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COMPARING THE EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE AND  
EXPOSITORY TEXTS ON TEACHER INSTRUCTION AND  
CHILD PROCESSING IN JUNIOR GUIDED READING

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

The University of Auckland, 2012

## **Abstract**

Narrative text has historically been used to teach children to read. Increased advocacy for the use of expository text for reading instruction in junior classrooms has been matched by an increase in the publication of this material. However there is little research evidence about how teachers are using these texts, or how children read them. This study, informed by Marie Clay's theory of Literacy Processing, investigated these two issues.

A quasi-experimental study was designed to focus on Guided Reading, the pivotal instructional approach used in New Zealand junior reading programmes. Five experienced teachers were observed while they conducted two Guided Reading lessons at three different text levels using narrative and expository text supplied by the researcher. Interview data was also obtained from the teachers. Following the lessons a total of 46 year one and two children (5- and 6-year-olds) read their texts to the researcher; their oral reading was recorded using Running Records of reading continuous texts and subsequently analysed.

Complex interrelationships between teacher practice, children's reading behaviour and text type emerged. The teachers delivered significantly longer lessons to children when using expository text and their practice varied from published guidelines in ways that, arguably, do not promote independent reading. Children found the expository text more challenging to read and more often needed teacher help to proceed with the reading. Comparison of narrative and expository texts read at an instructional level indicated there were higher ratios of self-correction on the narrative text providing more opportunities for the development of self-regulation.

This study highlighted issues related to using expository text in the well-established setting of Guided Reading, which is based on a set of accepted teacher practices, designed around narrative text and underpinned by our current descriptions of children reading narrative text. The findings of this study suggest that we adopt a cautious approach to the use of expository text in this context. If arguments for increased use of expository text with beginning readers prevail, changes to the design and delivery of Guided Reading lessons will be needed, perhaps led by developmental accounts of literacy processing on expository text that have yet to be developed.

## **Acknowledgements**

When this study began I was extremely privileged to have the combined expertise and wisdom of both Stuart McNaughton as my supervisor and Marie Clay as my adviser. Special thanks to Stuart for his support, guidance and patience.

The educational world lost a great treasure when Marie Clay passed away. In her quest to make the world a better place for children Marie achieved incredible things. Her continual questioning and challenging and her irrepressible energy are deeply missed. Although there can be no replacement for her presence Marie's influence continues to be close through her prodigious writing. I count myself so very fortunate to have worked with Marie.

This study would not have been possible without the support of the schools, the generous contributions of the five teachers involved and the wonderful children who approached the reading with such enthusiasm and engagement.

Special thanks to the following people who helped me in so many different ways:  
Ann Ballantyne, Rebecca Jesson, Linda Jin, Libby Limbrick, Kane Meissel,  
Robyn Reynolds, Dianne Stuart, Barbara Watson and Jenny Wood.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to my family and those special friends who encouraged and supported me throughout the journey.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

## *Introduction*

In the last 15 years there has been a marked increase in the number of texts published for use in instructional reading in the first three years of school. While the volume of narrative titles has increased there has been an explosion in the quantity of expository text being published. This has raised a significant issue for researchers and educators. What does the increased availability of expository text mean for our theories of teaching and learning? This thesis reports the findings of a quasi-experimental study that was designed to ask and begin to address questions about the use of expository and narrative text within a specific setting, Guided Reading, that is the central instructional approach used in New Zealand junior reading programmes.

The literature review that follows in this chapter explores three key areas related to teacher practice and child learning. A particular theoretical account of the processes involved in early literacy learning (Clay, 2001) is described. This account provides a theoretical basis from which we can begin to address questions about how different text types might contribute to, or hinder, the child's construction of a literacy processing system that is self-extending.

Chapter Two describes the methods of collecting and analysing three sets of discrete data. Two sets relate to teacher beliefs and practices, and one set to children's oral reading. Ethics considerations are addressed as well as reliability checks.

Chapter Three reports the results of the data analysis in three separate sections, teacher beliefs and understandings, teacher practice in Guided Reading and the third section reports the data collected from children's oral reading.

The results of the study are examined in Chapter Four in relation to the main and supplementary research questions. The pedagogical implications of these findings are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study are considered before future directions for research on this issue are proposed.

## ***Literature Review***

The use of narrative text in the instructional setting of Guided Reading in the first three years of school is common in New Zealand but we know little about the practice of using expository text for literacy instruction. In this review of research on child learning and teaching practice three key areas will be explored all of which are intricately related to the research issue. Underpinning this study is a complex theory of literacy acquisition that informs junior literacy teaching. This theory, developed by New Zealand developmental psychologist Marie Clay over a 40 year academic career, is presented alongside alternative theoretical models so as to highlight relevant differences and to provide rationales for locating this study within a particular theory of literacy acquisition. Clay's Literacy Processing theory provides a conceptual base from which to consider the three major variables in this study: text characteristics, teachers' beliefs and practices, and children's text reading behaviours. The literature review also provides a detailed account of the instructional practice of Guided Reading including its relationship to the theoretically rich construct of *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). This discussion highlights the historical development of the approach and its unique place in New Zealand literacy instruction. The third section of the review examines the body of research on the two types of text, narrative and expository, which are the central foci of the study. The review examines distinguishing features of the two text types and available research findings about their use in literacy instruction. A concluding section identifies several hypotheses arising from the review of literature. These provide the motivation for the study and contribute to the formulation of one general and several specific research questions.

## ***Theories of Reading Acquisition***

Research and theory related to explaining how children learn to read form a highly contested field within which a number of alternative accounts compete for primacy. While there is fairly widespread agreement among researchers and theorists about the nature of mature reading processes, and little question that competent young readers develop sophisticated processes for comprehending meanings along with rapid word identification skills, the order in which these skills are and should be acquired is disputed. Competing views have been variously characterised as *simple* theories (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) or as *complex* theories (Clay, 2001) depending on the view of the learner

and the process. Simple theories give priority to one source of information over others, for example, meaning (Goodman, 1985) or letter-sound links (Nicholson, 2005; Tunmer, Chapman, Ryan & Prochnow, 1998) and argue that access to this source of information is foundational for initial progress in literacy learning. A complex theory such as that elaborated by Clay (2001) allows that a reader begins to access information from several sources from the outset of engagement with text reading and that existing competencies, such as oral language and knowledge of the world, support new learning in important ways. In contemporary debates the primary contrast is between code emphasis (simple) and interactive theories (complex). The different perspectives have led to different and often conflicting pedagogical advice to teachers on optimal classroom conditions for literacy development. This highly debated area has been labelled “the reading wars” (Moats, 2007; Pearson, 2004) and remains a controversial area in education.

It is also important to note that evidence from teacher surveys in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America indicates that teachers use combinations of theories to inform practice (Nicholson & Lam, 1998; Openshaw & Cullen, 2001; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block & Morrow, 1998; Wray, Medwell, Fox & Poulson, 2000).

### *Code emphasis theories*

One theoretical position that underpins many instructional programmes around the world emphasises the need for the child to accumulate certain prerequisite skills and items of knowledge such as letter knowledge, phonological knowledge and automatic word recognition through explicit teaching (Adams, 1990; Snow, Burns & Griffith, 1998; Tunmer & Chapman, 1997) prior to, or early in the process, of learning to read; the instructional focus shifts to comprehension of text after these early skills are acquired. In these models fast accurate word identification is viewed as a prerequisite to being able to read text meaningfully (Adams, 1990) and learning of sound letter links is seen as the key contributor in developing fast word recognition.

Code emphasis theories separate out language comprehension processes from word recognition processes and consider each as requiring a separate kind of instruction. The emphasis is on mastering the written code with the ability to link phoneme and letter knowledge in isolation as a necessary precursor to accessing words in text. Instructional practices developed from this view advocate the use of direct teaching of specific skills in

classrooms particularly related to phonics, the learning of sound and letter links in isolation.

This ‘phonics first and fast’ approach has been advocated in many articles and research reports across different countries. In 2000, a report of the National Reading Panel in the United States stated that studies indicated that classroom reading programmes with systematic phonics instruction were significantly more effective than instruction with little or no phonics. A similar advocacy was promoted in a recent major report in the United Kingdom (Rose, 2006). The Rose report argued against instructional approaches that “incorporate *the* whole complexity of reading” (Rose, p.73), specifically referring to the influence of Marie Clay’s work, in favour of an approach that treats decoding and comprehension as separate things. Gough and Tunmer (1986) are cited as major influences for these recommendations.

Critics of these skill-based approaches to literacy instruction argue that the stress on the accumulation of item knowledge outside a meaningful context makes learning difficult for the young child (Donaldson 1978). Also there is some evidence of long term negative effects for children through adoption of instructional practices based on a simple theory. Recent research conducted with adult readers taught to read in phonics based instruction indicates that this instruction leaves a “cognitive footprint” which affects later flexibility with word solving. (Thompson, Connelly, Fletcher-Flinn, & Hodson, 2009, p.231).

### ***Interactive theories of literacy acquisition***

A key variable distinguishing code emphasis and more interactive theories is consideration of the impact of reading continuous text on explanations of developmental change in young readers. A theory of reading continuous text challenges the concept of reading as a linear, word identification process. Instead this perspective emphasises the central place of text meaning and the processes by which a reader draws on sets of knowledge, including phonological, orthographic, syntactical and semantic information in order to access the text message (Clay, 1991, 2001).

When reading is viewed as an interactive process the necessary semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonetic knowledge is thought to be built up through the independent activity of the child, and the instructional support of the teacher, from the beginning of instruction. Researchers adopting this position view children as active constructors of their own

learning (Bruner, 1980; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969); more recently emphasis has been placed on the co-construction of expertise between children and knowledgeable adults (McNaughton, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, 1998).

Of relevance in this study also is the importance placed by many researchers on the reader's prior knowledge as a critical factor contributing to, and constraining, what the reader can understand when they are reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Cazden, 1982; Pressley, 2000). Schema theory represents reading as an active process of constructing meaning by making connections between old knowledge and new knowledge encountered in the text (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). From within this framework Cazden also argues that "a critical resource in constructing meaning is the knowledge of people, places, events and ideas that the reader brings to the reading task" (1982, p.417).

***One example of a complex theory: Literacy Processing theory***

In seeking to understand the development of early literacy during a period of rapid cognitive and physical change Marie Clay developed sensitive tools for recording observable behaviours that could signal changes in how the brain is processing information (Clay, 1966). Processing in this context refers to all the activities happening in the learner's head, brain, mind or neural networks that enables them to make decisions about what the text is saying (Clay, 2001).

Frequent close observation of young learners during this period of rapid change enabled Clay to trace developmental pathways based on detailed studies of change over time in individual learners. Clay considered that an understanding of these pathways would help to address the most challenging theoretical question, that is, to explain how young children make perceptual and cognitive changes over time to develop into effective processors of print who teach themselves more as they engage in reading and writing activities on continuous text (Clay, 2001).

Clay called her approach "an unusual lens" (Clay, 2001, p.42) to mark it out from research that traces progress by undertaking large scale quantitative analysis of aggregated test scores. These studies have led to the development of stage-type theories of reading acquisition which in turn have driven classroom instruction (Paris, 2005). Clay argues that the components identified as important in such approaches have masked

differences between individual learners and led to teaching approaches that are unresponsive and unhelpful for some students.

The evolution of Clay's theory began with the observation and collection of data from 100 children learning to read and write in the first year of school in New Zealand (ages 5-6) for her doctoral study (Clay, 1966). It can therefore be said to be a classroom-based theory as it focussed on children learning to read and write in the specific context of New Zealand classrooms which, as with any classroom research, reflects the teaching programme the children have been exposed to as the programme defines children's learning opportunities (Clay, 2001).

Clay developed records of reading continuous text (commonly referred to as *Running Records*). This observational tool enables researchers and practitioners to gather information about whether a text is at an appropriate level of difficulty for the child by calculating a percentage accuracy rate. Evidence is also collected of the way the child is processing the information in the text through analysis of errors and the spontaneous correction of errors, called *self-correction* (Clay, 2001, 2002). The systematic collection of such records has provided rich descriptions of change over time as children move from novice to proficient readers.

In her original study, Running Records of text reading enabled Clay (1966) to identify and examine the sources of information children drew on when reading. Based on 10,000 oral reading errors captured in the weekly records of 100 children reading texts that had recently been introduced by their classroom teacher, Clay discovered a high degree of syntactic equivalence of single words or equivalent substitutions of word sequences (72%), in errors children made. This indicated that the child's control of oral language guided their first attempts at solving problems. Attention to the visual information in print developed slowly across the year so that by 6 years of age 41% of substitutions had some visual similarity. (Use of semantic information, a third major information source was not analysed.)

In the doctoral study Clay also found that self-correction correlated with reading progress over the course of the year. In fact self-correction was seen to be present in the records of children as they moved onto their very first reading books. It appeared that teachers in the study intuitively noted this behaviour in children as they were 'reading' simple one line

repetitive text and used it as a sign that children were beginning to monitor their responses and correct them. Over the course of the year children who fell into the top two quartile groups in terms of reading progress read more accurately and had higher proportions of self-correction leading Clay to consider self-correction as an important indicator of how children are processing text.

Children who can monitor their reading, discover dissonance between sources of information at the message, language or print levels, search further and independently solve the problem, not only reach the correct solution but also confirm the problem-solving strategy they employed.

Self-correction has also been identified by other reading researchers (Goodman & Burke, 1972; Ng, 1979) and identified as a key indicator in the development of self-regulation in oral language (Karmiloff-Smith, 1979). Wood (2003) states:

Self-correcting is one of the jewels in the crown of learning... It acts as a clear sign that the child is recognizing the significance of the effects of his or her own actions- a form of meta-cognition or knowledge of one's own cognitive activity. Self-correction is a real sign of strategic self-regulation in progress. (p. 25)

Clay (2001) maintains that self-correction is of particular interest to researchers as it can be more reliably observed than signs of self-monitoring and provides sound information about error and error correction. She cautions however against being able to demonstrate that self-correction by itself is a significant determinant of any change that occurs in children's processing systems because of the interdependent relationships between error and text difficulty. Her doctoral research first indicated that in order to be effective a high level of accuracy (90% or above) is a necessary prerequisite for self-correction to be a powerful opportunity for self-instruction. In the absence of self-correction, opportunities for developing a network of strategic activities are reduced. In a study of 52 competent readers in New Zealand between the ages of 6 and 7, in their second year of school, Ng (1979) found that when the text accuracy was controlled (for texts read with 90% or above accuracy) the most proficient readers demonstrated high self-correction ratios of between one self-correction for every two errors to one self-correction in every five errors. Control of the amount of error depends, on the choice of an appropriate text for the

child. For the purposes of the current investigation it is worth noting that all the texts included in Ng's study were narrative texts.

To elaborate different aspects of her theory Clay turned to the work of two theorists, Singer (1994) and Rumelhart (1994). Building on the work of J. A. Holmes (1953, 1970), Singer proposed a substrata-factor theory of reading whereby individuals flexibly mobilise a variety of knowledge systems to solve a particular problem while reading. Holmes named these systems *working systems*. As individuals learn to read, they develop systems in the brain, which can be sequentially and hierarchically organised.

Clay (2001) draws on Rumelhart's (1994) theory of interactive processing using multiple knowledge sources to help explain how these working systems operate at different levels of language as readers read continuous text. Rumelhart's knowledge sources, which involve features of letters, letters, letter-clusters, words, syntactic, semantic, sentence and discourse levels, act as decision-making centres. Each of these message centres actively "sorts, sifts and contributes" to decisions (Clay, 2001, p.108) as the child reads a sentence a word at a time, finding the next word that continues the sentence grammatically, keeps the meaning and matches with the visual information. A gradual process of change occurs as substitutions come to match more of the information in the text. How effectively these simple working systems operate depend on the information the child brings to the reading, what information is stored in the various knowledge stores and how well these knowledge stores are connected. Children learn how to do this linking by mobilising a network of strategic in-the-head activities. They learn how to check and search the sources of information they have at their disposal to attempt unfamiliar words and, under the right conditions, correct many incorrect responses.

In early reading effective processing can be heard when children read orally with phrasing in fast and fluent reading. When children group words together in phrases as they read, attending to letters, words and the sentence structure 'on the run' they are able to give more attention to the messages in the text (Clay, 2005b, p.150). Fluency and speed in reading has been linked to progress in the reading of older readers (Clay & Imlach, 1971; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

By the end of their third year of school observational records of competent readers show that they have many sources of knowledge available to assist with 'on the run' decision-

making. Kaye (2002), for example, explored the reading behaviour of 21 proficient second-grade readers (ages 7-8) on narrative texts and concluded these children were able to assemble working systems in order to successfully read more difficult text even if it contained unusual vocabulary or unfamiliar subject matter. These proficient readers were able to adjust their systems for processing information in print and use high levels of visual information, when required, to attempt to solve problems while retaining the support of other sources of information. Kaye recorded 60 different idiosyncratic ways that children broke words apart to try to solve them. Of particular note in this study was the observation that these competent readers always initiated problem-solving. By contrast, research studies of younger children show children either not giving any response or waiting until prompted at a difficulty (Biemiller, 1970; Clay, 1966). This is one indication that the younger children were still learning how to put together working systems to solve their problems on text.

The sophisticated word-solving abilities demonstrated by the second-grade readers represent the end-point of the early acquisition phase of reading development. This point is reached when children have developed a flexible processing system which enables them to pull together assemblies of working systems that can be used for different activities in both reading and writing. (Clay, 2001; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). Children are then said to have built a *self-extending system* also described as a *bootstrapping effect* (Stanovich, 1986). The development of such a system coincides with a shift from oral reading to silent reading when children are around 8-years-old.

Mental operations, or ways of working on print, such as self-monitoring, searching and self-correcting, play a central role in the construction of effective and flexible literacy processing systems. When children are reading aloud these processes have behavioural counterparts such as, hesitations, rereading, scanning pictures, sounding out parts of words, which provide observable clues to the mental processes being carried out by the child. These behaviours provide useful information to guide teaching interactions, but most importantly, they indicate opportunities for self-instruction on the part of the child. An important question to be addressed in this study is whether different kinds of text provide the same teaching and learning opportunities for young children who are still learning how to read.

### ***Literacy Processing theory – The conceptual basis for this study***

There were several compelling reasons for using Clay's Literacy Processing theory as the conceptual basis for this investigation of the impact of expository and narrative text in early reading instruction. The theory is grounded in observation of children learning to read and write in New Zealand classrooms. The assessment tools developed in the course of Clay's research provide powerful and reliable ways to capture evidence about early reading processes and are widely used in New Zealand primary schools. The theoretical perspectives and instructional recommendations arising from Clay's research have influenced New Zealand classroom practice since the 1960s (Ministry of Education, 2003). It was to be expected that this theoretical orientation would be central in teachers' understandings and beliefs about literacy and would inform their teaching practice within the instructional site of Guided Reading. (See later in this chapter, p.15.)

Clay's theory of Literacy Processing is closely linked to a key methodological tool for capturing children's text reading behaviours. The Running Record of reading continuous text is widely used in literacy instruction programmes across the world. Running Records provide particularly valuable insight into literacy processes in the first three years of school when children are often or typically reading aloud, and their literacy processing is 'under construction'. Some of the most detailed and informative research on literacy acquisition has been conducted within the framework of the early literacy intervention Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery is designed to provide a second wave of teaching effort for young children who have not got underway with reading and writing in the first year of school. The successful outcomes that have been achieved worldwide over a 30 year period for the lowest achieving 6-year-old children in Reading Recovery working from a theory of Literacy Processing strengthen the case for the usefulness of the theory and the decision to locate this study within that theory (Clay, 2001, 2005a, 2005b).

The body of research evidence that has developed from access to these classroom and individual teaching sites has enabled Literacy Processing theory to demonstrate the three characteristics of a good theory outlined by Shaffer (2002). The first feature is its parsimony or conciseness that enables the theory to account for a large number of empirical observations. Good theories are also falsifiable, capable of making explicit predictions about future events, as well as heuristic, building on existing knowledge by

continuing to generate testable hypotheses that if confirmed by future research will lead to a much richer understanding of the phenomena.

This research seeks to utilise the heuristic properties of the theory to examine how learning to read may be better understood by investigating the effect of the two contrasting text types, narrative and expository on the teaching and learning of young children.

### ***Guided Reading in New Zealand Junior Classes***

In New Zealand four approaches to reading instruction are recommended by the Ministry of Education (2003) for New Zealand junior classes (ages 5-8). These varied (but complementary) approaches include: Reading to Children, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, and Independent Reading. A similar range of writing approaches is recommended: Shared Writing, Guided Writing and Independent Writing. The Language Experience approach although introduced as a writing approach in “Effective Literacy Practice” (2003) has also been characterised as a reading approach (Department of Education, 1978) as it involves the creation of reading texts based on children’s own experiences. This set of literacy practices aimed at providing a broad range of rich opportunities for literacy learning has been described as a “Balanced Literacy Programme” (Department of Education, 1978). The term *Whole Language* has never been used to describe New Zealand literacy programmes in official teacher publications in New Zealand. However, it is inappropriately used by some writers to describe New Zealand practice (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985; Soler & Openshaw, 2007).

Guided Reading, occupies a pivotal place in this mix of instructional activities with its purpose of “leading children towards independence in reading” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.96). As described in a Ministry of Education teacher handbook, “Guided Reading gives a teacher and a group of students the opportunity to talk, read, and think their way purposefully through a particular text” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.69).

### **History and Development**

The earliest description of a Guided Reading-type approach to reading instruction emanates from the United States of America and is commonly attributed to Emmett Betts

(1946) with his framework for a Directed Reading Activity in “Foundations of Reading Instruction” (Ford & Opitz, 2008a). Betts outlined a framework for instruction that included preparation for reading selected texts, silent and oral reading followed by follow-up activities. A decade later, in their book “Teaching Children to Read”, Gray and Reese (1957) are credited with first using the term *Guided Reading* in describing how teachers shape a reading lesson. The term described an instructional approach using basal readers with grouped collections of stories in one textbook that children would read throughout the whole school year. This material was accompanied by a teacher’s manual with scripted instructions for teaching. Within the lesson teachers pretaught words in a skills-based approach to reading instruction (Ford & Opitz, 2008a). Despite the similar names there are key differences between this framework, which is still linked to the term Directed Reading Activity in the definition of Guided Reading in the Literacy Dictionary (Harris & Hodges, 1995), and the one that later evolved in New Zealand. These differences are explored next in this review.

New Zealand reading instruction for the first half of last century was influenced by theories and practices originating from both the United Kingdom and America (Price, 2000). In the 1940s New Zealand embraced a *phonics* approach and, in the 1950s a *word approach* whereby children accumulated a word reading vocabulary of 100 words taught in isolation from the text (Clay, 1966). At an International Reading Association Conference in Toronto in 1994, Warwick Elley described how over time a unique teaching style emerged in New Zealand which he credited to the inspiration of gifted individuals. Apart from acknowledging the work of important academics such as Marie Clay, Elley noted that New Zealand’s approach to reading was not based on a strong experimental research base as had happened in other countries. Key contributors Elley identified were Sylvia Ashton-Warner in the 1950s for her Language Experience type approach, and Don Holdaway in the 1960s for the Shared Book approach. He also recognised the influential work of reading specialists Myrtle Simpson and Ruth Trevor in the 1960s with their belief that meaning and interest are the two most important aspects of reading instruction from the beginning (Elley, 1994).

Myrtle Simpson, was editor of the first home grown reading series, the Ready to Read series (see description on p.26). In 1962 Simpson advised teachers on how to use the new little storybooks based on her own and the collected observations of teachers who had trialled the new books with children. She identified small group instruction using the little

readers as “the part of children’s reading experience concerned most with the direct teaching of reading” (Simpson, 1962, p.60). In conjunction with this instructional practice Simpson suggested many other reading and writing opportunities involving published books, and teacher and child generated texts including experiential stories, news charts and wall stories. Using this wide variety of text, opportunities for literacy activities involved whole class, small group and individual teaching as well as many independent reading and writing opportunities.

The Ready to Read handbook laid the foundations for many of the components of Guided Reading. Simpson (1962) proposed small group instruction should involve a brief discussion prior to the reading of the books followed by a new approach “teaching in the course of reading” (p.61). This signalled a major shift in teaching away from the preteaching of vocabulary previously used in junior reading instruction (Clay, 1966). One section of the handbook Simpson entitled “Guiding Silent Reading” (p.94) which contained a discussion of how to assist children to move from oral to silent reading. The term was not being used to refer to a specific component of the instructional framework.

Many key organisational features of effective reading instruction identified by Simpson continue to be identified in later descriptions of Guided Reading (Clay, 1991; Department of Education, 1985; Ministry of Education, 2003). These included the need for each child to have their own copy of a book, the discussion and reading of one little book in one lesson and the use of a small blackboard or similar as an instructional aid during the lesson.

In 1972 two professional development publications for teachers used the term *Directed Silent Reading* to describe key elements of effective group reading instruction. The first publication “Reading: Suggestions for Teaching Reading in Primary and Secondary Schools” written by Ruth Trevor for the Department of Education, introduced the descriptive framework of Before Reading, During Reading and After Reading which became common to all later overviews of Guided Reading (Department of Education, 1985; Ministry of Education 1996, 2002, 2003).

Also in 1972, Don Holdaway, an experienced literacy educator, in his book “Independence in Reading” introduced teachers to Directed Silent Reading as an additional approach to be used alongside an Individualised Reading Programme, the main

focus of his book. Although calling the lesson framework Directed Silent Reading Holdaway stated “in guided reading all of the children read the entire unit to themselves whether they are reading aloud in the early stages or silently as competence grows” (p.142). Holdaway’s use of the term “guided reading” foreshadowed the subsequent adoption of the term to describe the instructional group setting.

