there will be a higher percentage of teachers without child development training. Thus, if the case examples exercise were repeated today, it is likely that more children would be misidentified and judgements would not be challenged by similarly non-developmentally informed teaching peers. To identify and support children with SLCN relies upon a developmental understanding of 'the typical' and the willingness and resources to mobilise such knowledge to effectively intervene where necessary.

Perhaps the most important factor with potential to impact on teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language is the development of the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (The Communication Trust, 2008, 2011). This framework is related to workforce training and provides a clear pathway for individuals based on what is known about how adults learn (Kolb, 1984) and the potential for transformative learning (Moon, 2004). However, even with the wealth of materials, training courses and opportunities now available and despite the recommendations of the Bercow report for the standards for Qualified Teacher Status to be linked to a better understanding of SLCN, there is no mandated aspect either for what teachers must know and understand nor for whether and what training is compulsory. A further and crucial caveat to be acknowledged is the absence of a direct association between subject knowledge per se and effective teaching, i.e. just 'knowing' about typical language development may not necessarily impact on the learning that takes place (Wilson et al., 2002). The wider discussion of how teachers develop understanding and the dialogical and relational aspect to this learning will be discussed in response to question two.

Chapter 3. How is teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development shaped?

Question two operates at the interface between what teachers understand of typical and atypical language development (question 1) and how they as mentors then support students' understanding (question 3). Papers 6, 5 and 4 provide empirical evidence and papers 3 and 2 discuss policy. In order to address this question I will refer to the Ecology Model introduced earlier.



Figure 2 The Ecology Model of Language, Mroz, 2014

The model is framed within a socio-cultural view of teaching and learning where meaning-making occurs through participation in dialogic activities (Mercer and Howe, 2012) situated in the social, cultural and historical context (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). It sits within Lave and Wenger's more complex representation of social learning (1991) which recognises that the development of learners is shaped by aspects beyond the instruction itself and that learning takes place in every aspect of our lives. This broader interpretation is helpful in responding to question two as all aspects of the context can contribute to teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development: pupils, school practice, wider education policy and teachers' own personal and professional development. This socially situated learning emphasises the role of participation, of agency within the social world, which here is the school and classroom. Thus the teacher is viewed as an active agent involved in creating their understanding of typical and atypical language development.

I use the model as a reflective tool to consider the influence of each aspect and correspondingly recolour the factors as each is discussed. The majority of the discussion will focus on the influences of practice and pupils, which I have identified as the meso levels of the model, as this is where the majority of the research is located. I begin the discussion by focusing at a micro level on the personal domain; the influence of the teacher and the teacher's background on knowledge-in-action. I made this decision as, when reflecting on the model and this question, I was reminded of Tizard and Hughes' (1987) work (which I read whilst training to be a teacher), i.e. the model had in parallel acted as a reflexive tool for interacting with my own research history. ⁴ As a consequence of this reading, my belief that individual teachers *should* take responsibility to recognise and develop each child's 'true' language abilities was born and this therefore explains the decision to focus on the personal aspect of the model first.

⁴ Tizard J. and Hughes M. *Young Children Learning*. Their findings showed that, in relation to the language of working class girls, the teachers held negative perceptions and the girls did not demonstrate the full extent of their language skills in the nursery context i.e. there was a lack of congruence between the two worlds of home and nursery. This dissonance resonated with myself as a working class child who moved to 'the middle class world' of a selective secondary school.

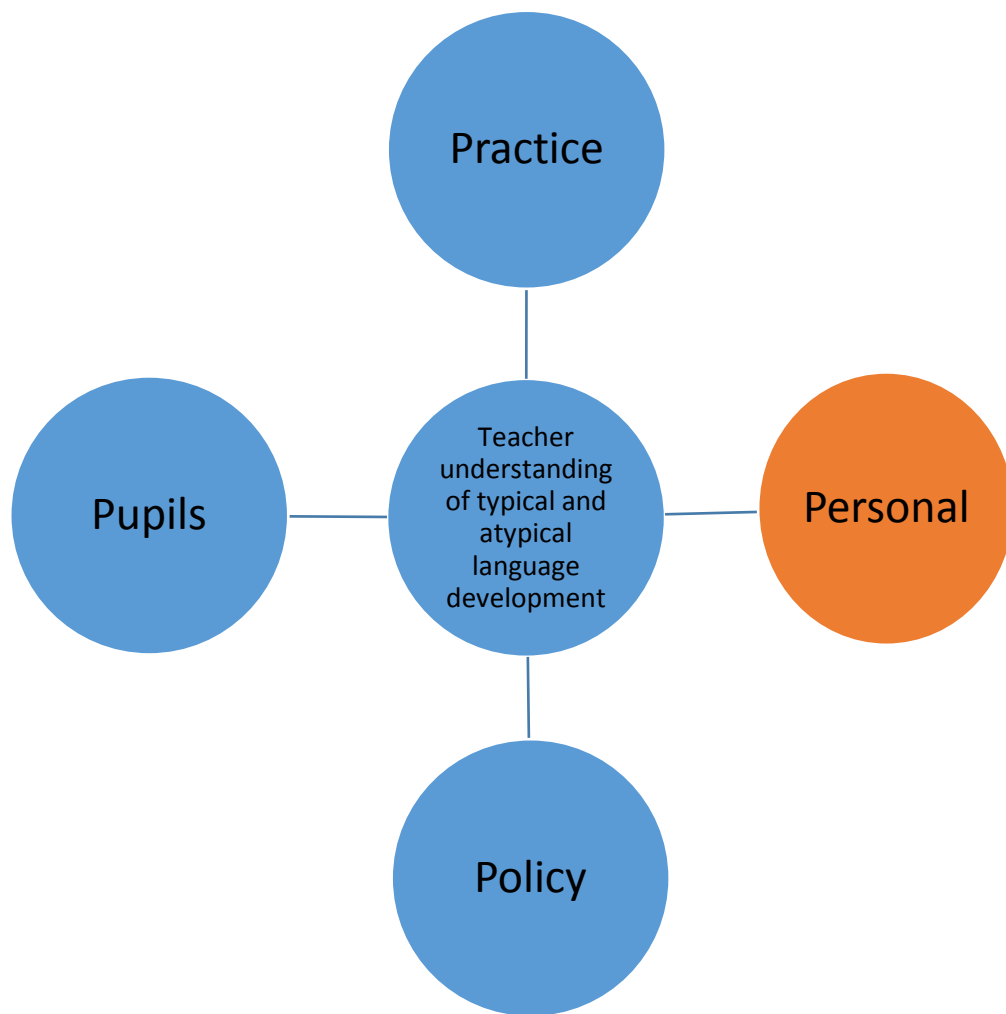


Figure 3 The Ecology Model of Language: The impact of personal factors on teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development

I have limited my interpretation of the personal aspect of the model mostly to initial training. The teachers' focus on the limitations of their initial training is evident (5) as they viewed future professional development as necessary and anticipated that it would be beneficial (6). Both views reflect the concept of hopeful self-efficacy, i.e. that the teachers would be able to exert a positive influence on their pupils' success. The motivations for training also add to our concept of how a teacher's personal biography shapes their understanding. Whilst work utility (aligning with self-efficacy) was a key, and unsurprising, factor in motivation, for some, *personal* interest in language development (6) was critical, despite this not being foregrounded as part of a teacher's core role identity in the same way as, for example, planning and classroom management skills.

I turn now to the meso factors of the model: pupils and practice, how the wider community shapes teacher understanding. These aspects are united by the importance of teacher values, “much research on teacher learning and teacher effectiveness demonstrates the importance of teachers’ values and beliefs about what they are teaching and who they are teaching...” (Ellis and Briggs, 2011, 288). Despite the separation of pupils from practice in the discussion that follows, there are, inevitably, significant overlaps between the two. Day’s original model refers to pupils as part of the micro system. However, with my focus on typical and atypical language development, pupils need to be part of a wider consideration – the meso system.