Guided Reading, as the name of the instructional setting, first appeared in New Zealand in 1978 in the “Early Reading In-service Course” (ERIC) produced by the Department of Education, through the influence of Don Holdaway, one of the ERIC developers. The other developers of this teacher resource included John Penton, Reading Adviser, and John Slane, Inspector of Schools. This group was assisted by a team of experienced practitioners. The aim of producing the material was to provide intensive professional development in a form that could reach every junior teacher in the country (Slane, 1979). It was therefore designed as a slide/tape course with accompanying booklets that teachers could keep. The course comprised 12 units which teachers viewed individually in sequence, one a week, at ERIC resource centres. Support was available from classroom teachers specially trained as ERIC resource teachers.

The ERIC resource, targeted at developing quality class programmes for beginning readers, included information on teaching approaches whilst also introducing teachers to theory and research through a selection of articles and excerpts, including chapters from Holdaway’s book “Independence in Reading” (1972) and Clay’s book “Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behaviours” (1972b). Training in observing and interpreting early reading behaviour by using Running Records of text reading (Clay, 1972a) was included as Units Two and Three. Unit Eight of the series “Using Graded Natural Language Texts” contained information on selecting and preparing material for Guided Reading and advice on the three phrases of a Guided Reading lesson. The value of this resource was demonstrated by its continued availability for over 10 years after its first production.

In 1979, Don Holdaway, published a second book, “The Foundations of Literacy”, which also contained detailed information for teachers on conducting Guided Reading lessons.

Senior school teachers (years 4-7) were also involved in professional development for reading from 1983 with the development of the Later Reading In-service Course

(LARIC), a video in-service course. Unit 4 was entitled “Guided Silent Reading” and introduced teachers to the elements of Guided Reading for older children.

All subsequent Ministry of Education teacher resource material has contained detailed descriptions of Guided Reading within the context of a balanced literacy programme incorporating features of the practice first identified almost 50 years before (Department of Education, 1985; Ministry of Education 1996, 2002, 2003). These features will be revisited again in the next section describing Guided Reading.

## **Features of Guided Reading**

### ***Physical organisation***

Organisational features embedded in the practice of Guided Reading are described in Ministry of Education professional development resources (2002, 2003). The teacher and a small group of children (usually four to six) although that may vary, gather on the floor or around a table with enough copies of texts for each child and the teacher. These texts particularly in beginning reading instruction are small reading books with about 8-10 pages able to be read in one lesson. It is recommended that the teacher have access to a small whiteboard for incidental teaching during the lesson. The suggested length of lessons is between 10 and 20 minutes.

### ***Grouping for instruction***

The formation of homogenous groups for Guided Reading instruction according to a common ability level is a common feature of junior classes throughout the New Zealand education system (Education Review Office, 2009; Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000). The development of observation techniques, including Running Records (Clay, 1972a), nationally introduced through the ERIC course (1978) enabled teachers to reliably group children according to their ability to read text written in a gradient of difficulty. Clay (1972b) linked New Zealand’s fifth birthday school entry policy to the practice of ability grouping because it enables teachers to gradually group children for formal reading instruction according to their needs as they begin to display similar literacy understandings after variable times at school. Children are subsequently flexibly grouped and regrouped as their reading development changes. Wilkinson and Townsend (2000) investigated the ability grouping practices of four exemplary junior class New Zealand

teachers. Flexible ability grouping was highlighted as contributing to the success of Guided Reading and successful literacy instruction.

Although it has a long established history in New Zealand, the concept of ability grouping has been controversial in the United States of America (Ford & Opitz, 2008a; Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000) because research showed that placement of children in inflexible grouping produced different qualities of instruction for different groups (Cazden, 2001). A revival of ability grouping in the junior school, in concert with a renewed focus on Guided Reading instruction has been demonstrated through recent surveys of effective literacy teachers (Ford & Opitz, 2008b; Pressley, Rankin and Yokoi, 1996) and teacher professional development material (Dorn, French & Jones, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2006; Mooney, 1990, 1995).

### ***The lesson framework***

The framework for a Guided Reading lesson includes three phases of teaching; Introducing the text, Reading the text, and Discussing and Responding to the text, with a possible follow-up activity (Ministry of Education, 2002). Follow-up activities that are unrelated to reading, such as worksheet completion are not recommended (Ministry of Education, 2002; Smith & Elley, 1997).

### ***Introducing the text***

Teachers provide a brief introduction to the text of a few minutes (Ministry of Education, 2002). Current descriptions of Guided Reading involve three teacher foci specifically targeted at supporting children to read the text successfully; activating background knowledge and experience, discussing text features and attending to unfamiliar vocabulary (Ministry of Education, 2002). It is suggested that if expository text are used more time may be needed for the introduction if there are unfamiliar concepts or vocabulary, diagrams, or layout features (Ministry of Education, 2002). Research support for the effectiveness of an introduction to a text comes from a small-scale research project (Wong & McNaughton, 1980) in which it was demonstrated that discussing unfamiliar elements of stories increased a reader's oral reading proficiency through increasing word recognition and greater self-regulation leading to increased self-correction of errors.

### ***First reading of the text***

Following the introduction the children read the text for the first time. Teacher guidelines for this phase are brief. It is suggested that the child reads the text independently with the teacher providing support if necessary (Ministry of Education, 2003). Teachers are encouraged to prompt the children for strategies by moving alongside each child as they are reading but are urged only to intervene when necessary.

The act of oral reading in the Guided Reading setting has numerous benefits for the teacher and the beginning reader. From a processing perspective Clay (1979) proposes that oral reading, a type of “thinking aloud”... “facilitates mental processing and aids self-correction” (p.262) as the child hears his attempts at words and these are fed back into the brain. Also the teacher is able to hear and monitor how individual children are reading and intervene at points of difficulty to aid processing (Forbes, Poparad & McBride, 2004; Schwartz, 2005).

There have been cautions about the negative effects of a practice known as Round Robin reading during the first reading in New Zealand from as early as 1962 in Simpson’s handbook to the new Ready to Read series. Round Robin reading is a practice whereby all members of the instructional reading group individually read a segment of text aloud to the group while all participants listen to take their turn reading. Simpson asserts that during group teaching with the books “oral reading around the group is neither profitable nor enjoyable” (p.95). In 2009 concern was again raised about Round Robin reading in an Education Review Office report. Some possible negative effects on children of the practice of Round Robin reading include preventing access to the meaning of the whole book, and causing child distraction and boredom (Ministry of Education, 2003). In a recent report of a small-scale research project Cullen and Paris (2010) observed the practice of Round Robin reading occurring in Guided Reading lessons. They also report choral or unison reading as occurring in some lessons when all children read together at the same rate. This practice also prevents children from independently processing text.

### ***Discussing and responding to the text***

The purpose of a discussion after reading the text is to deepen understandings but it is acknowledged that for the beginning reader reading the text successfully is the main focus

of the lesson and that the length of any following discussion will vary (Ministry of Education, 2003).

### **Scaffolded Instruction**

Guided Reading developed over time in New Zealand honed and refined by the beliefs and practices of effective teachers whilst based on overarching notions about reading as a meaning-based activity (Holdaway, 1972, 1979; Simpson, 1962). Many facets of its design fit comfortably with the theoretical construct of scaffolding first coined by Wood Bruner & Ross in 1976.

The concept of scaffolding can be applied to many aspects of the Guided Reading approach to explain how changes in children's processing are effected. Elements identified by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) as critical to the success of tutoring are that the tutor has knowledge of the task, and of what the child already controls, so they can operate just ahead of what the child can do independently. This has important implications for the teacher's role in Guided Reading that will be discussed in this section.

According to Berk and Winsler (as cited in Horowitz, Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005) the concept of scaffolding can be used in at least two ways according to how teachers a) structure both tasks and learning environments so that the demands challenge them appropriately and b) adjust the degree to which adults intervene in relation to the current needs and abilities of the child. An example of the first type of scaffolding is the framework of the lesson itself. This can be viewed as a scaffold because during the introduction the teacher provides support she judges necessary for the group and within the same lesson, withdraws that support and lets the children read the text as independently as they can. Teacher help is available if necessary (Clay, 1991). In this conception of a Guided Reading lesson as a scaffold, the structure is dismantled as soon as it is not required during the same lesson but elements of it are available for the child through supportive prompts when necessary.

Another way the teacher supports or scaffolds children's reading development is to provide a careful gradient of complexity in the texts they choose for children to read. As children progress through increasingly more challenging texts new scaffolds are erected and dismantled enabling the children's processing systems to be continually challenged

(Clay & Cazden, 1990). This places a great deal of responsibility on teachers to select appropriately challenging text. In Vygotskian terms text read at challenging levels can be said to be at the cutting edge of the child's learning and within their zone of proximal development (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Teacher interactions during reading are then best placed to affect development.

Studies of beginning readers of narrative text (Clay, 2001) have enabled recommendations to be made regarding optimum accuracy levels for children's text reading. The notion of challenge in new text is specified as one where the text can be read with no more than 5-10 difficulties in every 100 words (Ministry of Education, 2002). When text accuracy falls below these parameters it is likely the child will not be able to maintain a focus on the meaning of the text (Ministry of Education, 2002). Also from the perspective of Literacy Processing theory, if text accuracy is kept at 90% or above there is a greater likelihood of important processing benefits afforded by opportunities for self-monitoring, searching and checking that result in high levels of self-correction (Clay, 2001, 2002). In order to be able to make effective decisions about appropriate texts teachers need to closely monitor children's reading progress as they read more complex text (Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000). Monitoring of children's progress in New Zealand classrooms usually involves the regular administration of Running Records (Clay, 2002) and close teacher observation. In their 2000 article, Wilkinson & Townsend also identify the close matching of children to text and the careful monitoring of their progress as two additional features that make the Guided Reading approach in New Zealand successful.

Writing for teachers, Clay (1998) distilled several deliberate teaching actions that she observed teachers using to support children to read new text successfully. These principles can be interpreted as ways of scaffolding learning (Clay & Cazden, 1990) and relate closely to Wood, Bruner & Ross's account in 1976 of the principles adopted by effective tutors. Clay (1998) identifies the following features of an effective introduction; maintaining interactive ease, increasing accessibility, prompting the child to constructive activity, accepting partially correct responses, tightening the criteria of acceptability, probing to find out what children know, presenting new knowledge, asking children to work with new knowledge, and providing a model. Clay's description has a bias towards working with narrative text but she strongly suggests that all school readers can benefit from introductions to any text that contains new concepts and new vocabulary.

The concept of scaffolding has also been applied to the type of teaching interactions that occur while children read a new text during Guided Reading. When teachers have a working knowledge of Literacy Processing theory they can adjust the scaffold according to the needs of a particular child based on their observation of the child's reading behaviour. It is therefore critical for teachers to have a sound understanding of reading behaviours and a sense of developmental change over time in processing. Clay pinpoints this critical issue by stating that "if teachers do not understand literacy processing their prompting will be hit or miss" (Clay, 2001, p.128). Teachers can prompt children in ways that can either help them solve their localised problem or help them learn how to take strategic action that is generalisable to future reading experiences (Clay, 2005a, 2005b; Schwartz, 2005; Wood, 2003). Over the past 30 years, in New Zealand, as in many other English speaking countries, teachers have developed this knowledge base through their training as Reading Recovery teachers (Clay, 2005a, 2005b). Teaching interactions that foster strategic activity are acknowledged to be easier to achieve in one to one interactions; they are more complex and challenging in group situations when several children are reading at the same time (Schwartz, 2005).

### **Research on Effective Teaching Practice**

There is a great paucity of research that specifically targets what happens in the instructional setting of Guided Reading in a school context. Most knowledge about Guided Reading practices has emerged from larger studies, using both observational and survey designs, of the practices of effective literacy teachers. An overview of this literature follows.

A small micro-analytic study was conducted in the United States by Anderson, Wilkinson and Mason (1991) with six classes of third grade children in the United States, who received two Guided Reading lessons with a meaning emphasis and two lessons where the surface features of print were emphasised. Results indicated that lessons with an emphasis on meaning achieved superior performance across a range of outcome measures including error rate and recall of story elements. Lessons with a meaning emphasis also took less time than the lesson with an emphasis on the surface features of print.

In a New Zealand study of 40 effective literacy teachers, Elley (2004) collected data through observation of lessons, interviews and a written questionnaire. The teachers in

this study were judged to be effective teachers of literacy based on results from the norming procedure for the STAR reading tests for Year 3 students. Findings indicated that these successful teachers were following a standard New Zealand style of literacy programme (Ministry of Education, 2003) aimed at developing a lasting interest in reading and focusing on meaning. The effective teachers rated Guided Reading highly as an instructional activity which they used several times a week. Teachers were asked to rank a small number of teaching prompts they might use when children were unable to move on at a problem when reading. The highest ranked prompt was “What would make sense?” and the lowest ranking was to tell the child the word. This appears to confirm that the effective teachers focus on meaning during reading, viewing the child as a problem-solver. But the limited range of prompts used in the survey does not capture the complexity of questioning that teachers actually use while teaching. Other characteristics of these talented teachers were that they were experienced (all with over 10 years of experience), many had trained as Reading Recovery teachers and all were committed and enthusiastic about literacy.

In the United Kingdom, observational research commissioned by the Teacher Training Agency reported on the characteristics of effective teachers of literacy (Wray, Medwell, Fox & Poulson, 2000). In this study the main sample of 228 teachers was a mix of teachers teaching Key Stage 1 (ages 4-7) and Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11). The effective teachers provided a wide range of literacy teaching activities. Many different types of questions were observed being used to lead children to think about their own literacy use and comprehension. The authors describe this style of interaction as scaffolding although reference is not made to the origins of the term. The most salient characteristic of the teaching of literacy skills and knowledge at the word, sentence and text levels for the effective teachers was that it took place within the context of working with shared text. Another key characteristic of the effective teachers in this study was that they taught explicitly through modelling, demonstration, explanations and exemplification.

In 1996, Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi surveyed 45 teachers in the United States of America who had been nominated as effective in promoting literacy in kindergarten to second-grade. A complex picture emerged with few clear trends. Most teachers reported that 71% of their time was devoted to meaning making compared to 21% devoted to decoding. Ability grouping for literacy instruction varied across grades with a third of instructional time reported for kindergarten and first-grade, and a sixth of time for

second-grade. Of note was a high degree of choral or unison reading reported with 57%, 82% and 92% of teachers in kindergarten, first-grade and second-grade respectively reporting its use. In summary the authors reported that the teachers were integrating the attractive features of Whole Language with the explicit teaching of skills.

A large-scale observational study of effective literacy instruction in 28 first-grade classrooms across five American states (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block & Morrow, 1998) compared outstanding with typical teachers. There were high levels of exposure to literature and writing in the classrooms of the outstanding teachers. Wide use was made of levelled books chosen to provide some challenge for children. The authors also describe the teachers as providing a mix of Whole Language elements and skills instruction. The teachers are reported as teaching children to attend to multiple sources of information without giving priority to picture, semantic context and syntactic information over letter and sound level information. The outstanding teachers were described as teaching children how to do things for themselves. The researchers conclude that effective literacy instruction is a complex interaction of multiple components.

Also in the United States Ford and Opitz (2008b) conducted a national survey of the Guided Reading practices of 1500 kindergarten to second-grade teachers who self-identified as knowledgeable about Guided Reading. These authors support a New Zealand-type Guided Reading model and were surprised to find that many of the teachers saw demonstration and explicit teaching of skills prior to reading as important functions of Guided Reading rather than the kinds of scaffold that the authors more commonly associated with Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The researchers also report that narrative text dominated teacher use with two thirds of the text used classified as narrative. Ford and Opitz perceive this as a problem and raise the issue of how to help teachers move towards more of a balance of text use in Guided Reading. Also of concern for the researchers was the finding that teachers reported children read instructional level text only 58% of the time in Guided Reading. The researchers interpreted this as reflecting a misunderstanding about the essential features of a Guided Reading framework which requires the careful matching of text to children to ensure it is read at an instructional level. No definition of instructional level text was provided in the survey question therefore it is not clear whether researchers and teachers had a common understanding of what counted as instructional text.

It is difficult to combine information from studies undertaken in different education systems by researchers whose own personal theories of reading acquisition influence the questions asked and the reporting of the data. However, some clear characteristics of effective practice do emerge from this review of international research. Effective literacy teachers provided rich and varied opportunities for literacy learning in their classrooms. Reading was unanimously viewed as a meaning-based activity and engagement with texts given high priority. The differences between the teachers lay in the style of delivery of the teaching of the component parts of the reading process as might have anticipated given the influence of different theories of reading acquisition (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1983; Clay, 2001; Goodman, 1994). When these differences were investigated specifically in relation to Guided Reading, some of the teachers, including the effective New Zealand teachers, taught children through interaction using the text as the catalyst for instruction whilst other teachers explicitly pretaught information immediately prior to the text being read. This indicates that there is still considerable variability in the practice of Guided Reading between New Zealand and other countries first highlighted in the historical section of this review.

### **Current Practice**

Although there is little research evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of Guided Reading in New Zealand there is evidence that the approach is accepted as successful and implemented widely throughout New Zealand. A recent report of school evaluation visits to 212 Year One and Two classrooms by the Education Review Office (2009) reported that most classes observed in the first half of that year had a structured reading programme that included Guided Reading, alongside other instructional reading activities such as Shared Reading and Independent activities.

Arguably the high rates of literacy achievement for New Zealand secondary school students, relative to other countries, identified through international surveys such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Chamberlain, 2007) and the Programme for the International Student Assessment (PISA) studies (Telford & Caygill, 2007), can be attributed to New Zealand's broad-based approach to literacy teaching in the primary school. It may therefore not be surprising that research has not been undertaken comparing Guided Reading with other approaches to literacy particularly as

there is an ethical dilemma associated with pursuing research that denies services to children known to be effective (Clay, 2001).

New Zealand's involvement in international studies highlights an on-going source of concern for educators that whilst overall literacy rates are high there continues to be relatively low rates of literacy among Māori and Pasifika children (McNaughton, 2002; Ministry of Education, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998). New Zealand research indicates that instructional practice can be improved for low-achieving children in junior classroom literacy instruction and that this leads to improved outcomes. A project involving schools in low socio-economic areas has demonstrated that junior class teachers can raise rates of progress at a significant rate (Phillips, McNaughton & MacDonald, 2004). Intensive teacher professional development aimed at strengthening teachers' ability to select, introduce and support children's text reading had a direct effect on the children's achievement. These results demonstrate the potential for increasing children's literacy achievement nationally through professional development as happened with the Early Reading Inservice Course developed in the 1970s targeted at strengthening Guided Reading practices.

This review of descriptive accounts and research evidence relating to Guided Reading as an instructional site has highlighted aspects of teaching practice that are, or are likely to, provide optimal learning outcomes for students in these settings. The central role of Guided Reading in New Zealand primary schools, its long history and continuing strong support by national education agencies gives rise to expectations that teaching practices will be fairly standard across different schools and teachers. There is reason to expect that teachers themselves would articulate some common theoretical understandings and beliefs. At the same time it should be noted that the education system is less centralised and cohesive than it was when ERIC was distributed nationally in the mid 1970s. The review has also highlighted a marked bias toward the use of narrative rather than expository text in the Guided Reading setting. This finding invites questions about how teachers' knowledge, experience and practices might be challenged by the influx of, and expectations around the use of expository text. Research and advocacy around these two text types is examined in the following section.

## ***Instructional Text Types***

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this study narrative and expository text are defined in the following ways. Narrative text has a particular structure, an initiating event, sequent and a final resolution (Smolkin, Donovan & Lomax, 2000). Randell (2000) refers to this as a traditional story structure whereby a central character has a problem which is solved, and identifies three essential elements; tension, climax and resolution. In contrast the nonfiction genre, also called informational, transactional or expository text, has been defined by its purpose, that is, to explain, argue or describe (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Texts published for reading instruction are frequently classified as fiction or nonfiction text reflecting the worldwide usage of the Dewey Decimal system of book classification. These classifications once separated text written in a narrative or story style from those that were written as factual accounts, but in recent years a new genre that incorporates narrative elements into factual material has been recognised within the nonfiction genre. This category of text has been identified variously by such names as *narrative-informational* (Duke, 1999a, 1999b), *hybrid* or *dual purpose* text (Smolkin, Donovan & Lomax, 2000). In order to exclude the subcategory of mixed genre texts from this study the terms *narrative* and *expository* text are used predominantly throughout this thesis. Alternative terms used, such as *informational*, *transactional* and *nonfiction*, reflect the language used in the source material discussed.

### **A Brief History**

Prior to 1963 most of the texts used for reading instruction in New Zealand in the first three years were narrative texts imported from overseas. These have been described as “contrived text” (Clay, 1991, p.185) because some features of language, such as word length or phonemic regularity, had been manipulated to produce texts with sentences unlike the usual forms of written language in order to match whichever feature the teaching approach stressed as the most important to meet first. These texts could very loosely be described as narrative text although the manipulation of the language meant there was not a strong storyline in the early level texts. As children progressed in reading in many of the series they were then introduced to texts with stronger storylines (Price, 2000).

The first significant locally developed reading series was introduced into New Zealand schools in 1963 and, as previously discussed, accompanied a major shift in teaching practice away from the practice of preteaching vocabulary towards interactive, responsive teaching after a difficulty (Clay, 1966). Price (2000) suggests there was also a pragmatic reason for the development of the new series related to the cost of importing overseas reading books. The new Department of Education Ready to Read series incorporated many features of children storybooks including a strong emphasis on the meaningfulness of the story (Department of Education, 1985; Price, 2000; Simpson, 1962). The series, written in an increasing gradient of difficulty, contained 12 small readers and 6 miscellanies of stories designed to contain content familiar to New Zealand children. Careful attention was paid to the type layout, size and spacing of words. There was consistency throughout the series in the introduction and repeated use of a common core of high frequency and lower frequency words, repeated use of variations of a set of easily-controlled straightforward sentence structures and illustrations that provided clear and direct support for the text. Clay (1972b) dubbed these texts “natural language texts” (p.79) because they were closer to children’s language use and provided a gradient of difficulty of complexity alongside the child’s growing competence in oral language.

After the Ready to Read series was introduced, a Wellington publishing company, Price Milburn, began to produce many little storybooks at each of the same levels as the core text using the same principles of design. The rationale for this development was to give children the opportunity to read texts at equivalent levels of difficulty with success before the difficulty level was raised. The main author of the highly successful and still published series, Beverley Randell (2000), explains that she had four convictions about children’s early reading text when she began writing the narrative texts; the importance of traditional story structure, the key focus on meaning, a gradient of difficulty in texts, and the careful matching of illustrations and text.

In 1982 when the Department of Education produced a new Ready to Read series the strong focus on meaningful enjoyable stories remained, although editorial policy changes altered the close control over vocabulary and language structures of the previous series (Price 2000). Curriculum materials described the new series as one “that builds on the children’s spoken language and on the experience of the world and books that they bring to school” (Department of Education, 1985, p.83). At this time a colour wheel was devised to represent a gradient of difficulty. Colours were used for segments of a pie

graph based on the colours used in the original Ready to Read series (Department of Education, 1985). Nine colour bands subdivided into a total of 24 sublevels denote difficulty levels. After trialling texts with children Ready to Read books are assigned a level for use in Guided Reading.

There has been a strong tradition in New Zealand for junior class teachers to have ready access to narrative instructional material. The original Department of Education policy to provide copies of Ready to Read texts free of charge to all schools based on school numbers provided high levels of access (Department of Education, 1985) as well as a high degree of consistency in the texts available across schools. In recent years an increasing number of little readers written in a nonfiction style (including hybrid text) have also been supplied to schools by the Ministry of Education through the Ready to Read series.

To supplement this material schools purchase other available fiction and nonfiction text. Nonfiction texts have now been published on a wide variety of subject areas that young children in the first three years of school might study in such areas as Science, Social Studies or Health both in New Zealand and overseas by publishers such as Learning Media, National Geographic, Horwitz Martin Education, Pearson Education, Scholastic and Thomson Learning. We do not know to what extent schools are using the Ready to Read nonfiction text or whether schools are supplementing this material by purchasing additional nonfiction text for reading instruction. There is some evidence from the United States that teachers are increasingly using this material and this evidence will be presented in the next section.

Although there is no New Zealand research on the extent that teachers have taken up the recommendation to use nonfiction text early in reading instruction, research from the United States suggests there is a trend towards using more of this material for instructional reading in the first three years of school and this trend is likely to increase with the widespread adoption of Common Core Standards. The 1996 survey of 83 effective kindergarten to second-grade teachers (Pressley, Rankin and Yokoi, 1996) found that 6% of the teachers used expository text for reading materials. In the major 2008 national survey of 1500 kindergarten to second-grade teachers informational text had increased to one-third of instructional text (Ford & Opitz, 2008b).

A long held assumption, both in New Zealand and overseas, was that “children learn to read, then read to learn” (Chall, 1983). This phrase signalled a shift between reading largely narrative text as instructional text, generally accepted as more appropriate for learning to read, and expository text, which children were introduced to later in their schooling for the purpose of increasing their knowledge of the world. It was the practice for New Zealand children to be introduced to nonfiction text in reading instruction through such publications as the “School Journal” first published in 1907 by the New Zealand Education Department (O’Brien, 2007). Copies were supplied free to each child until the late 1940s when multiple copies began to be provided to schools to enable them to build up (on-going) cumulative class sets of material. The booklets contained several stories, poems and nonfiction text, often written in a narrative form, in four graded levels.