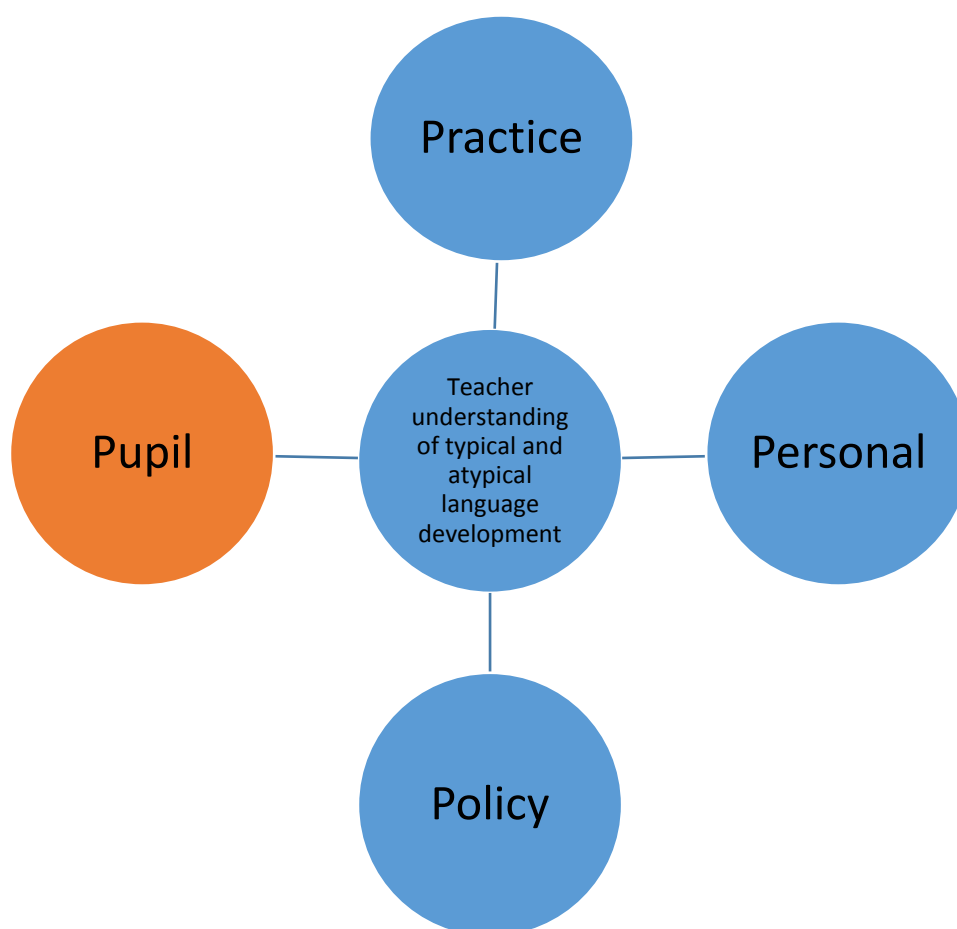


Figure 4 The Ecology Model of Language: The impact of pupil factors on teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development

Pupils will shape teachers’ understanding (see figure 4) in a variety of ways ranging from a general awareness of typical language development in children to more specialist knowledge

of atypical language acquired by working with pupils with SLCN. The nature of the peer group itself will also shape teacher knowledge; in paper 5, 31% of teachers said they used comparison with peers as a means of assessing pupils' speech and language development. This approach is potentially problematic as some teachers' understanding may have been shaped by 'deficit views' ascribed to pupils from lower socio-economic status (SES) groups (Fisher and Larkin, 2008; Grainger, 2013). Data from Mroz et al. (2002) demonstrated that educators were conscious of the limitations on pupils' development due to parents' inability to support their child:

...The thing is the children at home are not spoken to; they are not engaged in conversation, they are spoken at, they are given instructions and commands but a lot of them do not engage in dialogue at home... it's not the parents' fault a lot of the time... they don't have the language skills either (Teacher in a reception class, p69).

Evidence from both Mroz et al. (2002) and papers 5 and 4 demonstrated that the experience of working with children with SLCN impacted on teachers' understanding. In the interviews conducted with practitioners (4), children's difficulties with SLCN were described as problems with speech sounds and expressive language. This perception is demonstrated by the above descriptions being referred to first from a possible range of communicative behaviours which emerged from the analysis of the interviews. These behaviours included 'speech sound', 'speech sound + attention', 'expressive language + pragmatics', 'speech sound + attention+ expressive language'. In addition, references - for example to speech sounds or expressive language - were made relatively more frequently (4). In contrast, pupils with comprehension difficulties were referred to less frequently because of the hidden nature of their difficulties (Zhang and Tomblin, 2000) and may have thus been less influential in shaping teacher knowledge of atypical language development. Where pupil presentation has informed teacher-identification of atypical language, this could in turn impact on the support offered by teachers and continue to add to teacher knowledge in this area. Thus teachers' proficiency in expressive language is likely to be more developed than in receptive language. Whilst paper 4 indicates that support appeared appropriate based on the testimonies of the respondents their efficacy is, however, based only on teacher perception. Hence, whilst pupils with SLCN may have shaped teacher understanding, there is no certainty that all of those understandings are accurate. Methodologically the 'interview only'

approach can be criticised as Barr (cited in Thomson and Walker, 2010) states: “we cannot assume any correspondence between a life as lived and a person’s narrative about it” (p99).

Within the Ecology Model, the aspect of culture (labelled practice), i.e. the experiences and practice of the workplace and those within it, is pertinent to an exploration of how teachers’ understanding of typical and atypical language development may be shaped. Poulson and Avramidis (2003) view the school as an influencing factor in enabling and supporting teachers’ learning. One aspect of practice that could be influential is the experience of being a mentor (1), which will be considered in the next chapter.

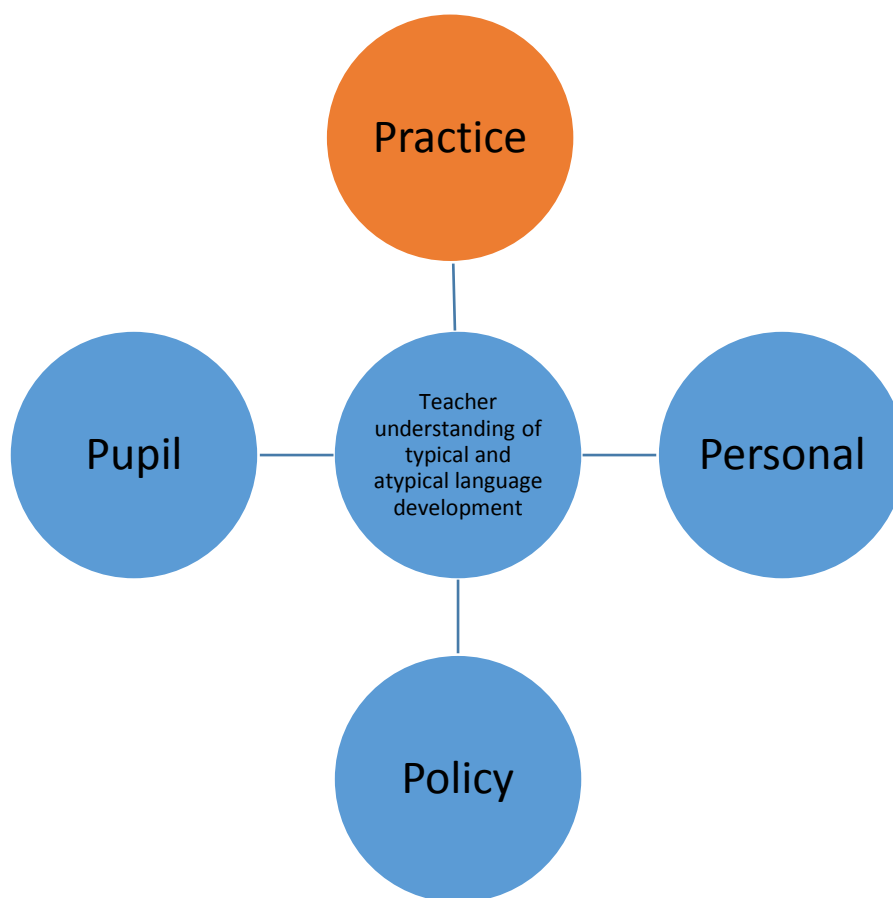


Figure 5 The Ecology Model of Language: The impact of practice factors on teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development

The practice of working with children with SLCN impacted on teachers’ understanding. The nature of the particular context and its interaction with the inquiry into the child’s needs; how pupils were described (4); how solutions were applied through knowledge-in-action (4); and in teacher-reflection of the need for more training as a result of their experiences (6, 5),

all connect with the concept of relational practice (Edwards, 2010) in terms of how and why the school and wider community may shape understanding. Within this domain of practice, a particular aspect of professional learning relates to collaborative working (4) within and beyond the school. This is important in shaping understanding and is evident both explicitly in day-to-day procedures (4) *“with a child like that, the nursery nurse and I tend to sort of bat it between us”* (p85) and in relation to continuing professional development (CPD) (6), where teachers have a sense of the potential value of working collaboratively with SALTs, a view supported by Tollerfield (2003), who found benefits to both professions. Edwards describes practitioners as ‘resourceful learners’ who direct their own learning through practice, which includes engaging with other professionals (SALTs) and those who the profession serves (children and parents). Teachers wish to direct their own learning by identifying the potential of CPD (6) to support their knowledge of typical and atypical development and are clear about how their learning needs can be met citing the importance of context (6:8), format (6:7) and the need for experts, i.e. SALTs, to disseminate and oversee this understanding (6:8). Teachers demonstrated their sense of self-efficacy by identifying an internal locus, a sense of how the training experienced could be shaped and interpreted for their own purposes and context.