As children successfully completed the final books in the Ready to Read series, at some time between 7- and 8-years-old, they were introduced to material from the School Journals for instructional reading. In 1994 Smith and Elley reported that New Zealand teacher surveys indicated that 84% of middle school teachers (ages 9-13) used the School Journals as the prime source of instructional reading material although 86% also used trade books daily for instructional purposes.

From as early as the 1970s there have been indications that New Zealand children were better able to read and understand narrative text than information text. In an International Education Association (I.E.A.) study in 1971 (Elley, 1994) New Zealand children (aged 14 and 17) scored highest in the world amongst five other countries for reading comprehension but results were better on narrative text than information text. Other indications of children’s experiences with expository text came from studies such as that conducted by Tom Nicholson in 1985 in the first year of high school which demonstrated that children were having many difficulties understanding textbook material used in their classrooms.

More recently there is some indication that New Zealand children have improved in their ability to read both fiction and nonfiction text more accurately. The National Education Monitoring project (Crooks & Flockton, 2005; Flockton & Crooks, 1997, 2001) sampled reading levels of Year 4 and Year 8 children in 1996, 2000 and 2004 and detected increased reading levels for both fiction and nonfiction at the Year 4 level for both text types. At the same time there has been little change in the percentage of children (20%) at

the bottom of the achievement levels at Year 8. Between 1996 and 2004 there was an increase in the ability of children to read nonfiction text, but numbers of those having difficulty reading and comprehending remained higher for nonfiction than fiction text. These results suggest that New Zealand teachers are effective at assisting most children to read both narrative and nonfiction text but that a proportion of children continue to experience difficulty reading both fiction and nonfiction.

## **Narrative and Expository Text: The Debate**

### *Arguments for expository text*

Arguments for increased access to informational text for children below grade four in American classrooms began to gather momentum from the late 1980s (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Newkirk, 1987; Pappas, 1991, 1993b; Sanacore, 1991). This sparked strong debate in the literature between ardent supporters of the primacy of narrative in young children's education (Egan, 1993) and those advocating a change in the balance of text types used in the classroom (Pappas, 1993b). One rationale for a shift in practice was the inability of older students in grades four to seven, when marked shifts occur in the amount of informational text used in classrooms, to demonstrate effective comprehension on standardised tests. This drop in understanding was coined *The Fourth Year Slump* (Chall, 1983; Langer, 1985; Langer, Applebee, Mullis & Foertsch, 1990) and early exposure to the discourse structures of information text was proposed as a solution to this effect (Duke & Kays, 1998; Palmer & Stewart, 2003; Sanacore, 1991).

In 1991 Pappas argued for the inclusion of information text in classroom instruction from the social-semiotic perspective proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1985). From this position Pappas argued that narrative is only one way humans make sense of the world and that we limit children's ability to learn about the range of intellectual thought if they are only exposed to narrative text. A more specific reason Pappas also proposed (1991) was that "children need opportunities to use books from a wide range of genre so they can acquire the pool of language that the written language in our culture affords" (p.461).

An influential survey by Duke in 1999 of the availability and use of informational text in 20 American first-grade classrooms supported the argument for greater exposure. Duke found an average of only 3.6 minutes spent with information text across the whole school day. A recent study in 15 classrooms (Jeong, Gaffney & Choi, 2010) replicated Duke's

original study but extended it from second-grade to fourth-grade. These authors found that literacy activities with information texts involved less than Duke found for first-grade with an average of one minute of second-grade time with information text, with an increase at third-grade and fourth-grade to 16 minutes. Although there was more access to information text in the classrooms than previously, especially in the classroom of more recently trained teachers, the use of information text for instructional purposes was still much less than narrative.

Research demonstrating that young children in first-grade and second-grade in the United States were able to learn from information text when these were read aloud to them has added weight to the argument. Reading expository texts to children was shown to impact positively on children's ability to use information text structure when retelling content (Moss, 1997; Pappas, 1993a). Children who had been read information text also improved in their ability to understand the language of information text (Duke & Kays, 1998); were able to incorporate different text structures into writing (Badger, 1990) and were able to recall information from expository text just as well as they could from narrative text (Jetton, 1994).

High interest in reading information text, particularly among boys, has been argued based on surveys of library use and classroom library choice (Smolkin, Donovan & Lomax, 2000). And case studies of two failing boy readers pointed to the increased motivation that can be generated by using informational text (Caswell & Duke, 1998) to ensure more successful engagement with text and thereby improve literacy levels.

In spite of all this attention being paid to informational text, the authors of a research review (Palincsar & Duke, 2004), conclude that there is no large-scale research to support the inclusion of more information text in classrooms. They did find however that small-scale research indicated that there are no harmful effects to including a balance of narrative and information text in classrooms (Kamil & Lane, 1997).

### *Arguments for narrative text*

The strong movement that has existed to change teacher practice towards greater use of informational text has challenged the view of many theorists and researchers who argue that stories play a central role in the education of young children (Bruner, 1991; Clay, 1991; Egan, 1988, 1993; Huck, 1999; Wells, 1986). Arguments for the primacy of

narrative relate to the role narrative plays in how human beings make sense of their world and their experiences. Bruner (1986) argues that life is a narrative and thought is the interpretation and reinterpretation of life's experiences. Narrative and storytelling are also described as being the primary vehicles for the transmission of social knowledge (Cook-Gumperz, 1993).

The enjoyment of stories is a motivational factor in using narrative text with children (Elley, 1999; Randell, 2000). Elley (1999) maintains that this enjoyment is related to their familiar content, the lack of threat for young children, the positive emotions raised by stories, and their ability to extend children's understanding of human nature. For Randell (2000) it is the structure of story with its tension, climax and resolution that injects a motivational factor to reading narrative text. Moreover, Tierney, LaZansky, Raphael and Cohen (as cited by Gordon, 1992) state that a wider band of interpretation is permissible for narrative text as the reader can come to the text with different amounts and types of prior knowledge and yet still adequately understand the text, unlike expository text that makes heavy demands on the prior knowledge of readers.

Many researchers claim that exposure to narrative text from a young age through storybook reading develops understandings about conventions of story and structural characteristics that support the early reading of narrative texts (Clay, 1991; Gordon, 1992; Huck, 1999; Trelease, 1989). Arguing for the importance of narrative text, Wells (1986) reported from a longitudinal study of children over the length of their primary schooling that the activity most closely related to effective literacy acquisition was listening to stories in the preschool years.

Knowledge that children have at the level of discourse that can help with decision-making is particularly relevant to the type of text being read. When children are reading stories, their understanding of the story held in their working memory enables them to predict or anticipate the next word on the basis of the story sequence which they can then check with the other sources of information available (Clay, 1991; Johnston, 1997; Smith, 1982). Clay describes story as, "like a vine supported by a wire" (personal communication, May 25, 2006). The story frame or schema also referred to as a *story grammar* (Perera, 1984), makes a story easier for young children to retrieve because the connections between the characters and events in the story are preestablished. Other features of storybooks identified as important include the close match between the

illustrations and the unfolding story, the degree to which the language structures are familiar to the child, and the use of many common words (Randell, 2000).

## **Issues Relating to Expository Text**

### ***Text characteristics***

This review has identified a growing advocacy for more classroom access to expository text and increased attention by researchers to the value and effects of this shift. At the same time it has not found any significant body of research supporting this advocacy or indicating what changes in instructional practices or reading processing might be involved. Meanwhile, two explosions have occurred in relation to both the quantity of information trade books published (Palmer & Stewart, 2003) and the quantity of information text published for instructional reading purposes for young children (Moss, 2005). Instructional reading texts previously available for older children who are already underway with reading, began to be published for children learning to read. The form and format of these new expository texts mirrored that of little storybooks; that is to say they are written in the same format as the little storybooks and with little enough text for them to be read in a single sitting.

In the debate over the use of expository text researchers have focused largely on considerations of the differences in children developing knowledge of the genre structure of narrative and expository text to help them understand texts (e.g. Pappas & Pettigrew, 1998). Only a few researchers have considered the effect of using expository text with beginning readers from a literacy processing perspective (Eure & Anderson, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Moss, 2005). Those that have considered the issue from this perspective contend that children can learn to read these texts at the same time as they are learning more about the world through the texts. Reading nonfiction text is however acknowledged as difficult for young readers so it is recommended that children are exposed to the features of nonfiction text while keeping the text easy to read, by choosing text that deal with information children already know about and using text with repeated language structures (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

The use of repeated structures is a form of text manipulation common in early text (Peterson, 1988). These texts occur in early narrative text and publishers have also taken this format and have used it extensively in expository text (e.g. Horowitz Education;

Pearson). New Zealand children have read this style of text in their first encounters with printed text in classrooms for 50 years and continue to do so. The text structure originated in the 1960s, when Price Milburn designed a series of readers called Caption Books as material for children to read before they began the first story in the Ready to Read series (Randell, 2000). Characteristics of these texts include one or two lines of simple repeated text structures which enable children to be introduced and to practice early reading behaviours such as one to one matching of print, return sweep and to develop an understanding of the match between photographs and print (Clay, 1991; Forbes, Poparad & McBride, 2004). Phillips (1997) describes these texts as “embryonic non-fiction books” (p.132), written about very familiar topics for young children and without the features of narrative text.

Randell (2000) the author of many of these original caption texts acknowledges their usefulness for assisting in the development of early reading behaviours, but rejects their use after the first level of the Ready to Read text, that is, very early in the process of learning to read. She shares Clay’s (1991, 2001) concern, that children can rely on their oral memories to reproduce the language of the text and fail to begin to focus on print. It is essential that children have opportunities to work on texts where they can use multiple sources of information in order to develop a processing system. As soon as the early behaviours are established, beginning readers need access to texts with the qualities of natural language texts (Clay, 1991).

Expository texts, by definition, are intended to impart new information. Although many different forms of the expository genre exist in texts for older children the most common text structures used for younger children can be described as problem-solution, cause-effect and compare-contrast types (Pappas, 1991). Perera (1984) states that nonfiction text is very difficult to write well for young children. She describes nonfiction text for young children as often being just a collection of unconnected sentences on a single topic with few explicit links between sentences thus making it more difficult for young children to read with understanding.

Features that occur in all expository text have also been added to texts for young readers with diagrams, indexes, glossaries, and captions. Duke and Billman (2009) have criticised publishers for what they see as the overuse of such navigational aids especially indexes in early text levels that have relatively few words. They claim that these additions are

unnecessary and likely to be distracting. Another common feature of nonfiction texts is their almost exclusive use of photographs as illustrations, which has been described as adding “a glamour that beginner texts formerly lacked, but also creates an obvious link both with children’s real-life experience and with screen-viewing” (Baker, Bickler & Bodman, 2007, p.9). However from a processing point of view photographs, unless closely linked to prior knowledge, cannot aid the young reader in the same way as illustrations link to story events.

Although they acknowledge there is limited research to support their assertions, Duke and Billman (2009) consider that while there are qualities that all texts have in common which influence difficulty levels, such as the font, core vocabulary, length of sentences, for expository texts, it is the level of sophistication of the content of informational texts that is particularly important. They also identify text structure (that is, whether statements from problem-solution, cause-effect, compare-contrast are mixed within texts), the inclusion of generic noun and timeless verb constructions, specialised or technical vocabulary, and navigational features such as indexes, headings, realistic illustrations or photographs as important features. How all these factors are dealt with in early informational text, they maintain, determines the difficulty level of the text.

### ***Professional guidance on the use of expository text in Guided Reading***

The increase in availability of expository texts has been accompanied by extensive teacher professional development material containing guidance on using these texts, both in the classroom generally and in Guided Reading lessons, (Baker, Bickler & Bodman, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Hoyt, Mooney & Parkes, 2003; Kletzein & Dreher, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003).

From 1985 to 2002 there has been a significant shift in the advice provided to New Zealand teachers on the use of expository text in Guided Reading. The 1985 Department of Education resource “Reading in Junior Classes” does not refer to nonfiction text use in Guided Reading. The subsequent 1996 Ministry of Education literacy resource for teachers of children aged 5 to 13, discussed transactional text use in Guided Reading and advised that “Teachers should not assume that skilled readers of narrative texts will be able to read transactional ones effectively” (p.112). The authors further state that, “The strategies students learn when reading narrative do not all automatically transfer to other

kinds of text” (p.113). These strategies are identified as “the processes involved in accessing and using information” (p.114). The most recent handbook on Guided Reading published in 2002 recommends that children experience nonfiction text from “the very beginning of instructional reading” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.35) and discusses how children can be introduced to the particular features of these texts in a Guided Reading lesson.

As yet there is a lack of supporting research evidence on which to base recommendations for teaching practice using expository text particularly as our expectations around children’s processing may be different for different text types as will be discussed in the next section.

### ***Research on children’s processing on expository text***

As discussed previously, the tradition of teaching reading on narrative text means that most of our descriptions of processing are descriptions of children reading texts which have the common element of story structure (Clay, 1966; Kaye, 2002; Ng, 1979). There are only very limited descriptions of children’s reading behaviour on nonfiction text, but those descriptions that do exist offer some evidence about the influence of text type on children’s literacy processing. These studies have been conducted by researchers with a background in Literacy Processing theory, typically in relation to Reading Recovery training, using the methodological tool of Running Records.

In a small-scale study 12 Reading Recovery teachers in Northern Ireland used at least one nonfiction text each week during instruction for one of their male Reading Recovery students (Scott, 2000). Whilst the text type did not affect the balance of sources of information the boys typically used for attempts on narrative text, the accuracy levels were lower for expository text for many and the children more often appealed for help. The researcher noted that the nonfiction texts were more difficult for the children and questioned the ways nonfiction text are levelled.

Eure (2004) studied the reading behaviour of young children reading nonfiction text. Five children in their first year of school were observed reading nonfiction text at Reading Recovery Book Levels 3, 5, and 6 (equivalent to Red 1, Red 3 and Yellow 1 on the New Zealand Ready to Read series). After a short interactive introduction, children read the text aloud; Running Records were taken and analysed (Clay, 2002). Comprehension was

checked using a conversational response protocol. A published report of the study, Eure and Anderson (2007), focused on behavioural evidence of active searching and solving behaviour and argued that nonfiction text provides young readers with many opportunities to learn how print works. The authors recommended that expository text be used alongside narrative text for instructional reading in the classroom and in Reading Recovery lessons but cautioned that repeated language structures in expository text may limit opportunities for searching and problem-solving. The report did not present comparative data on narrative and expository texts as a basis for this recommendation.

Duncan and Thornton-Reid (2010) used Running Records to capture the reading behaviour of 53 children from three first-grade classes (6-year-olds). The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008) was used to establish the children's appropriate instructional level (set at 90-94% accuracy) on fiction text. In this system a brief introductory sentence is read to the children before they read the text. Comparisons with accuracy on matched fiction and nonfiction text from the Benchmark System indicated that just over half of the children (58%) found the narrative text easier than the nonfiction. The researchers noted that many of the nonfiction text in the Benchmark Assessment kit used in their study incorporated narrative-type structure into the information texts. Children read the matched nonfiction text from this system and a school nonfiction book levelled by publishers. Many children found the publishers' levelled books harder to read leading to a recommendation that schools not rely on these levels when selecting texts for children. The use of information sources for text at Level G (New Zealand Ready to Read Blue level) and above is reported. When the use of combined or single sources of information was compared for the two text types at lower levels it was more likely visual information was used to make nonmeaningful substitutions. The researchers recommend caution with using nonfiction text before the middle of second-grade (equivalent to approximately Ready to Read Gold level and above) because of the possible impact of an overreliance on the use of visual information on the development of a processing system. It was also found that teachers generally supplied fewer words to children who could not proceed on fiction text than the nonfiction text, particularly at the lower levels of text read.

When we compare the limited information from these studies with the much richer descriptions of children reading narrative text referred to earlier in the chapter it would seem that our current descriptions of what children do when they read, are actually

descriptions of what children do as they progress through narrative texts. If, as Clay (2001) maintains, children construct different working systems for different tasks, it seems likely that in order to cope with the different demands of expository text, and to read with understanding, children will need to construct working systems that are different from the systems they use for reading narrative text. If we want to understand the impact of using different text types in early instruction we need much more information about the nature of the challenges in these texts and about the ways in which children respond to these challenges. Research designed to capture and compare children's processing behaviours on different types of text might enable us to identify a level of text reading to introduce and differentiate instruction for different text types.

### ***Summary and tentative hypotheses***

This review has explored the instructional practice of Guided Reading as it has developed, over the last 50 years, to be a pivotal site in which a particular conception of the role of the child and teacher play out. The review has identified three critical factors that interact within this instructional site: teacher and teaching practices, child processing and the nature of the reading task itself. The knowledge that a young child brings to the text, the features of the texts themselves and the levels of teacher support supplied during a Guided Reading lesson all contribute to the change that emerges over time in the working systems the child can construct (Clay, 2001).

An examination of historical and current practice in these fields provides a rich but relatively tangential body of evidence about factors which may be involved in the use of expository text for Guided Reading practice. Many more questions have been raised than are addressed in the current research base. Some relate to text types themselves – how clearly can we distinguish between narrative and expository text in early levels? What is the impact of repetitive text on literacy processing? What are the challenges to assigning levels to expository text, and how reliable are they for young children? What is current teacher professional knowledge and practice related to using expository text? And most importantly from the perspective of this researcher – what is the impact on young children's literacy learning –especially those for whom it is most challenging? When combined with this researcher's prior knowledge of literacy practice and processes, garnered in more than 30 years' involvement with early literacy learning, in the classroom and Reading Recovery, a set of expectations, concerns and tentative hypotheses which

underpin the research questions pursued in this study have developed. A central and motivating concern is whether we have enough knowledge about the impact of using expository text to be in a position to respond appropriately to the influx of expository text from publishers and increasing advocacy for its use as instructional text for young readers.

The most important question to be addressed in this study is whether different kinds of text provide the same teaching and learning opportunities identified and described within a literacy processing system framework for narrative text.

As Guided Reading is the principal instructional approach used to teach reading in New Zealand there arises issues related to whether the structure of Guided Reading is appropriate or appropriately designed for teaching children to develop effective processing systems given what we know of the differences in the characteristics of these text.

It is also interesting to investigate what experienced teachers' beliefs and practices are, related to both narrative and expository text in view of the enormous increase in expository text but relatively limited teacher professional guidance for how to use this material. It might be expected that teachers do not have much experience or professional knowledge about how to optimise instruction using expository text. One might expect however that teachers will be grounded in responsive teaching and able to adjust teaching to the needs of individual children in the group.

We do not know how the increasingly widespread use of expository text for instructional reading will affect the development of literacy processing; this is uncharted territory.

If these factors are all critical contributors to the development of children's effective and efficient reading processes they are important areas to investigate under research conditions. This research has the potential to enrich our understanding of the development of literacy processing, inform teacher professional development and published instructional guidelines and assist with appropriate levelling of expository text for young readers.

The following research questions were developed to begin the journey.

## *Research Questions*

Do the processes of teaching and learning differ according to text types in beginning Guided Reading?

Within this general question there were specific questions:

1. What are experienced New Zealand teachers' beliefs and understandings about beginning reading instruction and the use of different text types?
2. Do teachers use narrative and expository text differently in beginning Guided Reading?
3. Does children's literacy processing differ according to text type?
4. What are the relationships between teachers' use of narrative and expository text in beginning Guided Reading and children's literacy processing?

In the next chapter the methods used to collect and analysis data will be introduced and discussed.

## Chapter 2: Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of using different text types in beginning instructional reading. The investigation was guided by the general question: Do the processes of teaching and learning differ according to text types in beginning Guided Reading?

This chapter presents information on the participants, research design, setting, data collection procedure, measures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

### *Participants*

#### **Teachers**

Five experienced teachers of literacy to young children were sought for this exploratory investigation. Given that little research existed to answer the research questions it was decided that teaching interactions provided by experienced teachers would provide important base data for the investigation. Experienced teachers were also chosen because of the need to control for possible variation in teaching effectiveness if random or nonselective samples were chosen. Several groups of literacy educators were approached for assistance in identifying suitable teachers in the Auckland area. Participating teachers would need to have a record of effective teaching in junior literacy particularly in the instructional setting of Guided Reading. They would also need to have children in their classes who would be reading at all of the target instructional levels during the period of the study. Faculty of Education personnel at The University of Auckland, the largest Education training and professional development facility in New Zealand, including Team Solutions Advisers, lecturers in the School of Languages, Literacies and Communication, and Reading Recovery Tutors as well as Resource Teachers: Literacy were asked to recommend teachers who in their experience would meet the initial criteria.

Following these recommendations four teachers were approached to gauge their availability, and their ability to meet the target of teaching children at the designated reading levels. None of these teachers were able to participate for school reasons or because they were not able to meet the classroom teaching requirement so it was decided to use a different approach to identifying teachers for the study. The literacy experts consulted had also recommended schools, in addition to teachers, known to be delivering

quality literacy teaching with highly experienced literacy teachers as Principals, or Deputy/Assistant Principals responsible for the junior school. Recent Educational Review office reports were consulted to confirm that the literacy teaching practices in the schools were of a high standard.

The researcher then approached the senior literacy expert in each school for assistance in identifying teachers who met the criteria in their schools. In four schools senior personnel agreed to identify a possible teacher for the study, and a fifth school, while declining to participate, recommended a teacher in another school. Of the teachers recommended, three had full class responsibility, one teacher was a Reading Recovery teacher who also worked with small groups in Guided Reading lessons, and another was currently in a nonteaching Assistant Principal role. Observations were made in the classrooms of the three teachers to verify that Guided Reading lessons conformed to the principles recommended by the Ministry of Education, (2003). The experience of the remaining two teachers was confirmed through discussion with literacy professionals who had worked with both teachers. All teachers approached agreed to take part in the study.

The teaching experience of the five teachers ranged from 14 years to 23 years and the range of experience in teaching literacy in the first three years of school extended from 6 years to 21 years.

## **Children**

Forty-six children in total were included in the study. The criterion for initial inclusion was that the children were 5- or 6-years-old and were being instructed at one of three levels of text difficulty selected by the researcher that could be benchmarked to the gradient of difficulty (represented by a colour wheel) used in Ministry of Education curriculum materials (Department of Education, 1985). The colour wheel as an indication of a gradient of difficulty was introduced in the review and will be discussed again later in this chapter.

In three schools the children were already formed into instructional groups at the target levels either in the teacher's class or, in one case, in another class. In the remaining two schools small groups were formed for the purpose of the study using children from different classrooms being currently taught at the target instructional levels. To confirm each child's instructional level a record of oral reading (Clay, 2002) was taken by the

researcher on the most recent instructional text, that is, the text that had been introduced by their classroom teacher and read by the child in a Guided Reading lesson. Any child not able to read this text at an accuracy level of 90% or above was excluded from the study because the texts selected for research purposes were likely to be too difficult for them to read successfully. Three children were excluded for this reason. Another three children were excluded from the study because they were absent on the first or second day of observation and the incomplete data precluded comparative analysis of reading on the different text types.

The mean age and gender of children at each level of text is presented in Table 1. Ages ranged from 5 years 3 months to 6 years 8 months calculated to the date of the first day of observation. Children were allocated to groups on the basis of competency (a feature of New Zealand practice discussed in the previous chapter) but in general older children were reading at the higher levels. No attempt was made to match the numbers of boys and girls so the sex ratio of children simply reflected the number of girls and boys reading at the target text levels. As Table 1 indicates there were more boys than girls at each reading level.

Table 1

*Mean age, range and gender of children for three levels of text difficulty*

	Text levels			
	Early	Middle	Late	Total
Girls	4	7	7	18
Boys	9	10	9	28
Total children	13	17	16	46
Mean age	5.73	5.86	6.03	5.88
Range	5.25-6.17	5.58-6.50	5.58-6.67	5.25-6.67

The 46 children in the study came from a range of cultural backgrounds that reflected the diversity of Auckland schools. Most diversity occurred in School B and School E. For the majority of children the language spoken at home was English, with either one or two children speaking one of these languages at home; Gujerati, Hindi, Urdu, Japanese, Korean, or Mandarin.

## ***Research Design***

This study used a complex quasi-experimental cross-over design in a Guided Reading instructional setting to investigate whether the processes of teaching and learning differ according to text types (see Table 2). The five experienced teachers were observed working with three groups of 5- and 6-year-old children who were able to read narrative text at an instructional level (90% or above accuracy) at one of three predetermined levels of difficulty. For the study, elements of a counterbalanced design and an alternating-treatments design (Gay, 1996) were drawn on. Teachers alternatively and sequentially delivering one Guided Reading session using either a narrative or expository text supplied by the researcher selected at three levels of text on a gradient of difficulty. The design allowed for the children to be used as their own control. Each child was exposed to either the narrative text one day followed by the expository text or in the reverse order. Counterbalancing controls well for sources of invalidity and thus increases the possibility that effects are due to experimental rather than to extraneous effects (Gay, 1996). The design allowed for statistical comparisons to be made across subjects and text types.

Table 2

*Use of narrative and expository text by teacher, time and day*

Teacher	Day 1	Day 2
	Early Level	
Alexis	N	E
Bella	N	E
Claudia	E	N
Danielle	E	N
Ellen	E	N
	Middle Level	
Alexis	E	N
Bella	E	N
Claudia	N	E
Danielle	N	E
Ellen	E	N
	Late Level	
Alexis	N	E
Bella	N	E
Claudia	E	N
Danielle	E	N
Ellen	N	E

*Note.* N=Narrative; E=Expository.

Systematic observations were used to capture instructional features. The study conformed to the definition of systematic observation provided by Bakeman and Gottman (1997) of a “particular approach to quantifying behaviour concerned with naturally occurring behaviour observed in naturalistic contexts” (p.3). Clay (2001) describes records of behaviour collected during observations of teachers and children as “the measuring instruments of observational research” (p.268). Two methods of systematic observation were employed in this study. Teacher instructional interactions with children were examined using a specifically developed coding system for observational data. A well-established systematic procedure for recording reading behaviours designed by Clay (2002) was used to capture child behaviour while reading continuous text (described in Chapter One).

Observations were made from July to September over an eight-week period in the third term of a New Zealand school year.

Preliminary observations and trials in six junior classrooms provided opportunities to fine-tune design features, coding procedures and methods of data collection.

### *Setting*

Observations took place in the five Auckland schools of the target teachers Alexis, Bella, Claudia, Danielle, and Ellen. Of the five schools, three schools (Alexis, Claudia and Danielle’s) were classified as Decile 10, Bella’s school was classified as Decile 9 and Ellen’s school as Decile 5 on the scale designed for Ministry of Education funding purposes to reflect the socio-economic status of the school community. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of children from low socio-economic communities whereas Decile 10 are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of children from these communities (Ministry of Education, 2008, para.1).

The Guided Reading lessons occurred in a range of naturalistic settings. The settings were typical of those used in New Zealand junior class instruction for multiple teaching purposes. One teacher (Claudia) had responsibility for her class during the observations so was observed in the classroom during the usual literacy teaching time. The classroom organisation conformed to recommended guidelines for junior literacy teaching (Ministry of Education, 2003) with small groups of children engaged in literacy related activities whilst the teacher works with one group at a time for Guided Reading. Alexis and Bella

arranged to be released from class responsibility for the duration of the observations; they worked in withdrawal spaces or empty classrooms, as did Danielle and Ellen who were released from administrative responsibilities and small group teaching respectively. The practice of withdrawing children from the classroom for small group instruction, as used by four of the teachers in this study, is common in junior classrooms particularly when a teacher other than the classroom teacher is providing additional assistance to groups of children.

Alexis, Claudia and Ellen sat the children on the floor in a small semi-circle to introduce and read the book while Bella and Danielle sat at a small table with the children seated evenly around the table. Both configurations matched recommended guidelines for Guided Reading settings (Ministry of Education, 2002).

All teachers were available for school purposes during the period of observation. This particularly concerned Claudia who was working in her classroom with whole class responsibility, and who was interrupted during the observation periods by children seeking assistance or visitors coming to the classroom. To a lesser extent the other teachers were also interrupted by child messengers or by loudspeaker announcements. The time taken for lessons was not adjusted.

### ***Data Collection Procedures: Teachers***

#### **Guided Reading Sessions**

To investigate the effect of narrative and expository text types on teacher interactions with children at different levels of competency observations were made of Guided Reading sessions. In all cases the Guided Reading sessions took place during the morning instructional period between 9.00 a.m. and 12.30 p.m.

Observation took place over two consecutive days for each of the three identified groups as one of the two text types was introduced and read by the children. In the set of three lessons, held over two days, the teachers were directed to follow one of two possible courses: to either use the narrative text first with two of their groups and the expository book with one group, or use the expository book first with two groups and the narrative book with the third group. Across the five teachers there was a mixture of the two text types used on each of the sets of two days.

The researcher was introduced to each group of children the day before the observation. Following a standard protocol supplied by the researcher, the teacher explained that the researcher was going to be visiting the classroom, observing the teacher and children and asking some of the children to read with her.

### **Texts**

In order for comparisons to be made across teachers and children the texts were preselected by the researcher and supplied to the teachers. Copies of the texts to be used by the researcher were made available at least a day before the lesson observation so that the teacher could familiarise themselves with a previously unknown book or review a familiar book before using it with the children. The researcher asked the teachers to conduct a Guided Reading lesson following their usual practice for each of the six books supplied.

The texts used in this study were selected by the researcher at three different levels of text difficulty. The goal was to select texts that would represent a typical cross-section of material available in New Zealand school settings. The difficulty levels of the texts had been determined by each of the publishers at levels equivalent to the colour wheel used in Ministry of Education curriculum materials at Yellow, Blue and Turquoise levels. These texts are referred to in this study as Early, Middle and Late to denote the increasing level of difficulty. The use of colours to group texts within a gradient of difficulty originated with the original Ready to Read series published by the Department of Education in 1963 as described in the literature review. It is generally expected that children will progress through texts using this gradient of difficulty between the ages of five and eight (Ministry of Education, 2010). The upper level of text used in this study, Turquoise, is the text level that children are expected to be reading by seven years of age according to the Ministry of Education document “The Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the Reading and Writing Demands of the Curriculum” (2010).

The texts selected for the study matched generally recognised criteria for narrative and expository text. The narrative texts conformed to the definition of narrative as discussed in the review of literature and as expressed by Harris and Hodges (1995, p.162) “A story, actual or fictional, expressed orally or in writing”. All three texts had stories that involved the key elements of narrative tension, climax and resolution (Randell, 2000). Expository books selected for inclusion conformed to the definition of a nonfiction book as designed

“to explain, argue or describe” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p.165). Texts were selected to represent a variety of publishers and series available to schools and, as far as possible were text that would be available in the target schools in order to maximise the possibility that the teachers would have some knowledge of the text. As the majority of texts available in the book storerooms of the target schools were narrative rather than expository books it was possible to meet that condition with the majority of the narrative texts but each of the expository texts were available in only one of the schools. Details of text characteristics are included as Appendix A.

### **Teacher Observations**

The central context for study was the Guided Reading component of literacy instruction. To capture observational data of teacher interactions in this setting audio and video recording equipment was used. It was decided after preliminary classroom trials not to individually microphone each participant so as to minimise the disruption to children prior to the lesson and not distract them during the session. A small tape recorder was placed near the teacher and the group, which the teacher controlled. In order to ensure the recording of possible relevant nonverbal observations, and to provide a backup to the audiotape, the researcher operated a handheld video recorder. The researcher sought to optimise placement of the video recorder within the teaching space in order to adequately capture the data, while being careful not to distract the children. Children had been informed prior to the lesson that audio and video recording was to take place. Initially a small number of children glanced at the camera but subsequently all children ignored the researcher and the camera and were intent on talking about and reading the text.

An experienced transcriber worked on the majority of the 30 audiotapes of lessons with a small number of transcriptions being carried out by a research assistant. The researcher then thoroughly reviewed and edited each script using the videotapes made of the same lessons to provide any missing or unclear dialogue.

### **Teacher Interviews**

#### **Purpose**

This investigation set out to examine ‘what happens’ in the Guided Reading setting in terms of teaching practices, text type, and children’s reading responses. Exploration of teacher practice also calls for attention to teacher beliefs and pedagogical knowledge

base. The teachers participating in this study were recommended as effective teachers. Observation of teaching practice provided one independent source of information about practice and theories of action (Robinson & Lai, 2006). Semistructured interviews conducted after the observation data was collected, provided a separate, triangulating, source of information about teachers' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs.

Teacher pedagogical content knowledge has been identified as the mark of an expert teacher (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). This concept, first introduced by Shulman (1986, 1987) refers to characteristics such as disciplinary knowledge, awareness of the conceptual barriers that students face in learning the discipline, and knowledge of effective strategies for working with students. Teachers knowing how to tap student's existing knowledge and their ability to be able to assess student's progress are also important (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Pedagogical content knowledge is specific to the discipline, focused on children, unique for each teacher and gained through teacher practice (Schulman, 1987).

When the concept of teacher pedagogical knowledge is applied to teachers of early literacy in New Zealand, relevant factors include the teacher's general teaching experience especially junior literacy teaching, their beliefs and practices about literacy learning with reference to Literacy Processing theory, their knowledge and use of the instructional practice referred to in New Zealand curriculum statements and guidelines as Guided Reading and of particular interest in this study their beliefs and practices related to the use of narrative and expository text in reading instruction.

As there has been little research on Guided Reading in New Zealand classrooms and little research attention or professional guidance for teachers when using expository texts in Guided Reading the information obtained through the interview questions also sought to provide some baseline information, albeit from a small sample of teachers, of what New Zealand teachers' beliefs and practices in classroom instruction are related to using expository text in Guided Reading which would enable the first research question to be addressed.

#### Schedule

Each of the five teachers participated in a 30 minute semistructured interview conducted during lunchtime or after school hours. The interviews were conducted following the

observation of Guided Reading sessions, and teachers had an opportunity to consider the questions prior to the interview. The questions were designed to provide contextual information to enrich data gained through observation of teaching practice.

As the interviews followed the data collection it was also possible to seek teacher reactions to the specific materials used in the study. The interviews were taped for later transcription and analysis. The interview questions are contained in Appendix B.

## Analysis

Analysis of the interview data aimed to ascertain each teacher's pedagogical content knowledge and the extent of commonality amongst these beliefs so classification of responses was carried out post-hoc using a grounded theory approach rather than predetermined categories.

Responses for each of the five teachers were combined and patterns of similarities and differences were described in the areas initially identified as indicating the level of teacher pedagogical content knowledge.

Seven themes were identified in the data as distinctive indicators of teacher pedagogical knowledge. These themes were used to order and systematise the teachers' responses. The themes concerned; how teachers:- built their knowledge base about literacy teaching and learning, organised their classroom reading instruction, viewed their role in reading instruction, understood the developmental changes children go through in early literacy acquisition; how they used different text types in Guided Reading and in the classroom; and their views of the specific texts used in the study.

## ***Data Collection Procedures: Children***

### **Running Records of Reading Continuous Text**

A key measurement instrument in this study was the record of oral reading behaviour commonly referred to as a Running Record (Clay, 2002). The record is available for later coding and interpretation, allowing for in-depth analysis and interpretation of how the reader works on text. In the development of Running Records the reliability of recording and scoring of error rates and self-correction ratios of a trained observer with two years interval between two analyses of tape recordings from the original data was calculated at  $r=.98$  for error scoring and  $r=.68$  for self-correction (Clay, 2002).

When used appropriately by people trained to administer it in a standard way the Running Record provides a valid and reliable measurement task widely used for research and instructional purposes. Clay recommends that for research purposes the most reliable records are obtained by scoring an observation immediately following the recording and then rechecking the taped observation immediately (Clay, 2002). The researcher, who had 30 years' experience of recording, scoring and analysing Running Records, took a Running Record with each child in the study within two hours of the Guided Reading session for each text type. These records provided a rich source of data on text difficulty, accuracy rates, self-correction ratios and the sources of information used in error behaviour.

On the day prior to the commencement of data collection the target children were individually withdrawn from the classroom setting. A Running Record of the most recent instructional reading text was taken and the accuracy level calculated immediately. The accuracy score obtained was used to ascertain whether the child would be able to read the selected texts at an instructional level of 90% or above accuracy. This interaction also enabled the researcher to engage in conversation so that the children had some familiarity with the researcher prior to the observations of Guided Reading lessons and subsequent data collection procedures.

During each Guided Reading lesson a book was introduced by the teacher and read by the children. On the advice of Marie Clay (personal communication, May 25, 2006) a minimum period of an hour was provided before the researcher administered a Running Record on the oral reading of that text for each child in that group. This decision was made to minimise the risk of the child having memorised any of the text. All group observations were made in the morning with individual Running Records using a standard procedure being taken after the lunch break and before the end of the school day. In two cases children read the text during the lunch break after only 45 minutes had elapsed, because they were not going to be available in the afternoon block. In all cases children read in a quiet atmosphere either in a withdrawal room or in an empty classroom. The reading was tape recorded for reliability purposes. All tapes were checked by the researcher to confirm accurate recording of the reading behaviour. To ensure reliability all records were scored immediately following the recording and audiotapes were used to recheck the recording within four weeks of the observation.

## ***Observational Data Analysis: Teachers***

Data were analysed from observations of teachers. This section describes the analysis of teacher behaviour during the Guided Reading session.

### Exploring Teacher Behaviour

The aim of this section of the research was to use systematic observation to answer questions about teaching interaction. The recording of systematic sequential teacher behaviour, analysed by using predefined behaviour codes can help identify patterns in behaviour (Clay, 2001). In this study sequential systematic observation was used to identify how teachers used preselected narrative and expository texts with children as tools for teaching in the small group tutorial setting of Guided Reading. Identification of relevant major categories of behaviour codes arose from a view of Guided Reading as scaffolded instruction (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) in which interactive dialogue between teachers and children provides the necessary catalyst for development. The focus was therefore on teacher talk as the element that promoted learning and how the text type might influence that talk. A selective coding scheme was developed to categorise aspects of teacher talk that were deemed to promote and support learning during the three phases of a Guided Reading lesson.

Bakeman & Gottman (1997) describe the process of developing a coding scheme as a “theoretical act” because the coding scheme represents a hypothesis about the significance of data that is being analysed (p.15). The coding system reflects “the behaviours and distinctions that the investigator thinks important for examining the problem at hand.... It is the lens which he or she has chosen to view the world” (p.15). They contend that to consider using another researcher’s coding system is akin to borrowing other people’s underwear.

An examination of observational research focusing on teacher talk in the classroom and in individual tutorial interactions supports this view. The ways that researchers go about collecting data and analysing teacher talk reveals the lens through which their view of the world emerges.

Research on the use of language in classrooms has a long history (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto & Shuart-Faris, 2005). One major tradition has been to analyse features of

classroom discourse based on what Cazden (2001) calls *applied linguistics*, the study of situated language use in one social situation (p.3). This research has focused on different aspects of language, the language of the curriculum, the language of control, and the language of personal identity. Studies in this tradition have focused on a range of topics such as; teacher language in response to child's utterances (Clay, 1985), children's inquiry; and how teachers can facilitate deepening understanding through language (Lindfors, 1999). One extensive longitudinal study of children's language development examined teacher-student interaction and its impact on children's language development (Wells, 1986). Other studies have focused on the development of agency in children through facilitative phrases and conversational exchanges in teachers' language (Johnston, 2004).

Studies of tutorial interactions with small groups of children in relation to teacher talk are rare. One well known example is the small group instructional approach called Reciprocal Tutoring, where through teacher and child dialogue specific cognitive strategies first demonstrated in talk by the teacher during interaction comes to be acquired by children (Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1986).

These studies were designed to answer different questions and employed different approaches to analysing transcripts depending on the particular purpose and focus of their study.

Chapter One identified a theory of Literacy Processing (Clay, 1991, 2001, 2002) along with the concept of scaffolded instruction within the setting of Guided Reading as key theoretical constructs in this study. The coding system was developed with these two constructs in mind. In designing the coding system the challenge was to see whether mutually exclusive categories or patterns could be distinguished in the transcripts of teacher talk during Guided Reading lessons and whether these were different when different text types were used. The categories were derived from informal observation of classroom instruction and an extensive review of the literature in the field of study as outlined in Chapter One.

### **Teacher Moves During Guided Reading**

The lesson was divided into three phases for coding and analysis. These phases aligned with the recommended parts of a Guided Reading lesson as described in Chapter One.

The interactions were identified within one of three phases when the following shifts occurred:

#### Phase One: Teacher Introduction

The teacher talks with the children about the text before they read it.

#### Phase Two: First Reading of the Text.

This phase begins when the children start to read the text for themselves.

#### Phase Three: Discussion

It was determined that the teacher had moved to Phase Three after the children had completed their reading and after any discussion about the final page of the book. The teacher reviews aspects of the text with the children.

In the Guided Reading lessons teacher turns (of talking) within the teacher-child interactions were the focus of the analysis. Each teacher turn was analysed into teacher moves. A move formed the unit of analysis. A teacher turn comprised a single move or a series of moves. The boundaries between teacher moves were defined by a shift from one idea, or part idea to another. An idea shifts when there is 1) a different topic 2) another aspect of the same topic or 3) a change from the topic to a statement containing instructions or directions.

e.g. Teacher: /You're right, that's a fly, /and it can sleep absolutely anywhere./

Thus a teacher move could consist of a single word, a part of a sentence, a sentence or a series of remarks and included questions, statements and comments. Each successive move was assigned to one of three categories, which were then subdivided into subcategories, or coded as *Other*.

The unique coding system devised was both theoretically and practically based; it related to instructional foci for the effective delivery of a Guided Reading lesson, and included categories that were of special interest to this study. The coding was empirically fine-tuned through informal observation of Guided Reading lessons in classrooms settings; and the analysis checked for reliability after completion of the coding.

The major coding categories of teacher moves based on three key ideas about teaching and learning were labelled *Eliciting*, *Assisting* and *Informing*.

*Eliciting*. In general learning theory it is acknowledged that children construct new knowledge and understandings based on what they already know (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) and helping children connect to their existing knowledge is a recommended facet of practice in Guided Reading introductions (Clay, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2002).

*Assisting*. The second category, influenced by a Literacy Processing theory perspective conceived the role of the teacher as that of questioning or prompting the child in ways that assist them to become strategic problem-solvers when reading (Clay, 1991, 2001, 2005; Schwartz, 2005; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011).

*Informing*. The third category connects with the traditional role of teacher as educating through imparting information (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000) and also described as appropriate in Guided Reading instruction (Clay, 1998).

Any teacher utterance that did not fit into these three categories was classified as *Other*.

Whilst these broad categories could identify patterns of teacher talk globally it was not considered they would be fine-grained enough to capture all differences there may be between teacher talk with different text types. Subgroups of these major categories were then identified to provide finer detail. These subgroups were identified through reference to Literacy Processing theory or instructional foci around text type and included teacher attention to separate sources of information; meaning, structure and visual/phonological information, problem-solving or strategic activity, or attention to some feature of the type of text being read.

The definitions and descriptions of the subcategories (below) are followed by examples from the transcripts of each subcategory.

Behaviours that could occur in more than one subcategory were made mutually exclusive by definition. In the categories *Assisting* and *Informing* (subcategory 5 *Complex acts of processing*) any specific reference to meaning, structure or visual information was excluded.

## ***Categories of teacher moves***

The categories and subcategories were defined as follows:

### ***Category A: Eliciting***

*Eliciting*, defined as the teacher calling on children to draw on their existing knowledge, anticipate, synthesise, clarify, summarise, interpret or explain without referring to the print or the picture, had the following subcategories specified as the teacher calling for information related to:

1. Understanding or explanation

e.g. What's a building?

Can we sleep and swim at the same time?

2. Prediction or anticipation

e.g. What do you think will happen? (*in the story*)

Why do you think he might have done that?

3. Knowledge of print

e.g. How do you spell 'house'?

Why does it need to have an apostrophe?

4. Problem-solving

e.g. What do we do when we're stuck?

5. Text types or characteristics

e.g. What's the sort of story you make up?

How do you know it's a fiction book?

### ***Category B: Assisting***

*Assisting* was defined as the teacher prompting children to think about strategic activities including monitoring, searching for and/or using sources of information (meaning, structure, visual/phonological information) by using the text or picture (except for Category 2 Structure). Subcategories for *Assisting* were specified as the teacher calling for information related to:

1. Meaning from the  
topic/plot/storyline/characters/subjects/concepts/cover/title/pictures/  
vocabulary (word meanings)  
e.g. Look at the picture. What's happening here?  
What would make sense?
2. Structure of the text/paragraph/sentence/phrase/word  
(In Phase Two includes teacher reading sentence, phrase or word or  
reading with the children)  
e.g. Does that sound right to you?  
Put it together nice and smoothly.
3. Knowledge of print  
Information related to words/word parts/sounds/letters/punctuation  
e.g. Does that look right? Check it.  
What can you see on the end?
4. Multiple sources of information  
e.g. Look at the way it (*the word*) starts and think about where the cat  
is.  
It sounded great and made sense but check it looks right.
5. Complex aspects of processing  
e.g. I wonder if you can figure out what that says?  
Can you find the tricky bit?

### ***Category C: Informing***

*Informing* was defined as the teacher communicating by telling, confirming, repeating, modelling, commenting or restating included subcategories specified as the teacher attending to:

1. Meaning from the

topic/plot/storyline/characters/subjects/concepts/cover/title/illustrations/vocabulary (word meanings)

e.g. We're going to find out how animals sleep.

When he went back he was nice and safe.

2. Structure of the text/paragraph/sentence/phrase/word

e.g. We say "John sang me a little song. (children had read "John *sing* me a little song")

3. Knowledge of print

Information related to words/ word parts/ sound/ letter/ punctuation

e.g. That's a full-stop.

4. Multiple sources of information

e.g. You made it look right and sound right too.

5. Complex aspects of processing

e.g. I liked the way you tried to work that out.

Try that again.

6. Text type or characteristics

e.g. Narrative always has a main character.

This is a made-up book.

### ***Category D: Other***

*Other* is defined as all other teacher behaviour not included in Categories A-C.

e.g. Can you sit back please?

We're going to read another book today.

## ***Observational Data Analysis: Children***

### **Running Records of Reading Continuous Text**

Running Records of reading behaviour were analysed according to recommended procedures (Clay, 2002). An accuracy rate for each record was obtained as well as a self-correction ratio. Accuracy rates are calculated by dividing the number of words in the text by the number of errors to obtain an error ratio. That ratio is then converted to a percentage to give an accuracy rate. Self-correction ratios are obtained by dividing the number of errors made, by the number of errors made plus the number of self-corrections. This ratio indicates the proportion of errors that the reader made that they were able to independently correct.

Whilst accurate reading indicates the amount of error in oral reading it does not provide insights into the sources of information the child is using while reading. Analyses of error provide that information. The behavioural records were analysed for indications of the use of sources of information for each unsuccessful attempt at a word, the sources of information used if the word was self-corrected and tallies were made of other behaviours to seek additional evidence of the child's processing of print. Sources of information identified as being used for attempts are classed as meaning, structure or visual information. Meaning refers to the influence the meaning or the message may have had on the choice of the substitution; structure refers to the influence of the preceding syntax of the sentence on the attempt at the word and visual information indicates that the attempt was influenced by "the stimulus information on the page of print" (Clay, 2002, p.72). As visual information becomes closely linked to phonological information during reading acquisition visual information refers to the use of both visual and phonological systems.

In addition to tallying the numbers of discrete individual sources of information used in the error behaviour a count was made of the number of times combinations and/or individual sources of information appeared to be used. The use of more than one source of information is an indication of more efficient processing than the use of single sources of information at substitutions. Analysis of other behaviours included self-corrections and talls which also indicate a readers' strategic approach to print (Clay, 2002).

## ***Inter-Observer Reliability***

### **Teacher Moves**

The researcher and a trained independent coder coded randomly selected transcripts. Both the independent coder and the researcher were very familiar with observational research methods. Training took place through initial explanation of the purpose of the study and through discussion of points of disagreement. Consensus was reached on operational definitions. The coder undertook to code a random sample of 3 out of 30 transcripts for Phase One and Two of the lessons, and two randomly selected transcripts out of 17 in Phase Three, a sample of 10 % of the total number of transcripts. Reliability was calculated using an exact agreement formula (agreements divided by disagreements plus disagreements) for each code assigned to a predetermined move. Calculated in this way overall reliability for coding of transcripts was 86.5%. The range across scripts was 83% to 91.7%. For each phase of the lesson overall agreement was above an average of 86%.

### **Running Records of Reading Continuous Text**

A second independent coder, also very experienced with observing and analysing young children's literacy behaviour, worked with a random sample of 10% of the tape recordings. The coder recorded and analysed the taped reading behaviour using the standard procedures (Clay, 2002).

Two approaches to checking inter-observer agreement were used:

1. Specific agreement on the occurrence of errors and self-correction behaviour was calculated using the formula: Number of agreements, divided by total number of agreements plus disagreements. The mean inter-observer reliability using this formula was 94.72% (range 85.2%-100%).
2. Specific agreement on the occurrence of evidence indicating the use of sources of information for errors and self-corrections was calculated also using the formula number of agreements, divided by total agreements plus disagreements. The mean inter-observer reliability was 94.5% (range 81%-100%).

Given there were specific agreement formulae, the agreements were high and satisfactory.

### ***Ethics Approval***

Ethics approval for the project was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee. After the identification of suitable schools the Principal was approached. Verbal and written information was provided so that the Principal could discuss the project with the school's Board of Trustees. On obtaining written consent from the school the teacher was approached, provided with verbal and written information and written consent obtained. Written consent was sought and obtained for each child to be involved in the study from parents/caregivers after participant information was provided. At the request of the Ethics Committee a short statement was read to the children by the researcher or the teacher prior to the observation to indicate to the children the observation was taking place. Approval allowed the researcher to observe, audiotape and videotape teaching situations, to administer and audiotape Running Records, and to interview teachers involved in the study.

In Chapter Three the results from the three sets of data collected, teacher interviews, teacher interactions during Guided Reading lessons and child processing data will be presented.

## Chapter 3: Reporting the Results

Central to this research study is a theory of teaching and learning that views beginning readers and writers as constructors of literacy processing systems that will when developed enable them to extend their own learning at every engagement with text (Clay, 1991, 2002). In this view both the role of the teacher and the instructional text are critical to assisting the child to build such an independent processing system. The question ‘Do the processes of teaching and learning differ according to text types in beginning reading literacy instruction?’ lead the researcher to examine teacher interactions during the instructional reading approach called Guided Reading to observe how experienced teachers introduced children to unfamiliar instructional texts written in an expository or narrative style. The teachers were specifically asked to use this approach when working with the children but were free to vary the approach according to their usual practice. Analysis of transcripts of teacher and child interactions involved the use of a coding system developed around three types of teaching previously derived from theory, research, practical guides for teachers, and classroom observations.

To examine processes of learning during children’s reading of different text types evidence of children’s developing processing systems were investigated using standard behavioural records of reading recorded and analysed according to recommended protocols (Clay, 2002) and incorporating an additional level of analysis.