Teachers who recognised the need for a more experienced ‘other’ i.e. the SALT, confirm the socio-cultural framing of the context where learners worked with a more knowledgeable other in joint problem-solving within a zone of proximal development. In such a situation the expert alternates; the teacher has specific knowledge of the child as an individual within a particular milieu and the SALT’s expertise lies in recognising how the child’s specific language needs can be supported in this situation. Teachers’ desires to observe, to work alongside and to be overseen by SALTs (6), in order to be able to support a child with SLCN, can all potentially be seen to be part of a developing concept of relational agency, *“a capacity for working with others to strengthen the purposeful response to complex problems”* (Edwards, 2010, p12). This relational expertise goes further and requires that a teacher who has enhanced understanding, who recognises the proficiency that the SALT brings, then needs to orient their own responses to the child by taking on board this enriched comprehension. This alignment may take the form, for example, of altering classroom routines and classroom interaction to further support the child (Mercer, 2008; Alexander, 2010).

One of the core ways in which teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development will be shaped is as a result of the verbal teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions that take place as part of day-to-day practice within the classroom. The reciprocal nature of classroom interaction means that this aspect could be discussed within the pupils or the practice elements of the model but it is included here as much of what takes place in classrooms is based on the expectations and internal structures of the school. These interactions will be influenced by teachers' views of themselves as communicative partners impacting on the classroom culture. As I reflected on the autoethnographic interviews, I became very aware that whilst I had alluded to classroom discourse in my research, I had not explored this in any detail.

I haven't situated the professionals' understandings within their own practice, I didn't ask... what it is about your communicative style that you believe is helpful or important for these children? (Autoethnographic interview 2, p4)

Thus, the overt structures, how pupils are enabled to contribute to class discussion, how talk partners are allocated, will reflect the teacher's values and emphasis on communication. However, the hidden curriculum (Dewey, 1938) and the lived experiences of the children may be as, or more, important. The pupils in turn will influence teacher understanding of language development by their response to the socio-cultural world the teacher has created (Tizard and Hughes, 1987). The insights teachers gain from pupils' response or non-response will contribute to the knowledge-in-action that they acquire. This process of acquisition and refinement will require teachers to reflect on and adapt their communicative style. Goswami and Bryant (2010) signal the importance of how teachers talk to children and its influence on learning, memory, understanding and the motivation to learn. However, Alexander (2010) demonstrated that discourse patterns were very resistant to change. Within the practice domain, continuous professional learning (CPL) is an important aspect. Cordingley (2003) found that longer term and collaborative CPL were effective in changing teacher behaviours and impacting on learning, both of which are relevant to classroom discourse. Interestingly, teachers (6) favoured this collaborative, longer term approach to CPL. This interaction between teacher knowledge of communicative repertoire and classroom practice and experience sits mainly within the top right quadrant of the model, based on an interaction between the personal aspect (including teacher biography) and practice.

I turn now to policy (figure 6), which potentially has a huge influence on teacher knowledge of typical and atypical language development. The changes in policy are woven through reforms to curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (3, 2, 1) and the interface with the wider workforce to shape what the role of teacher means.

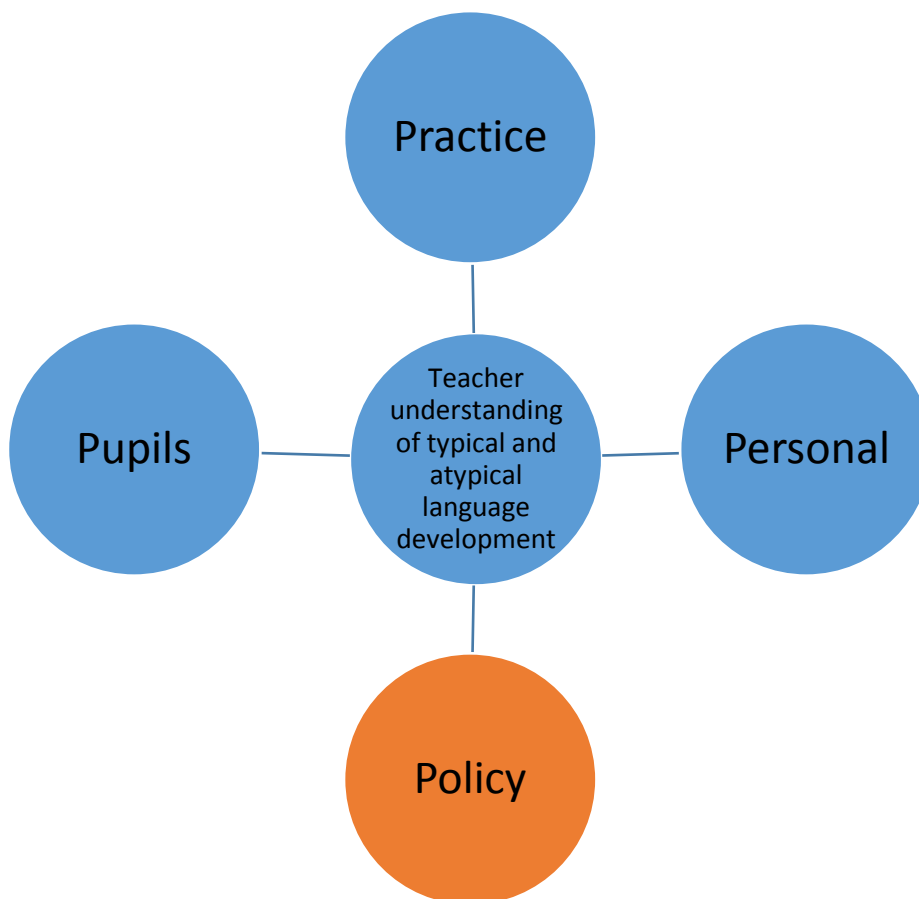


Figure 6 The Ecology Model of Language: The impact of policy factors on teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development

Within papers 4, 3, 2 and 1 there was little empirical evidence from teachers that broad policy changes (the macro level) were having a direct positive effect on teacher knowledge of typical and atypical language development. A critique on policy (3, 2 and 1), on the presence or absence (3) of political will, provides a sense of how influential policy may be. Ultimately then, there is an indirect link between policy recommendations, reform and enactment. Thus, for example, Bercow's recommendations for ensuring the teacher standards reflect knowledge of language development (3) and the availability of training for early years teachers (2) were not fulfilled. Similarly recent changes to the National

Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013) have reduced the focus on speaking and listening, whilst continuing to exhort teachers to “ensure the continual development of pupils’ confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills, to enhance the effectiveness with which they are able to communicate across a range of contexts and to a range of audiences” (DfES, 2013, p7). This reduced emphasis on speaking and listening is unsupportive of concerns expressed related to teacher knowledge and skills about children’s communication development (Dockrell, 2002) and of teacher awareness of and capacity to alter their own communicative repertoire (Alexander, 2010). Reflections on this from autoethnographic interview 1 summarise my concerns:

Two thirds of early years professionals didn’t have any training in children with SLCN, or if they did it was brief and didn’t help them to identify children, they couldn’t make the links between what was typical development and when to ring alarm bells and that worried them (Autoethnographic interview 1, p23).