Teacher interviews provided valuable information to augment the observations of teacher practice and child reading behaviour collected. Each of the five teachers participated in a semistructured interview with previewed questions. The following section reports the views of the five teachers as they reflected on key themes relevant to the study.

### ***Teacher Interviews***

To confirm the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge teachers were asked about their general beliefs and practices concerning the nature of reading development, the teaching of beginning reading and more specific themes related to the use of narrative and expository texts in relation to teaching and learning. A summary of the interview data follows centred around seven key themes that emerged from the data along with illustrative examples of teacher comments.

While this investigation was specifically concerned with teaching and learning related to reading, it is interesting to note that the teachers illustrated some of their interview responses with examples from across their oracy and writing programmes. This seems to reflect an integrated perspective on literacy teaching, which is encouraged in New Zealand curriculum documents (Ministry of Education, 2007).

### **Building a Knowledge Base**

The teachers attributed their general knowledge about reading as having built up from many sources over many years. The teachers in this study had been identified on the basis of professional judgements that they were experienced teachers of literacy with a strong knowledge base. In the interviews the teachers reported that their knowledge about reading came from a variety of sources:

It's not just one thing: it's a range of things. (*Bella*)

Observation of other teachers working with children was the source mentioned by every one of the teachers as being highly influential on their practice.

Watching other teachers, watching colleagues, I feel I was fortunate in that I taught in open-plan schools for several years and you pick up all sorts of amazingly good tips from the people who are working around you.  
(*Alexis*)

Four of the five teachers mentioned their initial teacher training as being an important factor in their learning and one of these specifically noted the opportunity this provided to observe teachers at work.

I was trained in the days we had three years and I had really good training.  
(*Bella*)

I was really lucky I had some very good associate teachers who had very skilled programmes in operation and therefore I picked up a lot of the understandings of what it was for and why you do it and how it happened.  
(*Alexis*)

The four Reading Recovery trained teachers all acknowledged the role that the Reading Recovery in-service training had played in deepening their understandings of literacy learning.

I think that Reading Recovery, for me, came in and well, pulled it all together. (*Claudia*)

In terms of teaching for strategies I got the most knowledge from Reading Recovery. (*Bella*)

The teachers also reported that professional material had been influential in adding to their knowledge. Resources mentioned included, “Effective Literacy Practice” (Ministry of Education, 2003), “Reading in Junior Classes” (Department of Education, 1985), “The New Zealand Curriculum-Draft for consultation” (Ministry of Education, 2006), Ministry of Education videos and inservice courses particularly “The Early Reading Inservice Course” (ERIC) (Department of Education, 1978).

Two teachers emphasised the importance of ongoing professional development both individual and school-based.

I run seminars on how we teach reading. I’m always doing professional reading just to make sure I know what I’m talking about. (*Danielle*)

On-going professional development within the school, if you’ve got some good practitioners is, I think, probably the best way to learn. (*Alexis*)

In general the teachers presented themselves as very confident and well prepared to teach children to read.

### **Organising for Teaching Reading**

All the teachers used Guided Reading as the core instructional reading activity. Descriptions of their daily organisation for instruction, that is using small groups assigned to different activities, matched recommended guidelines in New Zealand professional development material (Ministry of Education, 2003). The teachers grouped children according to reading ability. At any one time they might have up to eight groups that they would work with in a small group-teaching situation three to five times a week depending on their reading level. Danielle noted she sometimes grouped children according to instructional needs as well as ability to read levelled text.

There was one point of difference in the way Bella described how she organised for the Introduction phase of the Guided Reading lesson. This description matched observations of her lessons in the study. Bella reported that during the discussion prior to reading an

expository text she used a chart, completed from child responses, which acted as a simplified graphic organiser enabling children to identify key understandings in the book. When introducing narrative text a prepared chart identifying elements of a narrative text was also used. Bella had designed these instructional aids.

The role of formative assessment figured prominently in the teachers' practice. In describing how decisions to increase text difficulty were made, all teachers reported using Running Records (Clay, 2002) to confirm decision-making.

I would do Running Records. Looking for strategies, and looking for how they really sound, they need to say 'I'm confident and fluent and phrased' before I'd actually move them a level. (*Claudia*)

Evidence I would use would be a formal Running Record, listening to them read it to me individually, questioning, and the discussion around the book. (*Danielle*)

As a teacher, over time, you get a sense of when you need to change them. But obviously it's Running Records. They have to be your standard assessment. It's the accuracy, yes, and it's the strategies. (*Bella*)

### **The Teacher's Role in Guided Reading**

Interview questions designed to elicit the teachers' ideas about the form and function of Guided Reading uncovered two common beliefs about the reading process and the teachers' role in developing children's reading ability. Two additional goals were mentioned by the four Reading Recovery trained teachers.

Teachers focussed on four developmental processes:

#### ***The role of meaning***

In discussing their role in the teaching of reading, all the teachers emphasised the need to base their teaching on the central role of meaning and making sense in reading.

Guiding them to find the easiest and best ways to get meaning from text. (*Alexis*)

Reading is all about meaning- to gain meaning or information... Meaning, of course, underpins the whole lot [changes in strategic activity]. (*Ellen*)

### ***Ensuring confidence and enjoyment***

The teachers also believed that they had an important role to play in developing confidence and enjoyment in reading.

Confidence plays a big part in literacy learning. *(Danielle)*

To always encourage a love of reading. *(Alexis)*

I want them to enjoy it [reading]. *(Claudia)*

The four Reading Recovery trained teachers, Bella, Claudia, Danielle and Ellen, identified the following two additional goals that were not present in Alexis's responses.

### ***Fostering strategic activity***

These teachers articulated their awareness of the need to develop children's strategic activity and used a common language to describe how they fostered this. Terms used were drawn from Clay's (2002) Literacy Processing theory and included, cross-checking, monitoring, attempting to solve new words by drawing on different sources of information and self-correcting.

I want to see them using what they know. I want to see them thinking about what makes sense, sounds right, looks right, monitoring themselves, going back and checking on themselves, self-correcting, having a go at new words, that sort of thing. *(Claudia)*

### ***Developing independence***

The four teachers described their role in Guided Reading as being to guide children to becoming independent readers.

They are taking over control of the reading and I'm there to guide them. *(Danielle)*.

You are presenting them with a book and you're actually guiding them, as it says to, to ensure that they are using the strategies to become independent readers. *(Ellen)*

## **Developmental Changes in Early Literacy Acquisition**

Using the three text levels of the books in the study as examples (yellow, blue and turquoise) the teachers were asked to describe changes that occur in children's reading and to consider whether this might be different depending on text type.

Teachers described these changes in both general and more specific ways.

It's changing children who can now be flexible on text, read a variety of text and use a variety of strategies. (*Bella*)

The teachers all believed that changes in the reading process were the same for children whichever text type they were reading.

I wouldn't expect it to be different as long as I knew that the children were getting the exposure to nonfiction from very early on. Still [children] are going through the same process. (*Danielle*)

They'd still be using the same strategies to read the text. (*Ellen*)

The specific developmental areas the teachers described as changing in children's reading over the three book levels included changes in problem-solving, fluency, and the use of specific sources of information.

### ***Problem-solving***

The teachers' descriptions of how problem-solving changed over time reflected the two different theoretical views of the developing reader already noted.

The next example typifies descriptions of change from a strategic approach.

I'm looking at things like, what do you when they are faced with an unknown word in terms of using meaning, structure and visual information. I'd like them doing that at yellow, and at blue and at turquoise. (*Bella*)

Alexis's description of the direction of change had more in common with a code emphasis approach described in Chapter One. She identified the need for an initial concentration on the use of visual information leading to later incorporation of other aspects of reading.

As beginners they are very much focused on decoding words to get to a sentence...As time goes by I would expect them to be able to not have to concentrate so much on that therefore they are more able to concentrate on reading for meaning and getting the expression in their voice. (*Alexis*)

### ***Phrasing in fluent reading***

There was some variation in the teachers' expectations about the development of phrasing in fluent reading and, in terms of teaching moves, the point at which they would emphasise learning to reading fluently without the aid of a finger to point to each word. Two teachers (Claudia and Ellen) indicated they actively discouraged finger pointing as soon as children had early reading behaviours such as one to one matching and directionality in order to develop fluent, phrased reading as quickly as possible. By contrast two teachers (Bella and Danielle) advocated letting the child withdraw the use of the finger at any time without encouragement from the teacher. Alexis reported actively discouraging the use of the finger only at the highest level of text. These three different positions are represented in the following three quotations.

I take it out at Red as it interferes with fluency. Without the fluency they will lose the meaning far quicker, I think. Fluency really helps the meaning and helps them to use strategies. (*Claudia*)

I actually think that the use of the finger, if there's a natural transition where children will... they use it initially because they're doing one-to-one, and then there's a natural transition where a child starts to lose their finger. (*Bella*)

I'd discourage pointing by the time they're at the Turquoise level. (*Alexis*)

Alexis also approached the use of the finger as a management device.

If I'm working with a whole group, and I want everybody working on the same page at the same time, then I ask them to put their fingers on the words so we can actually keep together. (*Alexis*)

### ***Changes in sources of information***

#### *Visual information*

All five teachers described changes over time in the ability to search for and use visual information to assist in solving unknown words as well as the need for the child to accrue an increasing bank of known reading words.

We're just looking at saying initial sounds and then we're looking at endings and then as we move up the levels we see increasing attention to more of the word. (*Ellen*)

By the time they get Turquoise they should be able to see the bigger chunks of the word and put it together. (*Danielle*)

Having the whole phonemic, sound/letter relationship really sound. (*Danielle*)

The increase in the knowledge of vocabulary...getting all those high-frequency words under their belt. (*Danielle*)

Paying more attention to punctuation, the different forms of punctuation. (*Bella*)

### *Sentence structure*

Two teachers discussed the challenge for readers in the changing language of books.

Initially they'd be more simple structures and as they're going through the levels the sentence structures will be increasing as well. They'll bring their knowledge of book language to play as they read because there are certain structures that are familiar in books that are actually not common in oral language. (*Ellen*)

They are facing sentence structures that are not so repetitive and so simple and obviously a lot more writing on the page. (*Alexis*)

### **Narrative and Expository Text in Guided Reading**

Teachers believed the reading process was the same regardless of text type they did agree that different types of text presented different challenges.

Different text types will present different challenges for different children. It's the strategies that I'm teaching for not the text type. (*Bella*)

Some specific challenges were identified in expository text related to such features of expository text as vocabulary, text structure and sentence structure.

Often with the nonfiction text there is more vocabulary to cover. (*Claudia*)

In the nonfiction I'd be more aware it could be a completely new word outside their realm of experience. (*Danielle*)

One of the things I do is get the children to look at the contents page and to choose where to start. (*Danielle*)

In the introduction [with expository text] you have to have a really good look at how the book is set out. (*Claudia*)

Sometimes there are captions, titles, definitions, to read - maybe spend more time on that. (*Claudia*)

In the reading I'd be more open with telling a word they're stuck on. (*Claudia*)

Teachers' beliefs were sought about using expository text with young readers. They all valued expository text and felt children should be exposed to a wide range of text, including expository text, from early on in their schooling. The main reason given for using expository as well as narrative texts was the prevalence of that type of text in everyday life.

You need to be able to read so many different forms of information. I think the more we can expose them to it at an early age I think it's going to help them later. (*Danielle*)

Nonfiction is an integral part of my reading programme. (*Bella*)

I traditionally don't use it as much as possibly I should because emergent readers find it more difficult. But having said that, I recognise that there is an important place for it. And I mean that we're teaching children to live in the real world and let's face it, that's what they're going to be doing later on, they're going to give away the narrative reading. (*Ellen*)

Other reasons related to individual children's preferences for that text type. One teacher mentioned gender differences in text preferences.

They should be offered fiction and nonfiction side-by-side just because some appeal to some children more than others. (*Claudia*)

I'm saying boys just like nonfiction. (*Claudia*)

As the teachers' experience with using expository text might influence their practice, their opinions were sought on the degree they used expository text in Guided Reading. All teachers reported that usage was mainly governed by its availability in their school.

There just isn't a lot. I would use them if they were there, and if we had enough of them. (*Claudia*)

Differences were noted in the degree teachers believed that expository text should be used in Guided Reading instruction.

I would use 10% at red-yellow levels but up to 25% with older readers. (*Ellen*)

Three teachers suggested the balance of use should change over time.

A preference for using narrative text more frequently than expository text was displayed by some teachers for a variety of reasons.

Would always use more fiction as think they can relate their lives to it more. I'm speaking about the five year olds they're so egocentric and home centric that stories about homes and families speak to their heart and they respond to them...that links to what they are keenly into. It's just psychologically probably appeals more to a five year old at this stage. (*Claudia*)

It [expository text] sometimes doesn't flow like narrative so missing on fluency. It's not so good for focusing on reading fluently. (*Ellen*)

I guess they've been exposed to a wide range of narratives through being read to, as well as their own reading, so they have an expectation that this story is going to go somewhere...its going to have a beginning and a middle and an end. And it's going to resolve somewhere along the line. On nonfiction that is just telling them about something specific, they don't know where it's going. (*Ellen*)

Five year olds are very egocentric, narrative speaks to their hearts. (*Ellen*)

### **Expository Text Use in the Classroom**

Teachers mentioned other activities in their reading programme, such as Shared Reading, when they would use expository text.

I would use nonfiction text in Shared Reading quite a lot too... it's particularly linked in the topic study at the time. (*Danielle*)

All teachers also used nonfiction little readers in their studies of topics outside literacy learning time.

We're planning our Social Studies and we have been through the book room and got out books that we think would fit. (*Claudia*)

Teachers' comments highlighted the high degree to which they exposed children to expository text throughout the school day both through published trade books as well as little readers on specific topics. It appeared that the least exposure to expository text was during the Guided Reading session itself and this was in some measure owing to lack of availability.

### **Teacher Comments on Texts**

The texts chosen for the study were selected from a range of publishers whose books are available in New Zealand schools. The teachers were asked if they wished to comment on any of the books used in the study. Alexis chose to make a general statement about all the books.

All the books were great. They are all in our book room so I would have come to all of them. (*Alexis*)

More evaluative statements were made about the expository books than the narrative books.

I found the children coped really well with the one about the animals sleeping (*Sleeping Animals*). . . .and there was enough in it for us to discuss and to work on, but it certainly didn't pose too many problems. (*Danielle*)

The *Spikes, Scales and Armour*, beautiful pictures, a great concept and it wasn't too scary for them to read because it had structure that supported it, it followed through. (*Claudia*)

*Spikes, Scales and Armour* was more difficult for the children to actually read, but they did get involved with it and enjoyed it. It probably surprised me the extent to which they enjoyed it. (*Ellen*)

Three of the teachers expressed strong views about the highest level expository text, *Build, Build, Build*, identifying it as the most difficult text for the children to read.

I wouldn't have used it as I didn't feel comfortable with it. Children were not able to bring their experiences to it. (*Bella*)

That buildings one, I think I would have absolutely canned it...and either spent more time preparing for that text, or getting something different.  
(*Danielle*)

The Building one was difficult for that particular group. There was a lot to cover in a session. The children didn't understand what was happening in the story. They needed a lot more discussion. (*Ellen*)

## **Summary**

The responses from the five teachers confirmed that they were very experienced teachers of reading able to clearly articulate their beliefs and practices. There was a high degree of consistency between many of the teachers' beliefs and practices. However one teacher, in her descriptions of developmental change expressed a theoretical stance different from the other teachers and not in alignment with current Ministry of Education recommendations. It appeared that training as a Reading Recovery teacher may have given the remaining teachers their shared theoretical stance. The broadest spread of opinion occurred when teachers were asked about their teaching practice in relation to children using their finger to point to text as they read.

In the main, the teachers' self-reports appeared to be consistent with the intention to select experienced and knowledgeable teachers and were a confirmation of the methods the researcher used to identify teachers for the study.

When asked about different text types all the teachers reported they used narrative text more than expository text in Guided Reading. This was in some part due to availability although two teachers showed a clear preference for using narrative text for instructional reading purposes particularly at the lower text levels. The reasons given for this preference were consistent with their theoretical stance. All the teachers reported using instructional expository text in other parts of the reading programme as well as extensively using it in teaching in other subject areas such as Science and Social Studies.

## ***Guided Reading Lessons***

Teachers were asked to deliver a Guided Reading lesson according to their usual practice to a small group of children using the books supplied by the researcher. No time restrictions were placed on the teachers by the researcher. Four teachers were released from other teaching responsibilities to participate in the study. One teacher (Claudia) worked with the target groups in the morning literacy block with the class engaged in small group activities focussed on literacy.

### **Lesson Duration**

For fourteen of the fifteen paired lessons the narrative text lesson was shorter than the expository text. As the data was not normally distributed a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was performed. As shown in Table 3 the total mean time taken for narrative text ( $M=14.5$ ,  $SD=4.76$ ) was less than the total mean time for expository text ( $M=22.3$ ,  $SD=6.58$ ). A significant difference was revealed between the time taken for expository text and that for narrative text,  $N=30$ ,  $z=3.36$ ,  $p=.001$ ). In only one case (Alexis), a narrative text session was fractionally longer than the corresponding expository text (.5 minutes) even though the narrative text was shorter in length. The shortest individual time taken for all the Guided Reading lessons was 7.5 minutes for Early narrative text (Danielle) and the longest time was 36.5 minutes for Late expository text (Bella). During the narrative text introduction, identified as being the shortest, most members of the group revealed they had previously seen the text. As Guided Reading lessons are developed around text not previously read by the children it was noted during the observation that Danielle decreased the amount and type of interaction around that text that she had planned.

As the data significantly deviated from a normal distribution the nonparametric equivalent of an ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used. This test revealed there were differences between teachers when using narrative and expository text but these differences were not significant  $\chi^2(4)=8.032$ ,  $p=.09$  and  $\chi^2(4)=7.947$ ,  $p=.09$ . This may be due to the small number of levels per teacher.

Table 3

*Total, mean length, and range of minutes for total Guided Reading lessons by teacher, text level and type (SD in brackets)*

Teacher	Early		Middle		Late		<i>M</i>	
	N	E	N	E	N	E	N	E
Alexis	16.5	15.0	10.5	22.0	17.0	24.0	14.7 (3.62)	20.3 (4.73)
Bella	18.0	24.0	17.0	24.0	23.5	36.5	19.5 (3.5)	28.2 (7.22)
Claudia	9.0	12.0	9.5	20.5	9.0	11.5	9.2 (0.29)	14.7 (5.06)
Danielle	7.5	23.0	11.0	22.0	20.5	31.5	13.0 (6.73)	25.5 (5.22)
Ellen	16.5	22.0	16.0	19.5	16.0	27.0	16.2 (0.29)	2.8 (3.82)
<i>M</i>	13.5	19.2	12.8	21.6	17.2	26.3	14.5 (4.76)	22.6* (6.57)
Range	7.5-18.0	12.0-24.0	9.5-17.0	19.5-24.0	9.0-23.5	11.5-36.5	9.2-19.5	14.7-28.2

*Note.* \* $p < .001$

Guided Reading sessions as described in Chapter One involve three phases that include, the teacher introducing the book to a small group of children, the reading of the book by the children and some follow-up discussion or activity (Clay, 1991, Ministry of Education, 2002, Ministry of Education, 2003). The following section presents data on the time taken for the three phases of the Guided Reading sessions.

***Phase One: Teacher Introduction***

As with the overall lesson duration the teachers took less time for this part of the lesson for narrative text than for expository text as shown in Table 4. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicated that the difference between the length of the introductions for narrative and expository text was significant,  $N=30$ ,  $z=3.24$ ,  $p=.001$ . For narrative text the difference between the shortest and longest introduction was 5.5 minutes and for expository the difference was 15 minutes. A post-hoc comparison using a Kruskal-Wallis Test showed that Bella and Ellen spent significantly longer introducing expository text than Alexis, Claudia and Danielle,  $\chi^2(4)=12.26$ ,  $p=.02$ . For narrative text Bella spent significantly longer introducing text than Alexis  $\chi^2(4)=10.89$ ,  $p=.03$ .

Table 4

*Phase One: Total, mean length and range of minutes by teacher, text level and type (SD in brackets)*

Teacher	Early		Middle		Late		<i>M</i>	
	N	E	N	E	N	E	N	E
Alexis	2.0	1.5	1.5	3.0	1.5	3.0	1.7 (0.29)	2.5 (0.87)
Bella	7.0	8.5	5.0	7.0	5.5	16.5	5.8 (1.04)	10.7 (5.11)
Claudia	2.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	1.5	3.5	1.8 (0.29)	3.8 (1.04)
Danielle	2.0	5.0	2.0	10.0	2.5	9.0	2.2 (0.29)	8.0 (2.65)
Ellen	4.0	5.0	5.0	8.0	4.0	4.0	4.3 (0.58)	5.9 (2.08)
<i>M</i>	3.4	4.6	3.1	6.6	3.0	7.4	3.16 (1.77)	6.13* (3.84)
Range	2.0-7.0	1.5-8.5	1.5-5.0	3.0-10.0	1.5-5.5	3.0-16.5	1.7-5.8	2.5-10.7

Note. \* $p < 0.01$

### ***Phase Two: First Reading***

In Phase Two of Guided Reading the children, prepared by the teacher's introduction, read an individual copy of the book with some teacher interaction. For this segment of the lesson the same pattern emerged as Table 5 indicates. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test  $N=30$ ,  $z=2.36$ ,  $p=.02$  revealed significant differences in the length of time children read expository text compared to narrative text. When the lengths of the shortest and longest sessions were compared a similar range was revealed between narrative and expository text with 4.8 and 4.9 minutes respectively. Analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis confirmed that for both text types there was no significant difference between teachers for the relative time allocated to narrative texts  $\chi^2(4)=3.87$ ,  $p=.42$  and to expository text  $\chi^2(4)=6.39$ ,  $p=.17$ .

Table 5

*Phase Two: Total, mean length and range of minutes by teacher, text level and type (SD in brackets)*

Teacher	Early		Middle		Late		<i>M</i>	
	N	E	N	E	N	E	N	E
Alexis	10.0	12.5	8.0	14.0	13.0	18.5	10.3 (2.51)	15.0 (3.12)
Bella	10.0	15.0	11.0	15.0	16.0	20.5	12.3 (3.21)	16.8 (3.18)
Claudia	4.0	9.0	7.5	15.5	7.5	8.0	6.3 (2.02)	9.5 (5.77)
Danielle	5.5	18.0	8.5	10.5	18.0	21.0	10.7 (6.53)	16.5 (5.41)
Ellen	12.5	17.0	11.0	11.5	11.0	23.0	11.5 (0.87)	17.2 (5.75)
<i>M</i>	8.3	14.4	9.2	13.3	13.1	18.2	10.2 (3.71)	13.67* (5.38)
Range	4.0-12.5	9.0-18.0	7.5-11.0	10.5-15.5	7.5-18.0	4.0-23.0	6.3-12.5	10.8-17.2

Note. \* $p < 0.05$

### ***Phase Three: Further discussion***

Although discussion following the reading of the book is recommended practice in Guided Reading (Ministry of Education, 2003) for beginning readers, it is recognised that attentional factors may lead teachers to intersperse discussion throughout the reading or engage in a short discussion after the reading (Ministry of Education, 2002). The teachers in this study demonstrated both of these approaches. Table 6 shows that across the five teachers 60% of the narrative sessions concluded with a short discussion and 53% of expository sessions. The overall mean length of this phase for the five teachers across all levels of text for narrative was very brief at 1.8 minutes and for expository text 2.3 minutes. Alexis was the only teacher to include follow-up discussion after every text read. Bella included it after all but one reading. Owing to the limited amount of data no comparative statistical analysis was undertaken on the time taken for this phase of the lesson. It is possible that the presence or absence of this phase may have been affected by the experimental nature of the situation.

Table 6

*Phase Three: Total, mean length and range of minutes by teacher, text level and type*

Teacher	Early		Middle		Late		<i>M</i>	
	N	E	N	E	N	E	N	E
Alexis	4.5	1.0	1.0	5.0	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.8
Bella	1.0	.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	-	1.3	1.3
Claudia	3.0	-	-	-	-	4.0	3.0	4.0
Danielle	-	-	.5	1.5	-	1.5	0.5	1.5
Ellen	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	1.0	-
<i>M</i>	2.9	1.0	.8	2.8	1.8	2.7	1.8	2.4
Range	1.0-4.5	0.5-1.5	.5-1.0	1.5-5.0	1.0-2.5	1.5-4.0	0.5-3.0	1.3-4.0

### ***Summary***

For the purposes of this study teachers were given a selection of narrative and expository text and asked to deliver a Guided Reading lesson to homogenous groups of children. Data revealed that teachers took significantly longer to work with expository texts compared to narrative text for the total Guided Reading lesson. When the two longest

phases of the lesson for each text type were compared separately, teacher introductions (Phase One) and the first reading of the text (Phase Two), it was found that for both phases teachers took significantly longer to work with expository text than with narrative text. There was considerable individual teacher variation within each section for both text types with the most difference between teachers on the expository texts.