Summary

The empirical evidence presented to address question two is robust; the questionnaire design used in paper 5 was carefully conducted resulting in numerous revisions and was piloted on former early years practitioners. The high level of response adds to the validity of research claims made and detailed statistical analysis was carried out where appropriate (5). The interview process, from sampling to coding, was rigorously conducted (4, 6), resulting in high levels of inter-coder reliability; interviewees were also afforded an opportunity to comment on a draft final report. However, due to interviewee choice about the child described, I can make no claims for how representative or otherwise these individuals were in terms of the degree of complexity of children with SLCN. It is possible that interviewees chose children who they felt were particularly interesting or memorable. In addition, if interviewees were choosing from some time ago, it may be that details of individuals were inaccurate. It is possible that a more positive picture of outcomes or scenarios was produced as interviewees may have avoided describing children with whom they worked less successfully.

The response to question two concludes that the way in which teacher understanding of typical and atypical language development is shaped is extremely complex as it is dependent

on a number of overlapping and inter-related factors. There is evidence from papers 5, 3 and 2 that policy initiatives within curriculum, assessment and accountability can all potentially impact on teacher understanding. However, recognising the complexity of a teacher's role and that "practice is held in conflict with policy and with pupils and with personal selves" (Wien, 1996, p380) it is important to consider carefully how the new knowledge and skills teachers might require should be developed. The support teachers need to acknowledge their revised role as a 'relational agent' is a key issue in considering how teacher knowledge of language development might be influenced. Ellis and McCartney, (2011) propose that two key factors need to be considered: *"first how teachers already frame and apply their professional and craft knowledge in the classroom and secondly how school and wider policy systems affect this"* (p254). Teachers, whilst responsible for the education of all children in their class, are not SALTs. However, they do need a knowledge of typical and atypical language development that is sensitive to the needs of individual children. Thus, a great deal of consideration must then be given to *"which knowledge is needed by whom, to what extent and at which stages in the cycle of support"* (Forbes, 2008:152).

Chapter 4. How might tasks set by the university enable mentors in schools to support student teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development?

In this section I discuss the role two tasks set by the university might play in enabling mentors to support students in developing their understanding of typical and atypical language development (1, 3). The tasks are both driven by the urge to raise students' awareness of the importance of communication; to know about the expressive and receptive language of the pupils they teach. Paraphrasing from interview 1, I reflected on how students need to be aware of children with language difficulties and the potentially negative consequences of missing those individuals.

Students now spend increasing amounts of time in schools and the resultant change in the locus of the students' lives has and will continue to directly impact upon the HEI's (higher education institution) influence both in the institution and in schools. As a consequence, I rely increasingly on mentors to build student understanding of typical and atypical language development whilst acknowledging teachers' own lack of confidence (Dockrell, 2001) and perceived knowledge (Sadler, 2005; Mroz, 2006) (5) along with students' concerns about teaching pupils with SEN (Steer, 2009). I am thus highly dependent on a system that is structured in such a way that, despite the best intentions and commitment of teachers, inevitably leads to variation in the quality of mentoring provided. It is acknowledged how complex a process mentoring is; ultimately a developmental role enabling the student towards professional autonomy (Clutterbuck, 2013).

The curriculum HEIs and schools are required to teach (Teaching Agency, 2012) is designed to enable students to meet the standards for qualified teacher status. Much of the 'what', the content and classroom pedagogy is closely prescribed, whilst the 'how' is to some extent within the control of each school-institution partnership and thus can be influenced by their expertise and experience. These gaps within the prescription afford a degree of freedom which can then provide a space where understanding of typical and atypical language can be nurtured.

Aspects of the personalised learning task (1, task A) and the English assignment (B) presented opportunities for mentors to support student understanding. Both tasks aimed to

provide a joint enterprise and a collaborative enquiry (Ellis, 2010) where the students could mediate their learning from the HEI setting to the classroom and where mentors could reactivate and make explicit their prior knowledge in the field. The tasks also offered a possible homogeneity across mentors' individual communication styles and knowledge of language due to the accompanying supportive documentation. The design of the tasks, with their evidence-based agenda, was intended to ensure genuine enquiry does take place and to try to guard against what Smagorinsky (2008) sees as the tendency of students to *"gravitate to the norms of the school"*.

The discussion of the University set tasks consists of two main sections. First, I use a model which links the principles identified as important for teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development drawn from evidence in papers 1 and 3, and the features recognised as important to successful policy implementation (3) (hereafter referred to as 'the principle to policy model'). Secondly, I reflect on the personalised learning tasks to understand how they could mediate student learning of typical and atypical language development.

For the first analysis, both tasks were interrogated. However, a greater focus was placed on the personalised learning task due to the detailed reflection afforded from paper one. The examination sought to explore how the relevant teachers' principles identified in the models interacted with factors associated with policy implementation (3). In this way, I considered how the process of student task-completion might enable mentors to support students' understanding of typical and atypical language development. The model presented in table 2 provides the detail of how the tasks ⁵ demonstrate the reflexivity of the overlapping and interacting aspects.

⁵ The content of the English assignment requires that students carry out the following: Provide a questionnaire to their class teacher about the teaching, planning and assessment of speaking and listening; complete a speaking and listening profile of a 'known' child using an example template to encourage inclusion of aspects of form, content and use of language; and reflect on the links between development of spoken and receptive language and development of reading.

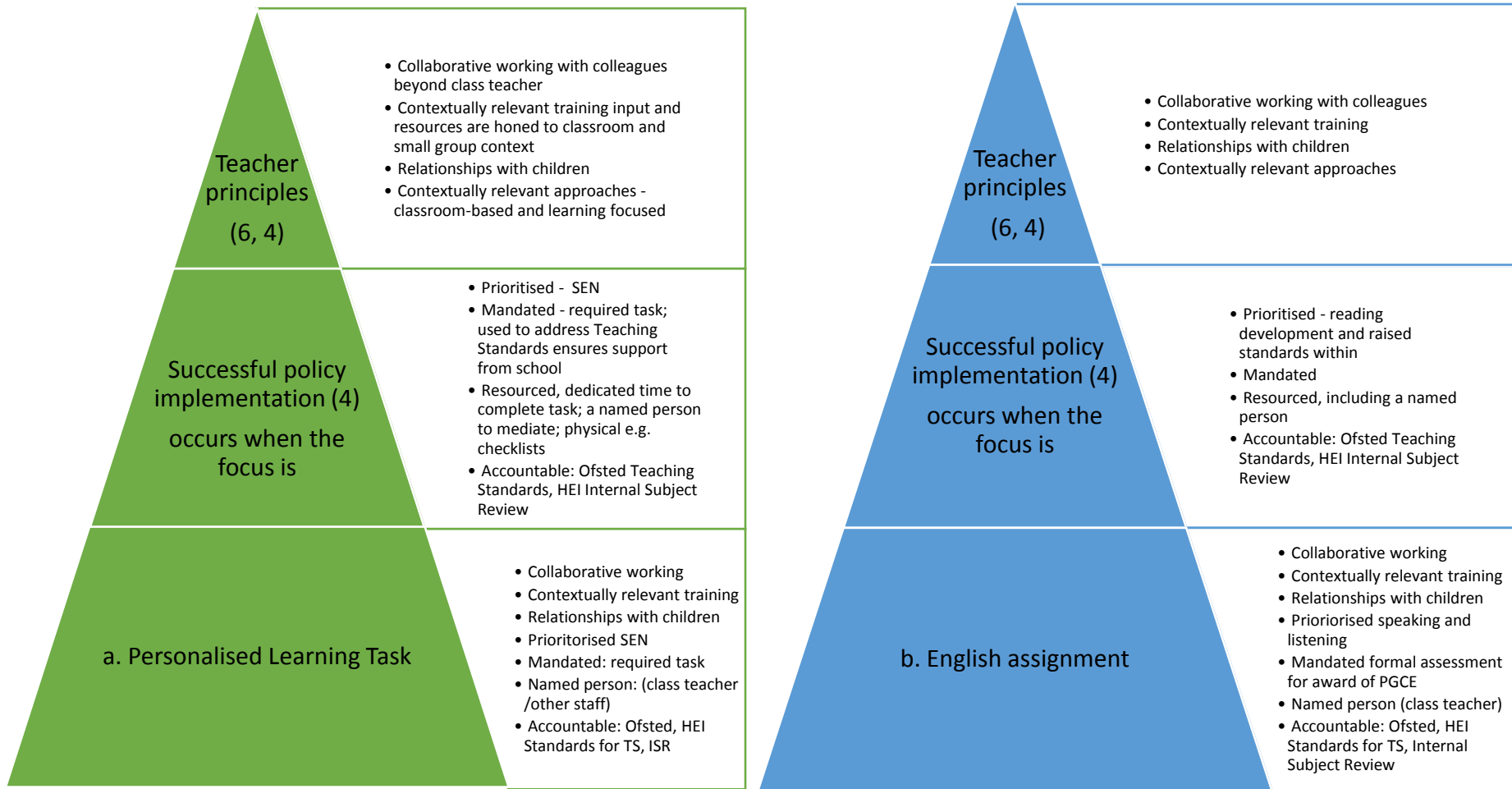


Table 2 Principles to policy model: This model summarises how each task potentially combines the principles identified as important for teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language and the features recognised as important to successful policy implementation

In summary, both tasks can be interpreted to meet the teacher principles for working with developing knowledge of typical and atypical language development and can potentially meet the criteria for successful policy implementation as outlined in paper 3 (see 'principle to practice model'). As a result, there is evidence that the tasks could enable mentors to support student understanding of typical and atypical language development. However we know that the interaction between task and outcome is indirect; it is not a simple transfer model (Wyse, 2011) and a number of factors may contribute to less successful outcomes or a lack of evidence that key understandings have been addressed (1).

The findings from paper 1 revealed that *"no reports [on pupils with significant literacy difficulties in KS1] routinely included a breadth of information about vocabulary, grammar, the ability to use language for a variety of purposes... and with different audiences."* (p96).

Autoethnographic interview 3b reflected some of the concerns expressed in paper 1

No specific references are made between a child's literacy difficulties and their spoken and receptive language nor are there any specific references made to the interaction between the child and the teacher... and given that the task was a personalised learning task, you would think there would be some kind of consideration of how to make an individual... more successful in the classroom... you know, the whole relationship, how you interact with that individual (Autoethnographic interview 3b, p7).

The initial critical overview of the task design and tools used, detailed in paper 1 (p97-98), whilst important, does not identify more fundamental issues that may have contributed to the lack of a specific focus on spoken and receptive language and the foregrounding of the teacher's communicative repertoire.

In order to more fully explore question three, I decided to reflect on the personalised learning task in greater detail and to explore its structure and aims within the HEI-school partnership (1). A consideration of any imposed task on schools would suggest that a key area of potential difficulty might be communication. In this instance this may mean where the interaction between the mentor and the student may have led to a limited understanding of spoken and receptive language or, for example, where the university tutor has not been sufficiently explicit about the potential links between speaking and listening

and reading. Breakdown in understanding may have also occurred in task A, where a student focuses on a child's apparently 'discrete' issues in phonics when broader atypical language issues may also have been indicated (6). Similarly, within the English assignment (B), the scaffold of the example speaking and listening profile has possibly restricted students in their descriptions of language. A key consideration in implementing the tasks in school was the failure to acknowledge or explicitly communicate my fundamental values about what teachers' might and should understand about typical and atypical language development and its role in learning. These beliefs permeated the choice and the development of the tasks, the materials provided and referred to, and the criteria for assessment. Thus my analysis of the personalised learning tasks was situated within these expectations. Similarly, feedback on English assignments revealed that I gave precedence to holistic knowledge of the child, demonstrated through the depth and breadth of the speaking and listening profile; the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship and interaction and recognition of how various facets of a child's personality, communication and intellect, overlap and influence teaching and learning experiences.

These values, based on my epistemology are that:

1. Spoken and receptive language are at the heart of all teaching and learning and key to a child's social, emotional and academic development;
2. Teachers know about their pupils' language competence and have a crucial role to play in developing their speech, language and communication skills;
3. The ability of a teacher to view oneself as a communicator is central to how and what they teach;
4. Both mentors and students have useful information that can develop understanding of a child's communicative competence and so tasks which enable a mutual training scenario to occur are beneficial (Mroz, 2013).

My aim through the two tasks has been to support students' knowledge of one aspect of child development within a critically informed approach to primary teaching. How then to manage, in the current context, the important issue of enabling mentors to support students' understanding of typical and atypical language development? My approach to introducing the tasks and the materials (which were imposed), and the use of compliance

checks may have unwittingly promoted acceptance of a performativity culture (Ball, 2003), with its increasingly pervasive mandating and accountability agenda (Edwards, 2009). This culture can be recognised in a situation where *completing* the task becomes more important than understanding the process and its underlying purpose, premise and values. I can envisage how students and their mentors may have perceived the tasks, with their checklists and specific supporting materials, as ‘doing inclusion’ or ‘doing speaking and listening’.

Summary of and reflections on response to question three

The critique of the tasks provided in paper 1 refers to issues of differing values, of teacher knowledge of language development, of classroom discourse and of the complexity of the role of the mentor who needs to be able to articulate, question and critique their own practice and to be challenged to provide evidence. However, any tasks provided to schools operate as part of a much wider system of influence (see chapter 3). As such, a number of additional factors need to be considered which would include: insights into policy implementation; interaction with teachers’ everyday lives in the classroom; and joint development of tasks where possible. Lofstrom and Eisenschmidt (2009), quoted in Aderibigbe (2011), acknowledge that *“collaboration between teachers and students has been recognised in the literature as an important factor in the development of teachers’ professional knowledge and skills at all levels”* (p3). Thus, in the co-creation of tasks, significant consideration should be given to how collaboration is embedded. A particular focus should be made on an explicit shared understanding of the values that underlie the tasks (Ellis and Briggs, 2011) with careful communication of the values held by teacher-educators and teachers. McNamara et al.’s application of workplace learning research (Eraut, 2007) to the ITE context foregrounds the importance of the adult educator in a workplace setting and the teacher as a learner. Edwards (2010) proposes that in order for practitioners to develop independent learning in initial or post-qualification teaching preparation, they need to be engaged in socially engaging and self-directed activities. The tasks, whilst socially engaging, are imposed, although there might be choices for self-direction within a particular context. A further critique of the tasks draws from Eraut’s research on workplace learning (2004, 2007) in which my efforts to reassign teachers’ often tacit understanding of language development into codified knowledge may have been predicated on an overly simplistic transfer model of learning. Reflections from

autoethnographic interview 2 revealed that I had failed to acknowledge the amount of work involved in transfer of knowledge from one situation to another and not thought carefully enough about how that knowledge and understanding is mediated to schools.

Whilst teachers may use their knowledge of an individual's language development to intervene, the process of how this knowledge is then made explicit for students, is unclear. The concept of relational agency is relevant here; teacher-mentors need to make explicit previously hidden aspects of their expertise, i.e. their knowledge-in-action of pupils' language development; to recognise how students interpret this information and to then align their own explanations in order to "*produce enriched understandings and practices*" (Edwards, 2010).

A review of ITE over the last forty years (Murray and Passy, 2014) suggests that whilst training is now more relevant and practical than in 1974, this may possibly be at the expense of a deep knowledge of child development. This observation is important; the tasks set for the students may have created a tension as they required the students to privilege, in this instance, knowledge of typical and atypical language development and its relationship to language and learners over government and school imperatives, performativity and practical knowledge (Engestrom's adaptive learning, 2001).

In conclusion, the knowledge contribution made in response to question three identifies that there is potential for teachers as mentors to develop students' understanding of typical and atypical language development via the mediation of HEI set tasks. However, this potential could only be realised if there was recognition of: the wider educational context; the importance of shared values; the complexity of the mentoring process and knowledge transfer, and the need to foreground the *process*, rather than the product, in order to ensure more meaningful engagement with the tasks set. Reflecting on the tasks through the lens of the Policy to Practice model aids understanding of the complexity of the tasks set, the preparation needed and the importance of my relational agency to the teachers and the students, and theirs to each other.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The aim of this commentary, as discussed through my contributing papers, has been to explore teachers' knowledge of SLCN and how policy and practice interrelate, concluding with how teachers might, in their turn, contribute to student teachers' understanding of typical and atypical language development. Within the discussion I begin by highlighting the findings from the research questions and the contributions to knowledge. The claims for these knowledge contributions are supported by the methodological rigour of the original research, the subsequent peer-reviewed papers produced, and the structured analytic and autoethnographic interview processes of reflection. Finally, I respond to two questions which have arisen during the writing of the commentary which are: what kind of a teacher-educator am I becoming? And what kind of researcher am I becoming?