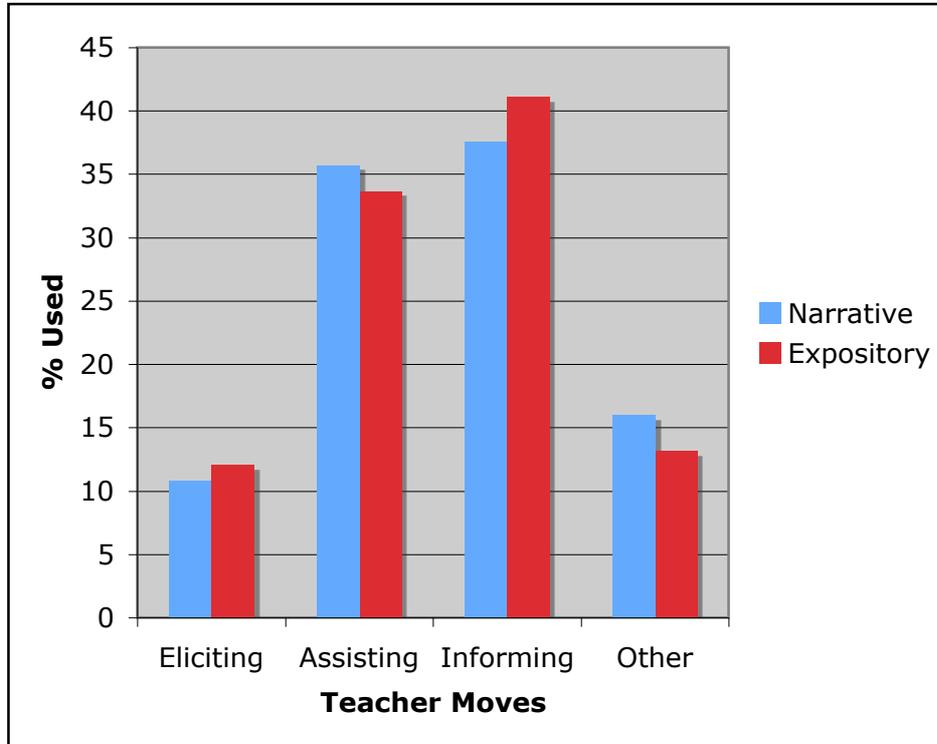
### **Teacher Moves: Total Lessons**

Transcripts of teachers' talk during Guided Reading sessions were divided into predetermined categories identified by the researcher as important characteristics of literacy teaching from a literacy processing perspective. These categories were classified as teacher moves when the idea contained in the statement was different to preceding and following statements. Teacher moves were generally short exchanges ranging from one letter or sound to one or two sentences. In total 6,519 separate teacher moves were identified from a total of 30 transcripts from the five teachers in the study and coded into one of three major categories and subcategories. The major categories of *Eliciting*, *Assisting* and *Informing* were identified according to discrete definitions. *Eliciting* was defined as the teacher calling on children to draw on their existing knowledge. *Assisting* was defined as the teacher prompting children to think about strategic activities. *Informing* was defined as the teacher communicating information. Episodes that could not be coded according to the definitions for the three categories were classified as *Other*. Of the total number of teacher moves categorised in this way 2,480 separate moves were identified in the 15 transcripts of the teachers when they were working with narrative text and 4,039 in the 15 expository text transcripts. This quantitative difference reflects the longer time taken by the teachers when working with expository text compared to the narrative text reported in the previous section.

The percentage of teacher moves identified across the complete Guided Reading lessons is shown in Figure 1. The relative percentage of teacher moves for each of the categories can be seen to be similar for both narrative and expository text. The highest percentage of teacher moves can be seen to be *Informing* for both text types, 37.5% and 41.1% respectively. The lowest percentage for all categories across the lessons was *Eliciting* for both text types with that category for the narrative text being the lowest percentage overall (10.8%). The categories of *Eliciting* and *Informing* on expository text exceeded that for narrative by 2.3% and 3.6%. For the categories of *Assisting* and *Other* percentage

use for narrative text exceeded percentage use for expository text by 2.1% and 2.8% respectively.

Figure 1. Percentage of teacher moves with different text types

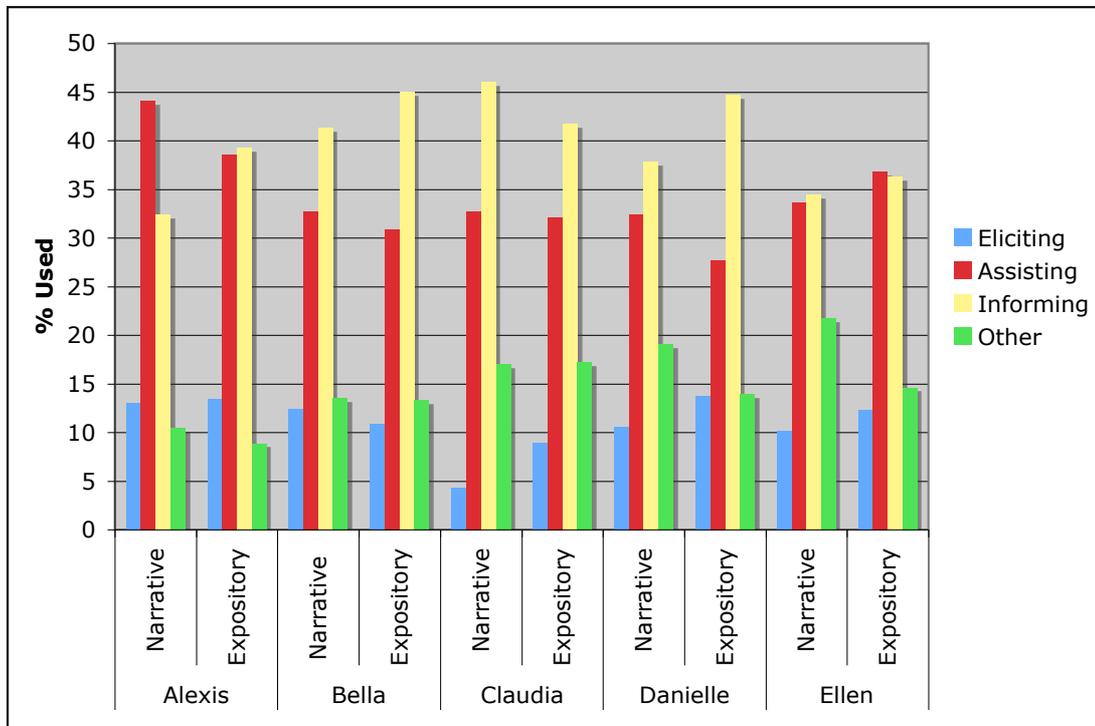


To investigate similarities and differences between teachers, data was disaggregated for individual teachers according to the percentage use of different categories and subcategories. This data is presented in Figure 2. It can be see that a greater range between teachers was found between categories when teachers were using the narrative text, for example, for *Eliciting* the range between teachers was 8.8% for narrative and 4.8% for expository text. For *Assisting* there was a difference of 11.6% for narrative text and 10.9% for expository and for *Informing* the range was 13.7% and 8.7% for narrative and information respectively. The category *Other* also showed a difference of 11.3% for narrative text and 8.4% for expository text.

An interesting trend to note for the category *Assisting* on narrative text is the consistency between four of the teachers, Bella, Claudia, Danielle and Ellen (range 32.4% to 33.6%) with Alexis accounting for the highest percentage (44.0%). The highest percentage of use for expository text for *Assisting* was also demonstrated by Alexis (38.5%). Possible

reasons for this trend relate to the nature of teaching interactions across the lesson and will be explored in the Discussion chapter.

Figure 2. Percentage of individual teacher moves with different text types



### Categories and subcategories

For each major category involving explicit teaching moves. *Eliciting*, *Assisting*, and *Informing*, teachers' use of subcategories were tallied and the percentage of subcategory use calculated for each category. Table 7 presents the combined percentages for all subcategory use within the categories of *Eliciting*, *Assisting*, and *Informing*. Patterns of use were similar for two of the categories, *Assisting* and *Informing* whilst for *Eliciting* there was a major difference in subcategory use. These trends will be discussed in the following sections pertaining to each category.

Table 7

*Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories with different text types*

Categories	Narrative	Expository
<b>Eliciting</b>		
E1	58.1	83.5
E2	28.5	0.2
E3	4.9	10.4
E4	3.0	1.8
E5	5.6	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Assisting</b>		
A1	32.2	27.5
A2	28.7	33.5
A3	26.0	28.1
A4	2.1	1.5
A5	10.2	8.6
A6	0.9	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Informing</b>		
I1	57.7	62.4
I2	7.7	2.3
I3	22.2	23.8
I4	1.3	1.3
I5	8.2	5.1
I6	2.9	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

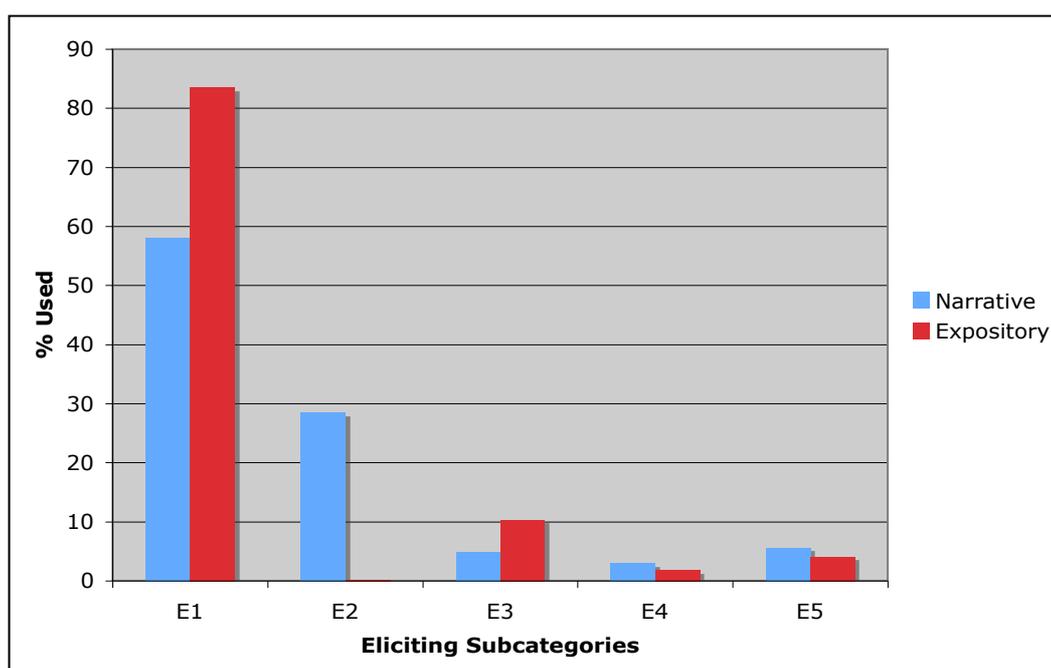
## *Eliciting*

As discussed in the previous chapter, within the category of *Eliciting* there were five subcategories directed to prompting children to draw on existing knowledge related to:

1. Understanding or explaining
2. Predicting or anticipating
3. Knowledge of print
4. Problem-solving
5. Text types or characteristics.

Figure 3 shows that when teachers were eliciting information across the lesson the majority of teacher moves for narrative text occurred for two subcategories Understanding or Explaining (E1) and Prediction or Anticipating (E2). For expository text the majority of moves were identified as Understanding or Explaining (E1). There was little use of the subcategory related to Prediction or Anticipating (E2) for expository text. Reasons for this difference relate to the nature of expository text and will be explored in the Discussion. Problem-solving (E4) was the least used move for both text types. Children were rarely asked to articulate knowledge of print, problem-solving or text characteristics in isolation from the text being read.

*Figure 3.* Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories of Eliciting with different text types



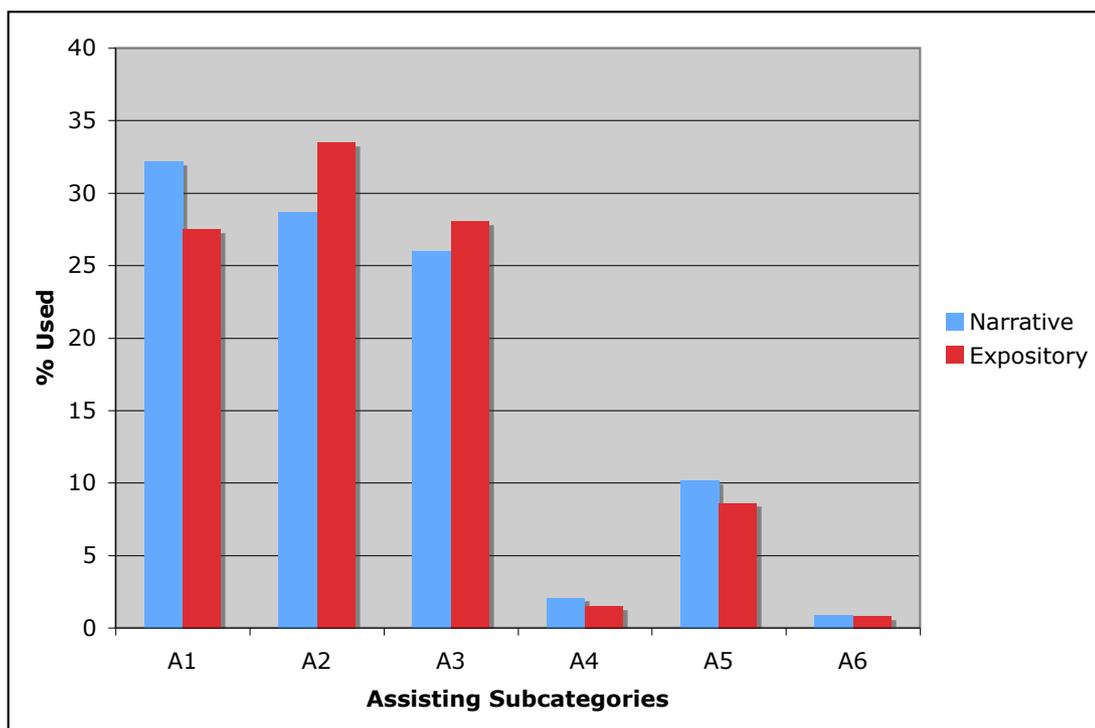
### *Assisting*

In total there were six subcategories identified as *Assisting* when the teacher prompted children to think about:

1. Meaning
2. Structure
3. Knowledge of print
4. Multiple sources of information
5. Complex aspects of processing
6. Text types or characteristics.

As shown in Figure 4 the subcategories for this category for both text types were mainly in subcategories Meaning (A1), Structure (A2) and Knowledge of Print (A3). The least demonstrated subcategories for both texts were those related to using multiple sources of information (A4), complex aspects of processing (A5) or text types and characteristics (A6). On narrative text Meaning (A1) was used more than on expository text and for expository text Structure (A2) and Knowledge of print (A3) were used more.

*Figure 4.* Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories of Assisting with different text types



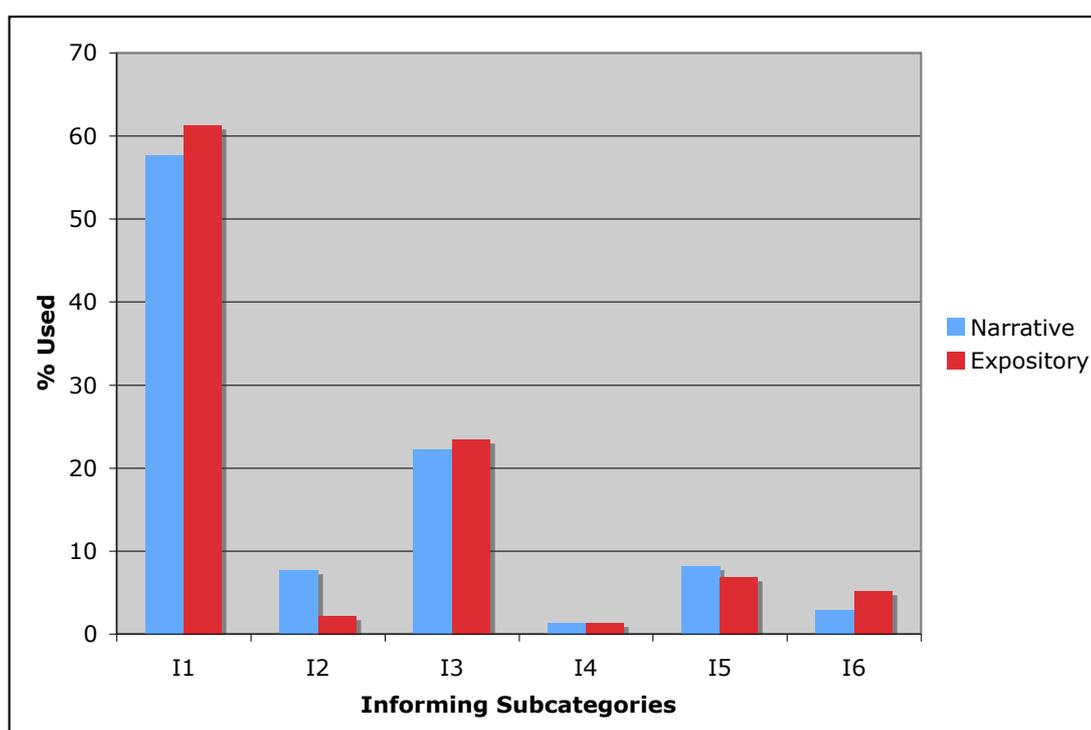
## ***Informing***

Six subcategories were identified within the category of *Informing* when the teacher communicated knowledge related to:

1. Meaning
2. Structure
3. Knowledge of print
4. Multiple sources of information
5. Complex aspects of processing
6. Text type or characteristics.

As shown in Figure 5 Meaning (I1) and Knowledge about Print (I3) combined accounted for the majority of teacher talk for both text types. Between text types there were small differences only in the percentage of subcategories used. Teachers were identified as informing children more about aspects related to the meaning of text (I1) more when working with expository than narrative text. There was more attention to informing children about the use of multiple sources of information, and text type or characteristics, on expository text.

*Figure 5.* Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories of Informing with different text types



### ***Other***

Teacher moves that were coded in this category were slightly higher for narrative text (15.9%) and for expository text (13.1%). General nonspecific teacher comments were included in this category as well as management statements.

### ***Summary***

The analyses of teacher moves over the total lesson duration revealed a similar pattern of category use for both text types. The largest percentage of teacher moves occurred in the category of *Informing* with this being used most on expository text. Over the total lesson the category of *Eliciting* was used least, followed by *Other*, and *Assisting*.

Teacher variation indicated that there was greater variability between teachers for each category on narrative text than expository text.

Tallying of subcategory use across the lessons revealed information about the specific areas teachers chose to direct their talk within the more general category. For the category *Eliciting* on expository text teacher talk focussed mainly on knowledge related to the content whilst with narrative text children were asked to talk about the content as well as predict or anticipate elements of the story not yet discussed or read. With the category *Assisting* children's attention was drawn to using meaning, structure and print knowledge for both text types with meaning being used slightly more for narrative text and Structure slightly more for expository. When teachers were imparting information about the text in the category *Informing* there was slightly more talk about the meaning for the expository text than narrative text.

### **Teacher Moves: Individual Lesson Phases**

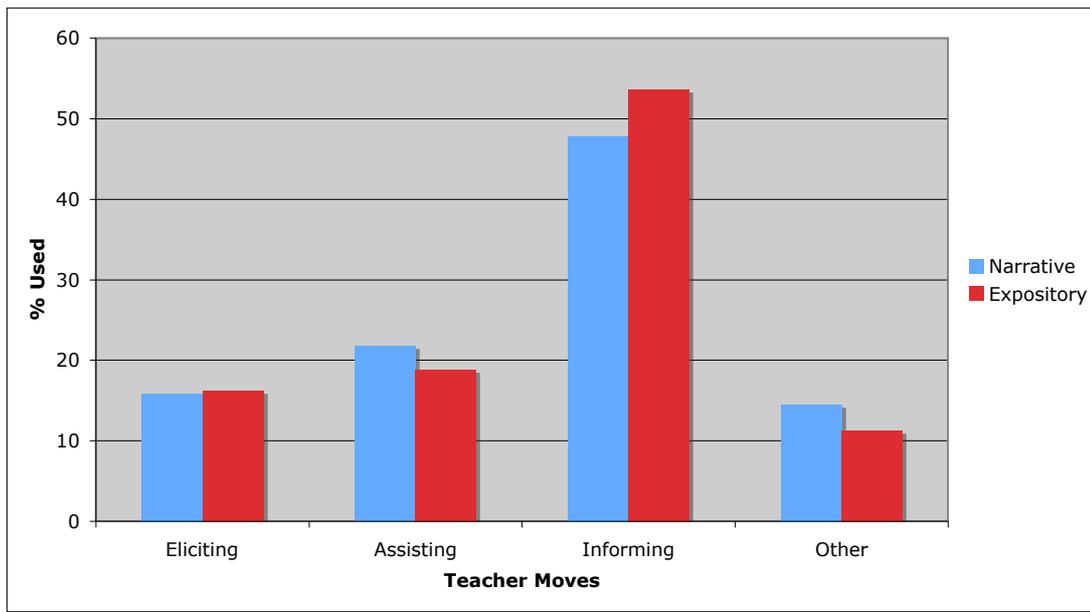
As the purpose, design and delivery of each phase of a Guided Reading lesson is distinct the analysis of teacher moves in each phase is separately reported in order to investigate possible differences in teacher interaction specific to individual phases and text types.

#### ***Phase One: The Book Introduction***

As can be seen in Figure 6 the overall pattern identified throughout the lesson was also present in the teacher introduction phase with both narrative and expository text for the category *Informing* as the largest category. *Assisting* was the next highest category for both text types and *Eliciting* and *Other* used least for both narrative and expository text.

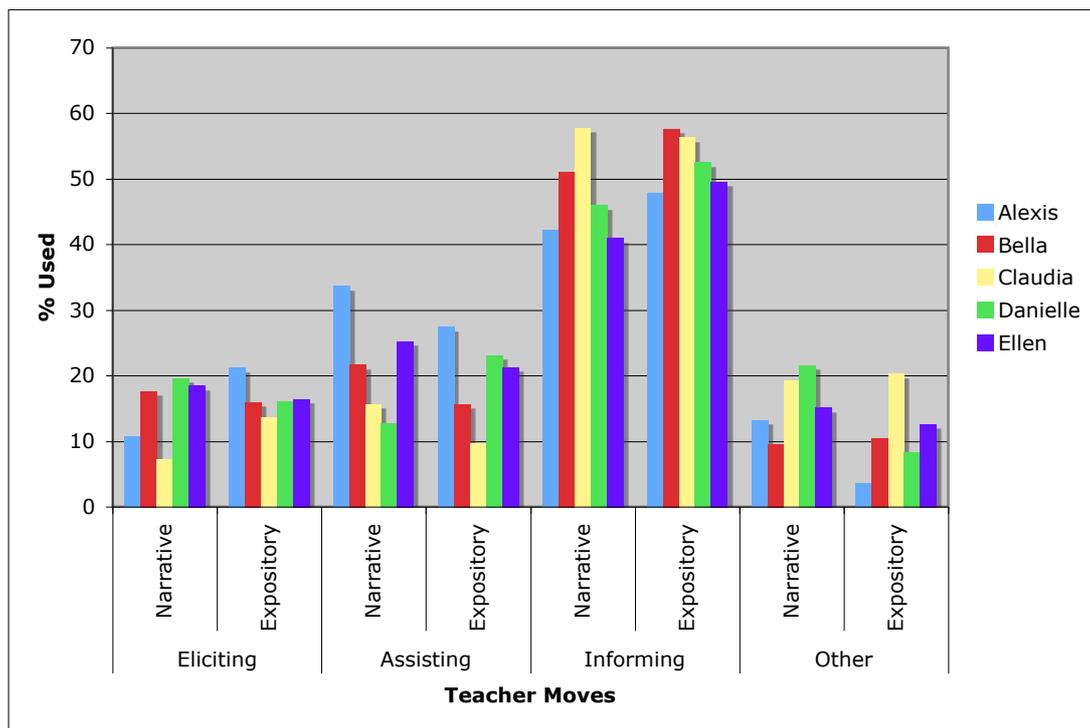
The percentage use of teacher moves for the category of *Eliciting* was similar for both narrative and expository text. For the categories of *Assisting* and *Other* the percentage use for narrative text slightly exceeded expository text with the category of *Informing* greater for expository text than narrative text.

Figure 6. Phase One: Percentage of teacher moves with different text types.



Whilst the balance of categories remained similar for both narrative and expository text across text types there was some individual teacher variation in the percentage use of categories as shown in Figure 7. For the category of *Eliciting* the range between teachers was 12.4 % for narrative and for expository text 7.5%, for *Assisting* the range was 18.1% for narrative and 17.8% for expository, for *Informing* 15.7% for narrative and for expository 8.6% , and for *Other* 12% and 16.8% respectively for narrative and expository text.