Summary of findings

Chapter two demonstrates that teachers are concerned to identify and support children with SLCN but need further training and assistance to do this due to both the heterogeneous nature of the group and the complexity of the teacher role. In chapter three, I concluded that teachers' knowledge-in-action of pupils with SLCN is shaped by their interactions between their personal understanding of teaching and learning, the practice in their environment, the pupils they teach and the policies they work within (Day et al., 2006), all of which can impact upon their capacity to identify and support children with SLCN. Chapter four concludes that there is potential within university and school partnerships to develop students' knowledge of typical and atypical language development although a number of important factors need to be addressed to ensure greater realisation.

Implications from the research

The response to the thesis questions leads to the conclusion that the education of teachers both initially and post-qualification is crucial to their capacity to identify and support children with SLCN. I am conscious however that it is important to recognise the role of 'teacher' is still contested. A review by Murray and Passy (2014) of the last forty years of

teaching in England concludes that there has been a fundamental organisational shift in the education of teachers and increasing expectations on the profession.

These structural changes and demands, when combined with the realities of a highly complex, multicultural society, have expanded primary teacher roles and responsibilities to a point where they are potentially limitless. (p498)

The demands associated with being a 21st century primary teacher are thus already substantial. McCartney, Ellis and Boyle (2009) highlighted the major challenges of planning communication partners and opportunities for talk within a specific, *funded* project for children with severe language impairment within a mainstream classroom and Brinton, Fujiki, Montague and Hanton (2000) reiterate the complexities of setting up working groups in mainstream classes where the social and behavioural variables of the language impaired children impacted on their ability to work cooperatively with typically developing peers. However, counter to this rather gloomy picture, there is an emerging evidence base that small-group intervention for children with impoverished language, when delivered by trained education practitioners in schools, is effective for expressive language (Hutchinson and Clegg, 2011). The message here is that progress can be made with diverse groups of children, given sufficient resource, and yet this resource issue is a key concern. We need to ask of policy makers whether the current role of teacher, responsible for the learning and teaching of thirty individuals with a diverse range of needs within a context of increased expectations on learning and standards is, essentially, 'doable'. Almost a decade ago, Day and Saunders (2006) proposed that school policy and strategies needed to pay more attention to their precious human resource. Recent studies, however, continue to report alarming findings in relation to teacher stress and attrition from the profession, particularly by newly-qualified teachers (Weale, 2015). We may ask more of teachers but ultimately at what cost to them, their pupils, other professionals and ultimately wider society?

It is within this complex context of high and shifting demand on teachers that I would argue *the* essential professional trait of a teacher is, firstly, to be able to communicate well, and secondly, to see the development of each child's communication as one of a teacher's prime responsibilities due to its central role in successful academic, social and behavioural development. Recognition of the importance of these two aspects could be the starting

point for teachers becoming even more conscious of the communication from and to, their pupils.

In order to develop this skill of communication, teachers should know about: language development (including the factors that impact on the language children use and understand); the influence of the teacher's communicative repertoire; how to reflect on their own communication and how to apply these understandings to classroom practice.

There is a strongly reciprocal relationship between teachers' knowledge of language development and how they then talk to children: *"good pedagogy draws upon a broad repertoire of teacher and pupil discourse and interactive forms"* (Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p165, referring to Alexander, 2005). Improved teacher knowledge of children's language development, and awareness of and flexibility in their personal communicative repertoire (see Hutchinson and Clegg, 2011) could enable teachers to deploy a communicative stance that is aligned to all pupils and not just those with SLCN. The term I would use to capture the knowledge requirements and behaviours anticipated from teachers would be to become 'more communication aware'. A specific consideration should be given to the area of SES and language which is emerging from paper two with the recognition that appropriate nursery provision can potentially mitigate against the possible issues for children born into social disadvantage (2). Research by Letts et al. (2013) highlights the dangers of naïve understandings about class language differences, whilst Grainger (2013) demonstrates how policy has presented both simplistic messages and the elision of 'facts'. I am concerned as a teacher-educator about some students' and teachers' low expectations of pupils from lower SES backgrounds and recognise my responsibility to challenge these deficit views.

How then might teachers be enabled to become even more communication aware? It is vital that the development of communication aware staff is embedded into and understood as the teacher's core role and is thus afforded the priority, status and resources required. The aspiration could only become a reality through the alignment provided in the curriculum offered to pupils and supportive pedagogical, assessment and accountability procedures. This might entail, for example, a situation to arise in which an 'oracy' expert would become available to every school (Alexander, 2010). There would need to be a significant investment in training at initial and post-qualification levels as the interaction between teachers' knowledge, communicative repertoire and application to the classroom may not equate with a capacity to alter on-going practice (Hutchinson and Clegg, 2011; Alexander, 2010).

McMahon et al. (2015) discuss the shifting perspective towards a view of teacher learning as life-long, career-long development, and Day et al. (2006) highlighted the differing needs of teachers for CPL at different stages of their career. Within an underlying research-informed focus on communication of the child and of the teacher, there is potential to both improve the identification and support for children with SLCN, but also for all pupils. It is vital then that the focus on being communication aware sits within teachers' core conceptions of their role.

As I reflected on the various papers, the policy context and the particular questions I aimed to answer, the complexity of the teacher's task became apparent. It highlights again the tension between the more positivist perspective of the SALT and that of the teacher operating within a classroom where the socio-cultural context is central. The SALT's focus is to determine between those children whose language is atypical, who have a clinical need and the child who is developing typically within a range. Teachers however, are operating within a context where children are expected to have begun school with the capacity to use language for learning but also to manage themselves socially within the classroom. There will be, within any class, a continuum of language proficiency, from those at a relatively early stage to those who are extremely proficient language users. The beginners would not be identified as having a SLCN, but they may not be adept in using their language to be sufficiently successful within the current expectations for raised standards, particularly in literacy. The teacher's role then is to identify and support the language needs of a potentially vast range of individuals who demonstrate a broad range of skills which may differ depending on the communicative context. Teachers need to determine between children who merit further investigation by a SALT, which requires teachers' alignment to a more positivist perspective, and those who 'simply' require ongoing tailored teaching. Essentially, the teacher needs to scaffold each child's development and operate within the zone of proximal development for each child's communication to provide a context for language use within an atmosphere where children can safely experiment with, and be encouraged to develop and repair their communicative attempts. Whilst the model presents a linear perspective of language development, it is understood as including the peaks and troughs and the overlap between the dimensions

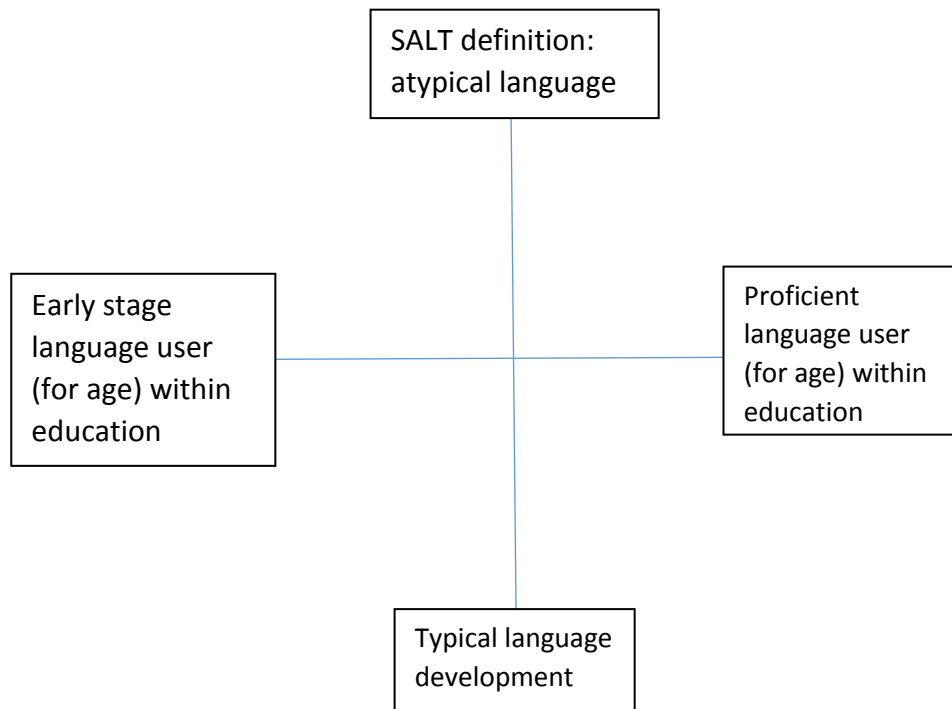


Figure 7. The juxtaposition of a clinical vs. a socio-constructivist educational model of language development

What kind of a teacher-educator am I becoming?