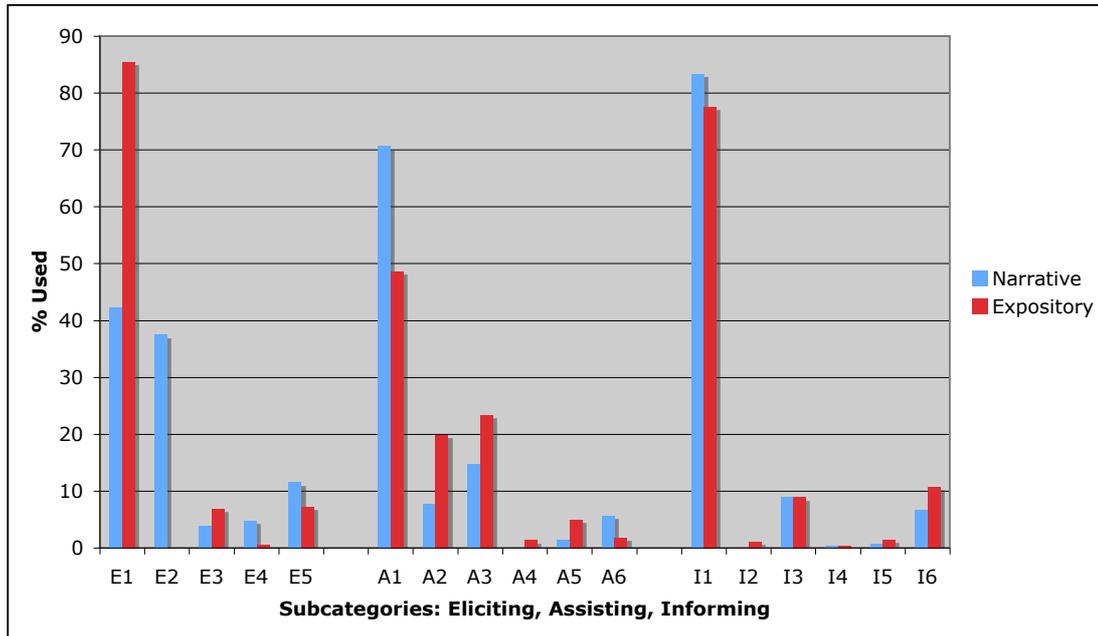
Figure 7. Phase One: Percentage of teacher moves for individual teachers with different text types



### *Categories and subcategories*

In Figure 8 the proportion of subcategories used for each of the main categories of *Eliciting*, *Assisting* and *Informing* are presented. During the Introduction to the new book teachers were eliciting more from the children related to Understanding or Explaining (E1) when introducing expository text than narrative text. Teachers asked children to predict or anticipate (E2) what might happen next during the narrative but there was no incidence of this move with expository text. It is interesting to note that for narrative text teachers proportionally allocated more teacher moves to assisting children to use meaning on narrative text than on expository text while assisting children to use structure and visual information occurred more on expository text (A2 and A3). For the category *Informing* teachers put the majority of their emphasis on meaning (I1) rather than other aspects. Across all types of interactions teachers were drawing children’s attention to both narrative and expository characteristics of text. This was most noticeable for the categories of *Eliciting* for narrative and for *Informing* for expository.

Figure 8. Phase One: Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories of Eliciting, Assisting, and Informing with different text types



### *Phase Two: First Reading of the Text*

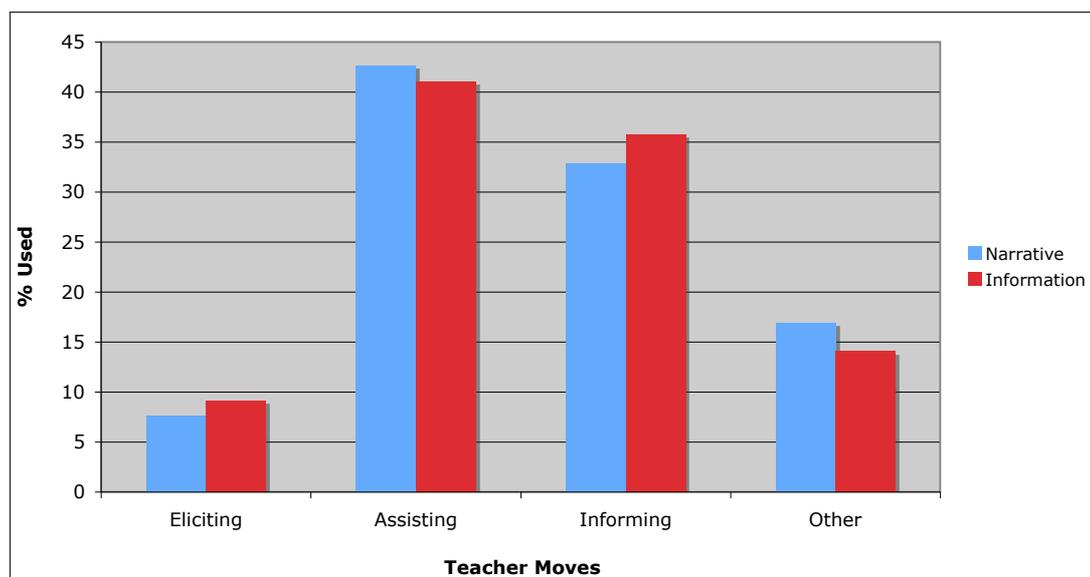
After the introduction, children read the text. Recommended practice for the oral reading phase across all age levels is for children to read the text independently, with the teacher interacting with individual children as they read (Ministry of Education, 2003).

It was observed that the teachers employed idiosyncratic patterns of organisation and interaction as the child read the text. These ways of working were affected variably by text type. The differences in teacher practice centred around two intertwined practices, individual or group reading (commonly referred to as choral or unison reading) and individual or group interaction. Four teachers Bella, Claudia, Danielle and Ellen asked the children to read the text individually and interacted either mainly with individual children (Claudia) or with both individual children and the group variably (Bella, Danielle and Ellen). Alexis interacted with the group as they read while the children read in unison. Exceptions to the practice of oral reading were Danielle and Ellen who, for the highest level texts, asked the children to read silently or in a whisper. Danielle stopped the children at the highest level after two pages to discuss the texts.

The data collected during this phase therefore combines teacher moves which were the result of both individual and group interactions. As can be seen in Figure 9 the pattern of

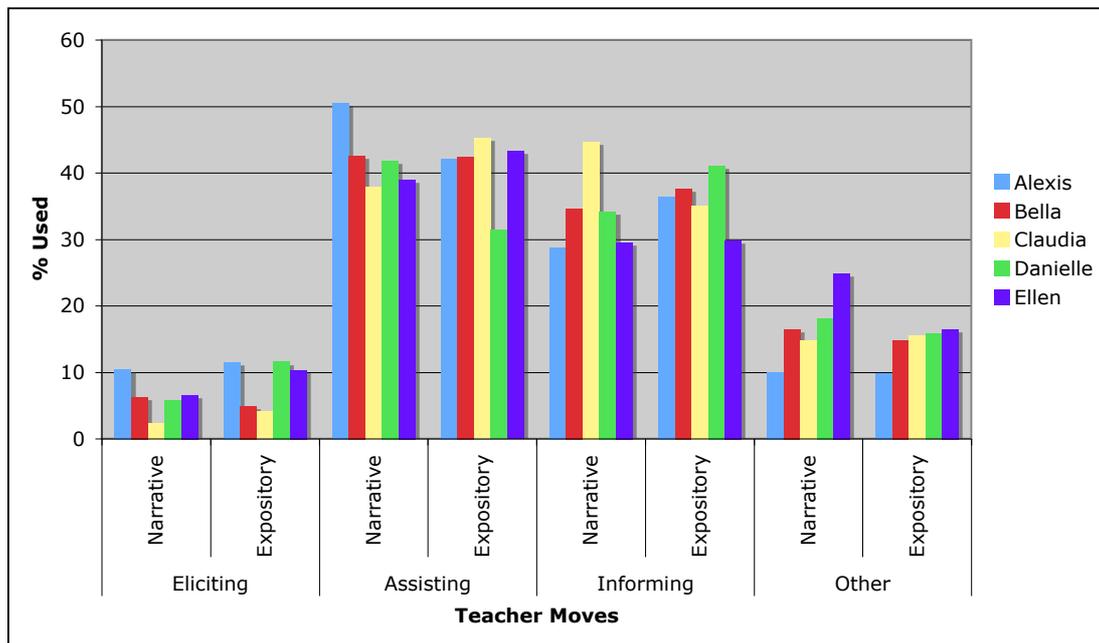
category use was consistent for both text types with *Assisting*, the highest category for both text types. For narrative text the categories *Assisting* and *Other* exceeded expository text by a small margin whilst for expository text the categories of *Eliciting* and *Informing* exceeded narrative text similarly.

Figure 9. Phase Two: Percentage of teacher moves with different text types



Whilst the balance of categories remained similar for both narrative and expository text across text types there was some individual teacher variation in the percentage use of categories as can be seen in Figure 10. For the category of *Eliciting* the range between teachers was 8.1% for narrative and 7.5% for expository text, for *Assisting* the range was 12.6% and 13.8 % respectively, for *Informing* 15.9% and for expository 11.2%, and for *Other* 14.9% for narrative and 6.5% for expository text.

Figure 10. Phase Two: Percentage of teacher moves for individual teachers with different text types



### *Categories and subcategories*

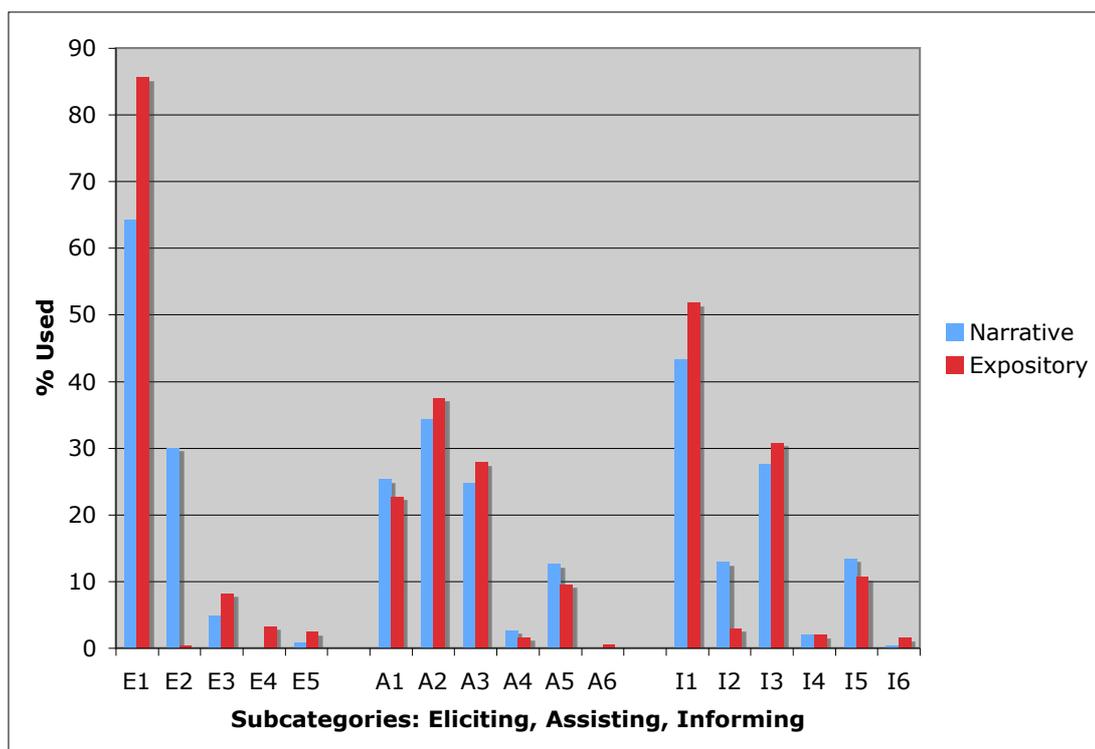
Figure 11 presents combined data for the subcategories of *Eliciting*, *Assisting* and *Informing*. In the oral reading phase of the lesson as in the introduction phase teachers elicited more from children related to Understanding or Explaining (E1) when introducing expository text than with narrative text. Teachers again asked children to predict or anticipate (E2) what might happen in the narrative but there was no incidence of this move on the expository text.

In the category *Assisting* teachers appeared to use a more balanced number of subcategories drawing on Meaning (A1), Structure (A2) and Knowledge of print (A3) for both text types. Finer analysis of the subcategory A2 revealed that two teachers accounted for the highest use of this category Alexis (46.7% and 38.5% for narrative and expository text respectively) and Ellen (26.1% and 27.3% for narrative and expository text respectively). These teachers assisted the children to use the structure of the stories differently. Most moves identified in this subcategory for Alexis involved reading with the children or reading the first word or words of sentences alone or with the children to lead them into the reading of the text following. In contrast and indicative of the other teachers Ellen, used a variety of prompts to support structure but focussed mainly on teaching for changes in phrasing and/or fluency of the reading.

For the category Informing for both text types teachers put the majority of their emphasis on meaning (I1) but also informed children about print features (I3) more than other aspects.

While the children were reading the texts teachers were also directing children’s attention to complex aspects of processing either through *Assisting* or *Informing*. There was little attention drawn to text characteristics in this phase of the lesson.

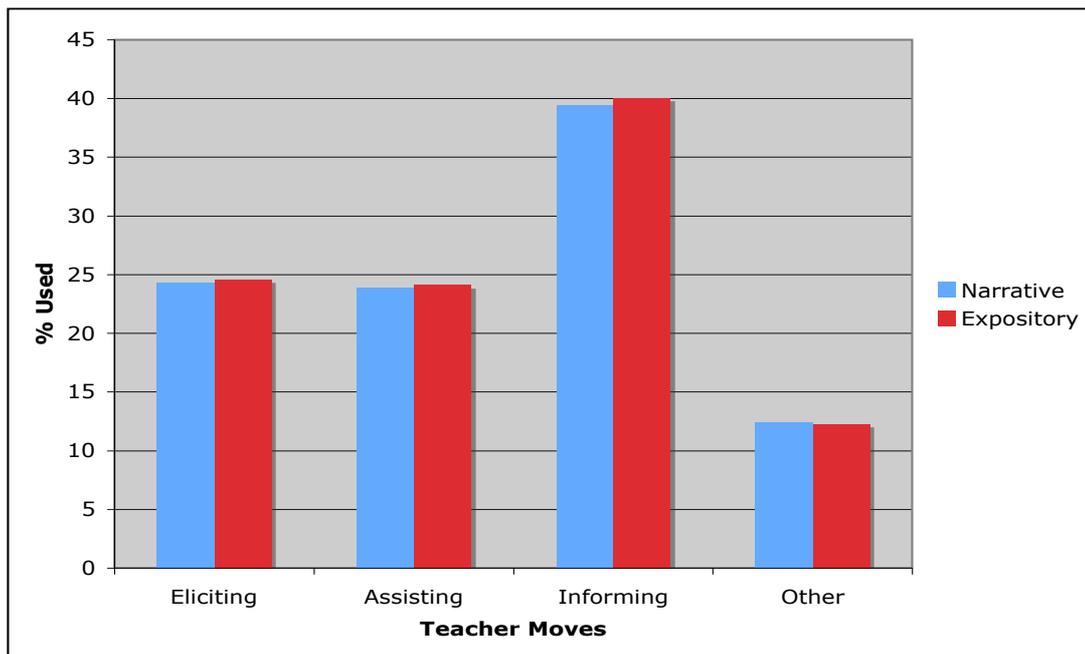
Figure 11. Phase Two: Percentage of teacher moves for subcategories of Eliciting, Assisting and Informing with different text types



### Phase Three: The Discussion

This phase occurred in 56% of the total sessions ( $n=17$ ). The Discussion following the reading involved Informing children more than eliciting information or assisting. Percentage use of categories shown in Figure 12 revealed little difference between text types. With limited numbers of teacher moves for this category due to the very short time allocation finer levels of descriptive analysis were not attempted.

Figure 12. Phase Three: Percentage of teacher moves with different text types



### Summary

In the Introduction to the text (Phase One) teachers' talk focussed predominately on *Informing* children for both text types with a lower percentage use for the categories of *Eliciting* and *Assisting*. As children were reading the text (Phase Two) teachers' talk was directed to *Assisting* and *Informing* more than *Eliciting*.

When subcategories of use for each category, *Eliciting*, *Assisting* and *Informing* were examined for Phase One the majority of teacher moves for both text types related to Meaning and Understanding. For subcategory use in Phase Two the majority of teacher moves for *Eliciting* and *Informing* related to Meaning and Understanding but that for *Assisting* Meaning, Structure and Knowledge of print were used variably for both text types. The individual practices of two of the five teachers have been attributed to the pattern of subcategory use in the category *Assisting*.

A major difference was found between text types within the category of *Eliciting* with teachers primarily eliciting information about children's current relevant knowledge for expository text whilst for narrative text two subcategories, Understanding or Explaining and Predicting or Anticipating accounted equally for most of the teacher moves. This pattern also appeared in teacher interactions while children were reading but there were

more teacher moves related to *Eliciting* of Understanding or Explaining and less related to Predicting and Anticipating.

Children's attention was drawn to text characteristics for the most part in Phase One of the lesson and mainly through *Eliciting* and *Informing*. There was a small percentage difference with more *Eliciting* of information about narrative than expository text and more *Informing* about characteristics of expository text.

### ***Children's Reading***

After a Guided Reading lesson with either a narrative or expository text the children were asked to read the book again for the researcher. A minimum of an hour had elapsed after the first reading of the book with an average of two hours for all children. A Running Record was taken using standard procedures (Clay, 2002). In total 92 Running Records of text reading were recorded. At a later time percentage accuracy rate and a self-correction ratio were calculated for each reading (Clay, 2002). In addition sources of information used were analysed (Clay, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2002). An additional level of analysis was undertaken that considered each substituted word in relation to whether combined sources of information were used or whether one source of information only, meaning, structure or visual information, was used. Because of the nature of the data, nonparametric statistical analyses were employed. Issues included sample size, nonnormality of the data and the level of measurement.

### **Text Reading Accuracy**

Accuracy rates computed on Running Records revealed that the majority of children ( $n=36$ ) read the narrative text with a higher percentage accuracy score than the expository text. Seven children read the expository text higher than the narrative text and three children read both texts with the same accuracy. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test found there was significantly more likelihood of attaining a higher percentage on the narrative text than the expository text  $z=4.763, p=.001$ .

Most of children (94%) could read the narrative texts with an accuracy score of 90% and above whilst just over half the children (54%) could read the expository texts within the same accuracy range.

As the focus of this study was on competent readers defined as able to read particular text at 90% or above accuracy subsequent statistical analyses were undertaken only on the results from those Running Records. Using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test on Running Records taken on texts read at 90% or above it was found that children scored significantly higher when reading narrative text than when reading expository text  $z=2.99$ ,  $p=.003$ .

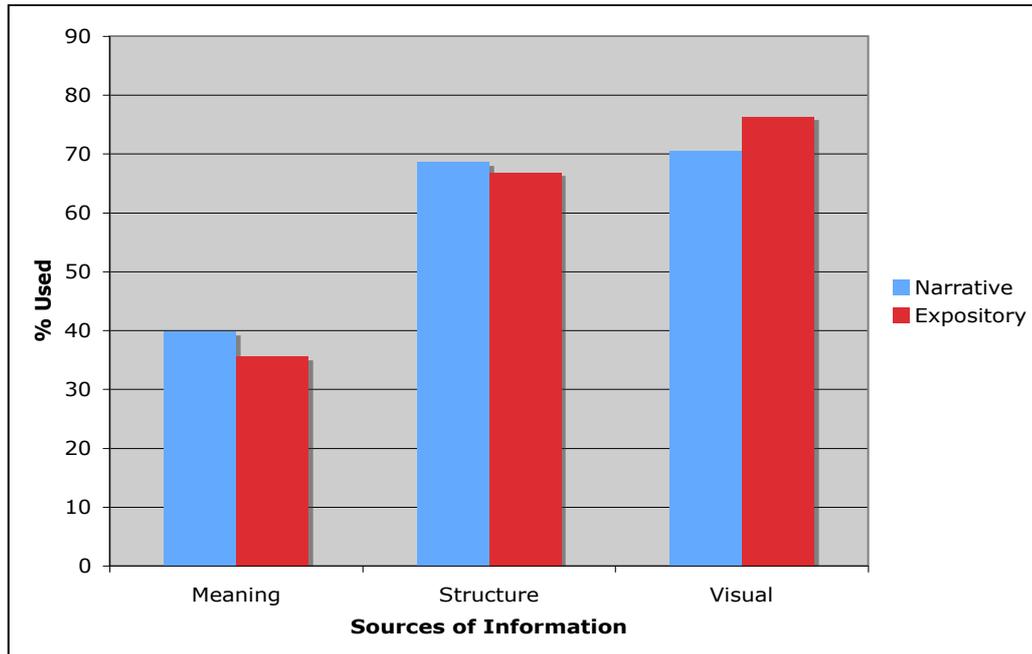
No differences were found in the data between accuracy rates for girls or boys. Two boys and one girl read narrative texts below 90% accuracy. Of the 28 boys in the study, 17 (61%) read the expository text at or above 90% accuracy rate and of the 18 girls, 11 (61%) also read expository text at or above 90%. A Mann-Whitney test indicated no significant differences between girls ( $M$  rank=21.71,  $n=17$ ) or boys ( $M$  rank=22.19,  $n=26$ )  $z(43)=-.125$ ,  $p=.90$  for accuracy rates when reading narrative text 90% and above. For expository text read 90% and above the Mann-Whitney test also indicated no significant differences between girls ( $M$  rank=12.32,  $n=11$ ) or boys ( $M$  rank=15.91,  $n=17$ )  $z(43)=-1.138$ ,  $p=.26$ , for accuracy rates.

### **Information Sources**

A tally was made of the number of times children appeared to use, meaning, structure or visual information when reading the texts (Clay, 2001). By this means an overall indication was obtained of the relative weighting of the use of each information source. Substitutions analysed in this way included attempts that were subsequently self-corrected.

This action was performed for all Running Records with an accuracy level 90% or higher involving 598 substitutions for narrative text and 380 substitutions for expository text. Comparisons between text types indicated that meaning was used for substitutions on narrative text (39.8%) more than expository text (35.5%). Structure was used 68.6% for narrative text and 66.8% for expository text and visual information was drawn on more for expository text (76.3%) than narrative text (70.6%). These differences are represented in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Percentage of sources of information for narrative and expository texts read at 90% and above accuracy



To explore similarities and differences related to narrative and expository text at different text levels data were disaggregated for Early, Middle and Late text levels. This data is presented in Table 8. It is interesting to note that the percentage use of Meaning decreased markedly for both the narrative and expository text on the highest level text in comparison to the Middle level text. The use of Visual information was highest for the Middle and Late expository text.

Table 8

Percentage of sources of information for narrative and expository text at three levels of text read at 90% and above accuracy

	Text Levels					
	Early		Middle		Late	
	N (n=12)	E (n=9)	N (n=16)	E (n=12)	N (n=15)	E (n=5)
Meaning	47.4	32.1	48.4	40.2	30.5	31.0
Structure	57.1	67.9	72.6	63.8	71.3	71.0
Visual	63.9	67.9	75.8	81.0	70.3	80.0

Note. N=Narrative; E=Expository.

Data discussed in the previous section presented an overall view of the sources of information children drew on when reading however such an analysis does not capture qualitative differences children's ability to draw on more than one source of information for individual substitutions. Such indications can be seen as important signs of the development of an effective literacy processing system when viewed from a Literacy Processing theory perspective (Clay, 2002) and are therefore of interest in investigating possible differences between text types.

Table 9

*Percentage of combined or single sources of information for narrative and expository text at three levels of text read at 90% or above accuracy*

Information sources	Text Levels					
	Early		Middle		Late	
	N (n=12)	E (n=9)	N (n=16)	E (n=12)	N (n=15)	E (n=5)
msv	11.3	13.2	28.5	23.0	14.7	19.0
ms	22.6	15.1	9.7	9.8	9.3	7.0
mv	12.0	3.8	8.6	6.3	4.7	5.0
sv	11.3	19.8	21.5	23.0	28.7	32.0
Combined Total	57.2	51.9	68.3	62.1	57.4	63.0
m	1.5	0.0	1.6	1.1	1.7	0.0
s	12.0	19.8	12.9	8.1	18.7	13.0
v	29.3	28.3	17.2	28.7	22.2	24.0
Single Total	42.8	48.1	31.7	37.9	42.6	37.0

*Note.* N=Narrative; E=Expository; m=Meaning; s=Structure; v=Visual

As can be seen in Table 9 for both narrative and expository text children used all three sources of information together most on Middle level text with a decrease for the Late level text. Meaning and structure together decreased in use over text levels for both texts although the decrease was more dramatic for narrative text. As can be seen meaning was rarely used as the sole source of information across all text levels and types. The pattern for the use of Visual information alone on expository text was similar for Early level text

and for Middle level text and decreased slightly for High level text. On narrative text this pattern started higher with the Early level text, was least for Middle level text and rose again for the Late level text.

Chi-squared tests revealed a significant difference between the use of combined and single sources of information across time for narrative text,  $\chi^2(2, N=598)=6.499, p=.039$  but no significant difference across time was evident for expository text,  $\chi^2(2, N=474)=3.668, p=.160$ . It is likely that the difference between the Early and Middle narrative accounted for shifts with the narrative text. This pattern of use will be explored in the Discussion section.

### **Self-correction**

To investigate another important indicator of effective processing in developing readers a tally was made of the number of times children made an incorrect attempt at a word and subsequently corrected it on text read 90% and above. A ratio was then calculated using the number of errors made and the number of errors corrected. In accordance with the theoretical perspective adopted in this study a self-correction ratio of between 1:1 to 1:5 was deemed to be indicative of effective processing as indicated through research on the reading of good readers between the ages of five and eight (Clay, 1966, 1991; McNaughton, 1988; Ng, 1979).

Data from Running Records indicated that no child reading 90% or above on narrative text did not self-correct some initial errors. For expository text two children read 90% or above on Middle level text with no self-correction. The absence of self-correction was interpreted as an indication of ineffective processing (Clay, 2001) and these results were included in the category of a low self-correction ratio.

More children displayed a higher self-correction ratio on narrative text read at 90% and above than on expository text read 90% and above. The percentage difference between high and low rates presented in Table 10 equates to 1 in 3 children with a low self-correction rate for expository text compared to 1 in 8 children with a low self-correction rate for narrative text.