As a result of the interactions with colleagues, my own writing and that of others, I have come to a number of understandings about how I think about this specific aspect of my work; how I communicate that to the students I work with; and the barriers I create and operate within. The expectations on a teacher-educator are challenging and varied: to be an excellent practitioner of a classroom one no longer inhabits; to present the range of approaches and research one has not had direct experience of; and finally - and urgently - to satisfy the regulatory demands that determine the continuance of one's very role. Within the area of primary English, there has, since 2006, been an additional layer of control focused on the teaching of reading. The combination of these factors, particularly those mandatory, regulatory pressures, have led, at times to disaffection with my own agency in my role. And yet, over the years, I have continued to engage with and innovate within the course that I teach; I have altered assignment expectations to focus on the typical development of receptive and expressive language and revised the content of school-based tasks, all in order to positively influence the process of development and the outcomes for our students. I persist in viewing my role as improving the education of pupils through

understanding their developmental language needs and yet only the students are directly under my sphere of influence, so it is with and through them that my understandings are to be explored, tested and enacted. As I reflected on my years as a teacher-educator for the autoethnographic interviews, I became aware of the complexity of the task in hand; of both the knowledge I believe it is important to understand and to co-construct with teachers, and the importance of relational understanding to effect this change. These reflections have re-invigorated my sense of agency and have given me the confidence to pursue this specific agenda within a rapidly changing teacher-education context.

In summary, my understanding of the needs of teachers in relation to developing the communication of all pupils, including those with SLCN, is built from my position as a previous SALT, teacher, SENCO and teacher-educator; from reading and thinking about the questions and from the numerous conversations, formal training and interactions I have had with colleagues from a range of disciplines over time. Much of what I have read and have written can be used to directly support students in this role and I have a 'captive audience' of students who are keen to learn. I am aware however, that my current position and identity as a teacher-educator is both contested and in a process of flux. Personally and professionally, I am reasonably comfortable with my shifting sense of identity and I anticipate this being helpful as the 'pedagogies, programmes and places' (McMahon et al., 2015) of teacher preparation continue to develop. My challenge is to determine what of my knowledge and understanding is of value to students at this stage in their professional journey, to act relationally with those students in their contexts and to model this process for the school-based teacher-educators in order to provide the students (and their mentors) with their own beginnings of 'communication aware' teaching.

What kind of a researcher am I becoming?

I began my research career conscious that one of my 'unique selling points' was my dual-qualification as a SALT and a teacher, and I definitely saw and see myself as someone who is interested in multi-disciplinary research. However, I am conscious that for the commentary and in order to reflect on my research career I have had, pragmatically, to think about my research from the perspective of who I am now, as a researcher and a teacher-educator. The process of empirical research has, for me, been intellectually stimulating, usually collaborative and focused on solving real-life problems. Documentary analysis within my

empirical work has been a rather different experience; largely solitary and interspersed with occasional discussions with colleagues, and yet still focused on looking for answers to the potential problems within the systems where I and my fellow educators operate.

When I first considered the original Nuffield-funded research, I was thinking from a positivist paradigm, i.e. what aspects of knowledge about language development do teachers need to know and how can we make sure they 'know' and apply them? Unsurprisingly, this perspective was quickly rejected and replaced with an interpretivist stance which acknowledged that what is known by teachers is dependent on a whole host of factors including: what views teachers hold of typical and atypical language development; and who is asking the question and for what purpose? And yet I am still, clearly, partially embedded in positivist thinking – my thesis questions could be seen to imply an either/or perspective, more suited to a clinician making a diagnosis rather than a teacher or teacher-educator who is concerned with the inclusion of all pupils. The allure of the certainty of a 'scientific' positivist view remains; part of the original appeal of the critical analytical approach lay in the combination of what I had at first considered a more objective approach, alongside a strongly qualitative autoethnographic interview approach. I recognised however, that the objectivity was an illusion, relying as it did on *my* perceptions of a critique of the papers. In terms of methodology, I remain open to both a quantitative and a qualitative approach – with much stronger leanings to the latter. I was thoroughly convinced of the value of the narrative interview approach, mirroring this in my quest for reflexivity through one of the autoethnographic interviews. I can see in future research how I would want to combine an analytical overview (such as that conducted for the questionnaires in the Nuffield-funded research and for the reports in paper 1) with a more qualitative in-depth examination.

I remain at heart someone who is interested in research which has the potential to make a difference to the day-to-day lives of the participants and those with whom they interact. I aim ultimately to try to solve real-life problems through understanding the contexts within which individuals operate and I look forward to developing future research proposals which can fulfil these aspirations.

Appendix A – Co-authorship agreements

Appendix A1

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Submission by Staff Candidates for the Degree of PhD
By Published Work

CO-AUTHORSHIP FORM

This form must accompany any submission of a joint authored publication for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the basis of published work.

A candidate should submit a separate form for each jointly authored work which is submitted for the degree.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION (article, book, chapter, monograph) Mroz , M and Letts, C. Early years education, language and social background.

DATE OF PUBLICATION _____ April 2014 _____

NAME AND VOLUME OF JOURNAL (where applicable) European journal of Applied Linguistics Volume 2, Issue 1

NAMES OF JOINT AUTHORS

INSTITUTION

1. _ Mroz , M and Letts, C. _____ University of Newcastle _____

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CANDIDATE TO THIS WORK (70)

Design of investigation _____ 60 _____

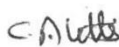
Conduct of research _____ 60 _____

Analysis of outcome _____ 70 _____

Preparation for publication _____ 90% _____

This statement should be endorsed by all of the co-authors.

I confirm that the above is a true estimate of the candidate's contribution to this work.

Signature 1 

PW7

Appendix A2

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Submission by Staff Candidates for the Degree of PhD
By Published Work

CO-AUTHORSHIP FORM

This form must accompany any submission of a joint authored publication for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the basis of published work.

A candidate should submit a separate form for each jointly authored work which is submitted for the degree.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION (**article**, book, chapter, monograph) Mroz M, Letts C. Interview stories: Early years practitioners' experiences with children with speech, language and communication needs.

DATE OF PUBLICATION 2008

NAME AND VOLUME OF JOURNAL (where applicable) Child Language, Teaching and Therapy 24. 1

NAMES OF JOINT AUTHORS

INSTITUTION

1. Mroz, Maria Anna / Letts, Carolyn

University of Newcastle

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CANDIDATE TO THIS WORK (70)

Design of investigation 80%

Conduct of research 70%

Analysis of outcome 60%

Preparation for publication 70%

This statement should be endorsed by all of the co-authors.

I confirm that the above is a true estimate of the candidate's contribution to this work.

Signature 1 C. A. Letts

PW7

Appendix B – Abstracts

Paper title	Abstract
<p>Paper 1 Mroz, M (2014) ‘Off the radar:’ the framing of speech, language and communication in the description of children with special educational needs in literacy.</p>	<p>This paper considers how pre-service primary teachers in England (trainees) are supported to work with children with special educational needs (SEN) using a personalized learning task. The focus, in particular, considers how speech, language and communication skills are foregrounded in the reports describing children with moderate learning difficulties including difficulties with literacy. The context recognizes the importance of pupils’ spoken and receptive language development and the prevalence of children categorized as having speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and the educational, social and emotional impact of this disability. However analysis of sixty five reports identified only four children with SLCN. In contrast eighteen 5-7 year old children were identified who were struggling with literacy. Analysis was conducted on this sub-set due to the close links between reading development and spoken language skills. The analysis explored the question ‘what do trainees’ descriptions of literacy reveal about their understanding of speech, language and communication?’ Results revealed that speech, language and communication skills were referred to only briefly and with some limitations in understanding. Further analysis explored the task design and considered to what extent it supports trainees in referring to knowledge about speech, language and communication in practice. The article concludes that the personalized learning task could be adapted to ensure greater development of knowledge of speech, language and communication and the role of teacher talk. It considers the challenges posed for mentoring where the prevailing social semiotics of the classroom emphasizes performativity (Ball, 2003) over a more holistic view of children.</p>
<p>Paper 2 Mroz, M and Letts, C. (2014) Early years education, language and social background.</p>	<p>In recent years educationalists have been concerned that children from more socially deprived areas of the UK come to formal schooling at age five with poor language skills. In 2001 responses by early years professionals (responsible for children aged 0–5 years), to a questionnaire and follow-up interview, found that their general levels of training in language development were low. Since 2001 training has increased in the sector and there have been new initiatives around promoting language development in the early years. This paper aims to: reflect on the educational context in the Early Years Foundation Stage (children aged 3–5) a decade ago; to consider how this context has changed and to discuss what potential impact the changes may have had on the training of Foundation Stage professionals in relation to children with speech, language and communication needs. It will draw on results from a large sample of children aged 2;0 to 7;6 years that were tested for language comprehension and production in 2010 as part of the standardisation of a redeveloped language test (New Reynell Developmental Language Scales (NRDLS): Edwards et al., 2011). There is some evidence from this study that the percentage of children from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) or language delay may be decreasing.</p>
<p>Paper 3 Mroz, M. (2012) Meeting the recommendations of the Bercow report on services for children with speech, language and communication needs in England: The challenges and</p>	<p>The recommendations from the Bercow Review of services for children with speech, language and communication needs (DCSF, 2008a) have significant implications for the training of pre-service teachers who will be expected to be more able to meet the needs of such children. This article explores the potential within the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status, the key framework for the development of pre-service teachers in England, to support the implementation of the Bercow Report. The discussion focuses on three recommendations: that language is central, a human right; the need for early identification and intervention and the development of a continuum of</p>

<p>the potential within initial teacher training.</p>	<p>services around the family. The article reflects on a successful and an unsuccessful implementation of policy within pre-service teacher training to better illustrate the issues entailed in realizing Bercow Review recommendations within pre-service teacher education.</p>
<p>Paper 4 Maria Mroz and Carolyn Letts (2008) Interview stories: Early years practitioners' experiences with children with speech, language and communication needs</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted with 50 early years practitioners, exploring their experiences with children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). A narrative approach was taken to elicit information on the children they were working with who had these needs. This included characteristics of the children's behaviour, how they were identified and strategies used to help them. Participants identified children to discuss, many of whom had complex needs. There was large variation in how the children were identified and who the participants liaised with. Responsibilities taken on by participants when working with and devising strategies for the children did not relate to seniority of post held, or to level of relevant training.</p>
<p>Paper 5 Mroz M (2006) Teaching in the foundation stage: How current systems support teachers' knowledge and understanding of children's speech and language</p>	<p>This paper discusses the knowledge, skills and understandings of Foundation Stage teachers in relation to children's speech and language development. Results from a questionnaire to 294 teachers reveal limited initial and post qualification training. Teachers' knowledge of specific aspects of children's language revealed that key areas for training were centred on the identification of children who may have speech and language difficulties and speech sound development. The discussion centres on how changes to the curriculum in initial teacher training, in the consolidation of the revised Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and in the assessment requirements within the Foundation Stage may impact on teachers' knowledge of speech and language development and on their ability to identify children who have speech and language difficulties.</p>
<p>Paper 6 Mroz, M. (2006) 'Providing training in speech and language for education professionals: challenges, support and the view from the ground'</p>	<p>This article explores the training needs in speech and language of teachers and other early years educators in education settings. Results from the interviews demonstrate that practitioners have clear ideas about preferred training formats and they specifically want more training in identifying children with communication difficulties and opportunities to work more closely with speech and language therapists. The discussion explores the limitations on training faced by early educators and then goes on to demonstrate that there is potential within their policies and practice which could support them in their identification role. However, more explicit links need to be made between the particular needs of children with communication difficulties and the general documentation available to educators.</p>

Appendix C – The process of engaging with the analytic rubric

1. I read through each paper and made an initial response to each of the analytic prompts and to the thesis question(s);
2. I then re-read each paper to ascertain whether the responses to the prompts had been correctly assigned and to determine whether they did indeed address the questions identified;
3. Finally I revisited the wording of thesis questions to determine their suitability based on the evidence presented from the papers.

An example of the analytic prompts is provided overleaf.

Delineation of the problem	
A statement of the position of the problem- main argument written succinctly = thesis statement	
A brief account of how the position will be justified (of what reasons and evidence will provide a warrant)	
An evaluative synthesis of relevant literature emphasising how it supports and does not support the claims being made and creating a warrant for the research questions	
A justification for the research questions generated from an evaluation of the literature	
An account of collecting and analysing empirical data – the weight of evidence must be sufficient for the claims being made – the evidence must warrant the claims	
An evaluative summary of findings from the empirical data	
Making the case based on an interpretation of, and examples from, empirical data in the light of the literature The writer is making claims about what is true and / or just. The reasoning will take the form of a series of assertions or denials. Claims are elaborated and justified in logical order: to convince the reader that what the writer claims is trustworthy.	
A conclusion in which the argument is reasserted	
An explanation of how new light has been shed on the topic and why this is important –what contribution is being made to the field?	

Table 3 Analytic prompts to interrogate each of the papers. Taken from McLean, M. Argumentation and the doctoral thesis: theory and practice in Thomson, P. and Walker, M. (editors, 2010) Routledge doctoral student's companion: Getting to grips with research in education and the social sciences (p233)

Appendix D - Process for carrying out the autoethnographic interview

Date and action	Outcome/result
October 2013	
Colleague asked to do interviews	Colleague commits to reading abstracts (or whole papers) and to read Mizzi (2010) paper on multivocality.
November 2013	
First interview carried out Questions presented to colleague: how did you come to be employed at the University; What were your earliest impressions of the role here, what was it like? How have you come to carry out your research for your PhD and what motivated you to develop this research interest?	Salient points noted post interview by myself; interview transcribed and coded
June 2014	
Second interview carried out; theme of linkage between papers	Salient points noted post interview by myself; interview transcribed and coded
July 2014	
Third interview – 4 mini interviews carried out on one day; drawing out my reflections on what I research and how I research, what my own knowledge is and the methods I employed. These final interviews were less tied to a narrative approach.	Salient points noted post interview by myself; interview transcribed and coded

Table 4 Process of carrying out autoethnographic interviews

The interviews were interrogated using an interpretivist analytic framework. Coding was carried out on an iterative basis in which the robustness of the coding was tested through ‘second look’ (Crabtree and Miller, 1992). The initial coding of the first interview purposively searched for voices which could be heard and identified the ‘professional’ and parent voices – teacher, SALT, Teacher educator, SENCO, researcher, parent. Second and subsequent ‘looks’ identified:

1. themes exemplified by recurring phrases / words e.g. pragmatist and frustration; novelty, excitement , applied research; tensions in role(s)

The coding of the second interview, the purpose of which was to look for links between papers, was carried out in a similar manner. These links included: pragmatism, the tension between speech and language therapist and teacher discourse, voices of the critical academic and teacher – educator, self –critical academic voice and silenced teacher-criticising voice.

However with the third interviews I found the very direct approach of trying to specifically state my epistemology or ontology as less helpful and so I revisited these and added notes in a narrative form to address how and why I carried out the work and wrote each of the papers.

A thread running through the three interviews was the search for the professional and other voices which informed my research and my journey as a researcher. In addition themes related to my unfolding career and research history were identified in a quest to illuminate what drove the research I did, what questions I wanted to answer and the links between these positions and the ways in which I carried out my research. The analysis of the interviews and their contribution to answering the thesis questions was ultimately intended to illuminate the conceptual framework that underpinned my body of work. The auto-ethnographic nature of the 'self-interview' and the self-coding were helpful in leading to a reflexive analysis of the body of work submitted for my thesis.

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