Table 10

*Percentage of high and low self-correction ratios on narrative and expository text read at 90% and above accuracy*

Self-correction ratio	N (n=43)	E (n=26)
High		
1:1-1:5	86.1	60.7
Low		
>1:5	13.0	39.3

*Note.* N=Narrative; E=Expository.

### **Teacher Assistance at Difficulties**

When a child stops reading because they have either made an error they cannot correct or are unable to attempt a word during the recording of a Running Record the word is supplied by the recorder after a time lapse of three seconds to enable the child to proceed with the reading (Clay, 2002). Theoretical explanations for this behaviour relate to the child's inability to search for sources of information with which to solve the problem.

Tallies of the number of times children were told the correct word revealed that a greater number of words were supplied by the researcher during the reading of expository text than narrative text. An average of slightly in excess of one word per child was supplied for narrative text and for expository text three words were supplied per child on texts read at 90% and above.

Table 11

*Number of words supplied at a difficulty on narrative and expository texts read at 90% and above*

	N (n=43)	E (n=26)
Words told	47	78

*Note.* N=Narrative; E=Expository.

## **Summary**

To investigate children's processing systems when reading different types of text Running Records (Clay, 2002) were taken and analysed on the reading of 46 children after they had received a Guided Reading lesson on the texts selected for the study. It was found that almost all the children could read the narrative texts with an accuracy score of 90% and above whilst just over half the children in total could read the selected expository text with a similar accuracy rate. There were no gender differences revealed in the accuracy scores of different text types.

Analysis of the combined records of text reading for all text levels showed that for both text types visual information was used more than structure and meaning on text across all children's records. When language sources (meaning and structure) were combined these exceeded the use of visual information. Other indications of effective processing revealed that there was a trend across the three levels of narrative text for a shift to be occurring in the ability of children to move towards beginning to combine more than one source of information for attempts. This trend did not occur for expository text.

Marked differences occurred between text types for self-corrections with children achieving more effective ratios of self-correction when reading narrative text. There was also a difference noticed between text types in the frequency with which children were supplied with the correct word by the teacher at points of difficulty. When reading expository text children were more likely to be unable to attempt words.

In the next chapter these results will be discussed in relation to the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Discussion

My interest in conducting this study arose from personal observation, over the last 15 years, of an increased advocacy for the use of expository texts, in addition to narrative text, early in children's reading instruction (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Duke, 2004; Palincsar & Duke, 2004; Pappas, 1993a; Sanacore, 1991). This advocacy has given rise to the widespread proliferation of expository text designed for early reading instruction. (e.g. Learning Media; National Geographic; Pearson Education; Thomson Learning and Scholastic).

A quasi-experimental research study was designed to explore the effect of using qualitatively different text genres in the core instructional setting of Guided Reading from the perspectives of both the teacher as tutor and the child as learner. It was decided that Guided Reading would be an appropriate context for the study because it is in this setting that New Zealand teachers provide the most support for developing children's ability to read increasingly difficult text. Therefore this context would theoretically be the most sensitive to instructional decisions. This choice also provided a means of controlling general instructional parameters because Guided Reading has a normative structure (Ministry of Education, 2003) and, by locating the study in the real world of classroom instructional contexts the ecological validity of the design would be increased (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The quasi-experimental format employed a combination of counterbalanced and alternating treatments design features (Gay, 1996) which controlled for sources of invalidity. It was decided to use a purposive sample of experienced teachers in the study as they are judged to be more effective in the teaching of literacy (Elley, 2004).

It will be recalled that one overarching research question with four more specific questions were developed arising from the issues identified in the review of the research and teacher practice literature.

The general research question was as follows:

Do the processes of teaching and learning differ according to text types in beginning Guided Reading?

Within this general question there were several more specific questions:

1. What are experienced New Zealand teachers' beliefs and understandings about beginning reading instruction and the use of different text types?
2. Do teachers use narrative and expository text differently in beginning Guided Reading?
3. Does children's literacy processing differ according to text type?
4. What are the relationships between teachers' use of narrative and expository text in beginning Guided Reading and children's literacy processing?

To answer these research questions, three sets of data were collected and examined. Each data set required different tools for analysis. A unique coding system was developed to analyse teacher interactions, teachers' beliefs and understandings were obtained by interview and records of children's oral reading behaviour were captured and analysed. Results from the data collected and analysed were presented.

As a framework to shape the discussion of issues that follows, the specific questions will be addressed to answer the more general question related to the teaching and learning opportunities afforded by using different text types in Guided Reading. A final section will consider what the findings mean for our current knowledge in this area and make instructional recommendations regarding all interrelated factors. The limitations of the study will be addressed before suggestions are made for future research directions.

### ***Teacher Beliefs, Understandings and Practices***

Clear descriptions emerged from the data of knowledgeable professionals dedicated to ensuring that children obtained the best possible start in literacy learning and able to articulate clearly their theoretical positions and practical stances towards literacy teaching and learning. There was uniformity in many of the teachers' beliefs based around reading as a meaning-based activity consistent with New Zealand professional development resources (Ministry of Education, 2003) and with research findings about effective teachers of literacy (Elley, 2004; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block & Morrow, 1998). These teachers confirmed themselves as "professional experts"

(McNaughton, 2002, p.98) whose knowledge had built across their careers from a wide range of sources including participation in professional communities both inside and outside school.

The four Reading Recovery trained teachers were unanimous in their description of the impact that that particular professional community had had on their learning in assisting them to deepen theoretical understandings about literacy learning. This was demonstrated in the common language they used when describing literacy processing and their description of the developmental changes they would expect to see in readers as they progressed through the gradient of difficulty the books in the study represented. That training as a Reading Recovery teacher contributes to the development of effective classroom literacy teachers is consistent with the finding of Elley (2004).

The teacher who articulated a different theoretical understanding reflecting a more linear, skill-based view of reading acquisition (Adams, 1990) also indicated the development of her understandings had been influenced most at the school level, in the main through interaction with other teachers. This teacher's beliefs were reflected in different practices within the Guided Reading lesson that did not fully match recommended practice (Ministry of Education, 2003). It is possible that this mismatch between recommended and actual practice may have developed within the particular professional community of the school but confirming data is not available for this hypothesis. The potential impact of the divergent practices for the development of processing strategies will be considered later in this chapter.

In 1994 Warwick Elley commented on the striking consistency of New Zealand teachers' literacy beliefs and practices. The single example of marked difference in this study provides some support for a claim made by the Education Review Office (2009) that there is some diversity in teachers' knowledge and beliefs about the teaching and learning of literacy in New Zealand although the extent of this divergence and the quality and impact are unknown. Clay (2001) contends that evidence from very different education systems around the world suggests that children can develop effective literacy behaviours in widely varying programmes, and that different approaches to teaching do not adversely affect normal progress children (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1983). There is some evidence however to suggest that if the teaching approach is too narrow the effect is most marked

on those children finding it difficult to engage in literacy learning (Clay 1991; Peters 1967).

Each of the teachers expressed a keen interest in using more expository text in Guided Reading but all noted that there was not much choice available to them in their schools. In the New Zealand context this means there were not as many expository texts in the store of centrally held instructional reading books. Informal observation in the study schools confirmed this was the case. The lack of informational text in classrooms of all forms, including instructional texts, has been highlighted as a problem in American junior classrooms (Duke, 2004; Jeong, Gaffney & Choi, 2010; Moss, 2005). Although no New Zealand research has been undertaken to explore the extent of teachers' use of informational text, or its presence in classrooms, data from the teacher interviews suggest that there was extensive use of expository text in the study schools. Teachers reported they used expository text in instructional literacy settings such as Shared Reading as well as in content area instruction defined by the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006) and integrated into the classroom through the study of topics related to subject areas such as Science and Social Studies. In addition all schools had extensive school libraries and individual classrooms had their own class libraries.

Teachers' opinions differed on when the introduction to expository text should occur. Those who thought that children should not be introduced to expository text until after they had begun to learn to read on narrative text gave rationales related to the content, structure and language of expository text. The findings in this study provide some support for this view and will be discussed further later in the chapter.

### ***Text Type and Teacher Practice***

Professional development material reviewed in Chapter One lead to a theoretically based expectation that any differences in the ways narrative and expository texts that were used instructionally would be in response to the linguistic and structural features of the text (Ministry of Education, 2002; Parkes, 2003). It was also anticipated that there would be many commonalities in lessons delivered by a group of experienced teachers using the core practice of a Guided Reading session (Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000) and guided by common developmental views of literacy and literacy processing (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003). As will be discussed, considerable similarity in practice was noted during

lessons. But there were also differences, and these stemmed from idiosyncratic teacher practices as well as different text characteristics.

Text characteristics differed markedly between text types and consistently influenced the duration of Guided Reading lessons. Recommendations made to teachers delivering small group instruction to several groups daily during instructional reading time are for lessons to take between 10 and 20 minutes (Ministry of Education, 2002). These recommendations were met by all teachers for the narrative text but were exceeded for the expository text in all but one case.

However it should be noted that increased time to introduce and read the expository text does not necessarily mean an improved quality of instruction (McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald & Farry, 2004). If, as Wood (2003) contends, the right state of arousal needed for learning to occur for adults engaged in intense intellectual work at the limit of their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) is 20 minutes, it follows that for young children much shorter focused periods of concentrations are critical. Careful teacher attention to selecting the most memorable and pertinent aspects of the text to highlight and discuss would shorten lesson time and also mitigate against the possibility of confusing children with too much talk (Clay, 2005b).

The teacher with the shortest mean lesson times for both narrative and expository text was observed working within the constraints of the classroom which may have affected her decision-making. A teacher working in a real-life classroom situation is forced to make focused decisions about how to conduct a lesson including the amount and type of teacher talk (Cazden, 2001). In addition, during the First Reading of the text this teacher adopted a style of interaction closely aligned to recommended teacher practice particularly for the narrative text (Ministry of Education, 2002) which saw her interacting with individuals as they read independently. This is the most conducive situation for the development of independent processing as the teaching can be more contingent to the learner's needs (Wood, 2003). Both factors may account for the overall shorter lessons for both text types although this teacher's expository lessons were longer than the narrative in a pattern similar to the other teachers.

Comparison of the time taken for the individual phases of the Guided Reading lessons revealed significant differences between narrative and expository text for both the

Introduction and the First Reading of the text. In the case of the Introduction phase this difference was anticipated because recommendations to teachers suggest expository text introductions will need to be longer (Ministry of Education, 2002) but there is no such recommendation for the First Reading. That the Introduction to the expository text took longer indicated that more time was needed to create an effective scaffold to prepare children for reading the text. The First Reading also took longer because the scaffold was not withdrawn resulting in more teacher talk during the reading and less opportunity for children to independently read the text.

At the Early level the expository text was twice as long as the narrative text. In this case it was to be expected that the time taken to work with this text might be longer than the narrative text. In fact teachers did not spend much more time introducing the text. And although the children took longer to read the expository text, the time was not double that of the narrative text, (except for one group who had unexpectedly already read the narrative text at the same level). A possible reason for the quicker than expected reading of the Early expository text may be the structural features of the text. The text contained two different sentence structures that were repeated on every page with almost no variation except for the last page where several questions were posed. Children may have been able to read the text faster because they were recalling the repeated structure from memory. The significance of text characteristics such as these for developing children's processing systems will be further discussed in relation to the data from the Running Records of subsequent rereading of the texts.

At all times the teaching was interactive and responsive to the children and to the text being read. Consistent with New Zealand practice there was no teaching of individual items or skills prior to the text being read (Ministry of Education, 2003). This contrasts with the preteaching of skills reported in the United States by some effective literacy teachers during Guided Reading lessons (Ford & Opitz, 2008b; Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996).

The analysis of teacher moves during lessons attempted to capture, the nature and the content of teacher talking during Guided Reading and to determine whether teachers adjusted these aspects of their teaching according to the type of text being read; and if so, in what ways.

Teacher practice throughout the lessons confirmed their stated beliefs about reading as a meaning-based activity (Elley, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2003; Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996). Most of the interactions (teaching moves) focussed on meaning, ranging from the discourse to the word level. Also important, although to a lesser degree, was the attention teachers paid to aspects of print throughout the lesson. This occurred for both text types in almost equal proportions. However as the time of the lessons was much longer for the expository text, just as there was increased attention to the meaning of the text with the longer time, there was also much more teaching for the use of visual information on the expository text. Aspects of these moves are discussed further below.

General learning theory proposes that all learning involves transfer from previous knowledge (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Connecting to existing knowledge and creating bridges between that knowledge and new knowledge has been identified as important for learners of all ages (Bransford et.al, 2000). Consistent with these understandings is a cognitive strategy, activating prior knowledge, identified as important in assisting with comprehension. Research has demonstrated that teacher attention to this issue has increased the comprehension of text in older readers (Duke & Pearson, 2002). As has been discussed activating prior knowledge has long been identified as an important characteristic of effective introductions to narrative text (Clay, 1998; Holdaway, 1979; Ministry of Education, 2002).

On expository text teachers were eliciting information from children about their current knowledge related to the content of the text and making links for them to the new knowledge in the text. Teachers also did this with narrative text but with this text type they were also modelling another cognitive strategy that has been identified as important in research on comprehension in older readers (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Teachers were asking children to predict or anticipate story outcomes or to interpret characters' thoughts, feelings or motivation. In Clay's terms they were "prompting the child to constructive activity" (Clay, 1998, p.177) and highlighting for them the active thinking processes required for reading.

By contrast, there were no occasions when teachers asked the children to predict the probable content of expository text. There are two possible reasons for this. The first relates to the teachers expressed lack of knowledge about using the text type. The second reason for the lack of prediction on expository text may have been the teachers' intuitive

judgements that this would not have been a productive activity for young children with limited knowledge of the world or of expository book structure. Prediction has been suggested as appropriate in Guided Reading lessons using expository text in relation to anticipating what the text might be going to tell the reader and the form or organisation that it might take (Duke, 2004; Kleitzein & Dreher, 2004). But Kleitzein & Dreher (2004) consider this to be most appropriate when children already have some understanding of expository text structure. The actions of the teachers in this study were consistent with this guidance.

This signals an important difference in the characteristics of the two text types, which will be discussed further when children's processing is presented. The opportunity for young children to read text that allows and supports them to anticipate the meaning of words by drawing on information from all levels of text, including the discourse level, makes an important contribution to building effective processing systems. If some text types limit these opportunities, this has important implications for the patterning of literacy instruction and learning.

The teachers in this study were also assisting the children to work strategically with the information in the print and in the illustrations consistent with expectations for Guided Reading practices (Forbes, Poparad, McBride, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2003; Schwartz, 2005). Few differences emerged between the ways the four teachers who acknowledged they had learnt a great deal about literacy teaching and learning from Reading Recovery were prompting the children to problem-solve on different text types. This was consistent with beliefs expressed in their interviews about the commonality of strategic activities regardless of what text type children were reading.

As children read, teachers observe and prompt for many aspects of processing during the first reading of the text (Schwartz, 2005) and this was confirmed by the data. Of particular interest was the extent to which teachers were prompting children to assemble more complex working systems (Clay, 2001) by assisting children to use more than one source of information or to take responsibility for independent problem-solving by asking questions such as, What could you try? This pattern occurred on both narrative and expository text.

However through the analysis of the teacher data and observations of teacher practice, differences emerged in organisational features and interaction patterns during the First Reading of the text. These differences were unexpected and may have contributed to the longer lessons for expository text. Two sources of difference are discussed here: oral reading practices called choral or unison reading and issues of teacher support during whole group or individual interactions.

The practice of choral or unison reading has been identified as unproductive in the literature in both New Zealand and overseas (Ministry of Education, 2003; Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996). Different degrees of unison reading were observed in the study. One teacher encouraged the children to read in unison and stay together at all times when using both text types. This appeared to be her usual practice. It was interesting to note that this was the teacher who expressed a different view of the reading process. Other teachers while not actively encouraging unison reading did not discourage it when children read together. This happened more often on the expository text. It appeared that the teachers were intuitively providing more intensive support for the reading by using it as a type of shared reading task with the teacher and the group providing support, a form of temporal contingency (Wood, 2003). A more productive approach used by one teacher to provide more support on the higher level expository text, while still allowing for independent problem-solving, was to discuss each double fold page and then let children read the text independently. Whilst this may be a useful technique for expository text which has discrete sets of information it would interrupt the flow of the story in narrative texts and so work against effective processing.

The second, related pattern that emerged in the data, concerned the level of teacher control and interaction with the whole group during the reading of the new book. In this study the highest level of teacher support during the First Reading was observed when teachers led the group of children into the text by reading sentences or phrases to them prior to reading, or with them, or repeated a sentence after the children had read it. The teacher who actively encouraged unison reading was observed to do this more than the other teachers on both text types. However other teachers were more inclined to do this on the expository text as they appeared to intuitively respond when the children needed more support.

As discussed previously when Guided Reading is viewed as a form of scaffolding (Clay, 1998) the first reading of the book can be seen as a partial dismantling of the scaffold allowing the child to use their current levels of processing to read the text supported when necessary by the teacher. Clay (1998) states “It is a process of drawing the child into the activity before passing control to the children and pushing them gently towards problem-solving the whole first reading of the story for themselves” (p.172). Where the teacher provides a high level of support to the whole group during the reading, control of the task by the children, and their opportunity for self-regulation is reduced as well as opportunities for the teacher to observe and interact with the responses of individual children in order to foster checking, searching and self-correcting behaviours (Forbes, Poparad & McBride, 2004; Schwartz, 2005).

It appeared that the seating of the group influenced both the tendency for children to read together and the style of interaction that occurred. Children sat in a semicircle on the floor or around a small table. This arrangement worked well for the Introduction to the text because the children needed to be able to hear the teacher and see a copy of the book she held. However this configuration was maintained for the First Reading of the text. Therefore it was more possible for the children’s reading and the teacher’s interaction to become a group activity. As mentioned in a previous section one teacher only separated children in the group and asked them to read to themselves while she circulated to listen and interacted with individual children. A recommendation from this study would be that teachers adhere to the Ministry of Education guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2003) and encourage children to move apart when reading the text to themselves so that independent reading can be encouraged and teacher interaction with individual children facilitated.

In summary, it was observed that teachers adopted practices to help the children cope with the greater cognitive demands of the expository text. They put into place a more developed scaffold and retained it for longer. The scaffold itself was in many ways similar to that used with narrative text except for two features: the first feature was the elimination of prediction from the Introduction and the second, was to provide increased teacher support while reading which then reduced the amount of independent reading activity for the children.

## ***Text Type and Children's Processing***

The finding that narrative texts were easier for the young, developing readers in this study to read than expository text supports the widely held position that expository text is more difficult to read and understand for readers of all ages (Dymock, 2005; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Nicholson, 1984; Perera, 1984). It also confirms the findings of several small-scale studies of children reading expository text in the first three years of school (Duncan & Thornton-Reid, 2010; Eure, 2007; Scott, 2000).

Through observational records of what children do as they read it has been possible to gain insights into underlying psychological and cognitive processes at work and their neurological bases in brain activity during the act of reading (Clay, 2001). Clay (2001) states “making substitutions (which match on visual, structure and meaning features) and self-corrections, and rapid processing, are features of assembling effective working systems early in literacy acquisition” (p.122). In this study records of oral reading behaviour were used to capture and analyse these features of processing. When the records were analysed for the processing features Clay identified, some potential effects were uncovered.

In terms of Singer's (1994) theory of working systems (see Chapter One) the evidence suggests that children were more effectively able to mobilise their existing working systems to meet the challenges of new, instructional level, text when they were reading a narrative rather than an expository text (Clay, 2001). To read expository text effectively children need to develop different working systems as the features of the texts call for different weighting of knowledge sources.

Research on young children learning to read has documented the important role that control of oral language structures plays in the decisions children make about words. This is especially so when the children are reading natural language texts, that is, texts that use language that is close to their own oral language (Clay, 1991; Randell, 2000). The data showed that a high proportion of error substitutions that children made during oral reading of both narrative and expository text matched the syntactic class of the target word. When children are reading stories with varied but simple structures we are likely to assume that their responses are guided by their control of oral language structure. However the role that structure plays in assisting the child to anticipate the upcoming word is dependent on the characteristics of the text being read and caution is needed in

interpreting the contribution of oral language knowledge when children are reading texts with repetitive language structures. As discussed earlier if a particular sentence structure is repeated many times in a text, the class of substituted words will match the structure because the child has remembered that structure, and not necessarily because they have been actively problem-solving to find a solution.

This has important implications for how children learn to work across many different sources of information. With repetitive text the problem is solved once the child has read the structure for the first time. Because the language pattern is held in the memory the child does not need to search for any further information to confirm their prediction and productive opportunities for error detection and correction are limited. A fuller discussion of repetitive text can be found in the review of literature. Both the Early and the Middle level expository texts used in this study included repeated language structures so the results for these text levels have to be interpreted cautiously.

Visual information was used in a higher proportion of substitutions for both text types at every level of difficulty in excess of structure or meaning. The standard protocol for analysing the use of visual information in Running Records does not quantify the amount of visual information used – some part of the word, or simply the initial letter, qualifies as using visual information. Because this approach was followed in the analysis for this study it was not possible to capture any differences there might have been in the degree to which the visual information was used across difficulty levels or on texts of different types.

Evidence from records of narrative text reading by proficient readers in the second and third years of school (Kaye, 2002; Ng, 1979; Williams 1968) indicates that typically readers use all sources of information together for every attempt or word substitution and that the meaning of the text is maintained in the substitutions. This has been interpreted as evidence of a marked change in the efficiency of the children's processing systems over time (Clay, 2001). So there was a particular interest to find out if the children in this study were combining different sources of information when making substitutions.

The data analysis showed that children were beginning to combine sources of information from the earliest text level and on both types of text. This finding confirmed earlier studies on narrative texts (Clay, 1966; Nalder, 1984). But the data did not show a

consistent pattern of an increasing use of combined information, as children read more challenging text. There was some indication that children became more competent at using combined sources of information between the Early and Middle levels of difficulty on narrative text, but this trend did not continue to the higher-level text. For both text types, the children used all sources of information together more often at the Middle level text than they did on Early or the High level text.

On the High level text there was an increase in the use of structure and visual information together or the use of visual information on its own in substitutions for both text types. This suggests that information from the meaning and/or structure was less accessible to the children at this level and raises questions about the complexity of the language and meaning in these texts in relation to the level assigned by the publisher. (This issue is discussed later in the chapter.) It is also possible that the marked lack of attention to fluency, phrasing, expression and intonation may have limited the children's ability to use meaning and structure effectively causing the visual information to be emphasised.

A measure of effective processing in early reading is how oral reading sounds (Clay, 2005b; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). It had been anticipated that this would be a relevant area for investigation. Clay (2001) argues that attending to aspects of prosody allows the reader to use the structural properties of sentences in text to access meaning more effectively which thereby aids understanding. Attempts to capture this important aspect of text reading were hampered because more than half the children pointed to individual words in the text while reading both types of texts. Pointing to words in the text is recognised as an extremely important reading behaviour early on, while the children are developing understandings about the match of language and print (Clay, 2001; Ehri & Sweet, 1991). But finger pointing also has the effect of slowing up the reading; hindering the reader's ability to read words fluently in meaningful phrases which in turn impacts on their ability to monitor understanding and to anticipate upcoming language (Clay, 2005b). Because this behaviour was so common analysis of prosodic features seemed unlikely to produce differences between text types and was therefore not undertaken.

At the same time, the extent of fingerpoint-reading observed at all levels of text reading and on both text types is an important finding in this study. It raises questions about some of the teachers' beliefs about the role of finger pointing and the relative lack of importance they were placing on developing the use of phrasing and other aspects of

prosody during Guided Reading lessons (Clay, 2005b). It was also noted that the children read slowly when reading both text types, whether they were pointing to the text or not. As discussed previously, the speeding up of reading processing, based on faster pick up of information, checking and decision-making, is an important facilitator of reading development (Clay, 2001). It may be the case, as one teacher noted in her interview, that information text, with different language structures and no direct speech, does not lend itself to the development of this aspect of reading. It was not possible to address this issue in the current study because quantifiable data on speed and phrasing was not collected, but this view would be consistent with the hypothesis that children generally need greater support to read expository text successfully.

Two important aspects of reading behaviour captured through Running Records of reading continuous text indicated differences in the processing abilities of children according to the type of text being read.

One indicator of difference was with the interruptions to oral reading that occurred when a word was not attempted by a child and the reading stopped. Previous studies of reading behaviour children show that young children stop while reading and are unable to proceed when their current problem-solving abilities are not adequate to meet the challenges in the text (Biemiller, 1970; Clay, 1966). However when competent readers in their second and third years of school read material that contains unusual or unfamiliar words and concepts this does not happen; they are able to generate a response that, even when it is not correct, makes use of the different sources of information available (Kaye, 2002).

In the small number of studies of expository text it was found that young children were more likely to need to be told words in order to be able to proceed when reading expository text than when they are reading narrative text (Duncan & Thornton-Reid 2010; Scott, 2000). This study confirmed this finding. On expository text the children were not able to attempt to solve their problems through actively searching their knowledge bases using the meaning of the text, the sentence structure or the visual information.

The second and most important finding relates to the concept of self-correction. A higher level of self-correction was found on narrative text compared to expository text when the text accuracy was controlled at an instructional level or above (90% or above). As discussed in Chapter One in general learning theory self-correction is recognised as an

important indicator of the development of self-regulation (Wood, 2003). In literacy research and theory self-correction generally is recognised as a reliable marker of progress when children are learning to read (Clay, 1966, 2001; Ng, 1979; although see Thompson, 1981 and Share, 1990 for an alternative view). When a self-correction occurs several different sources of information are being used together to reach a successful conclusion. This can be seen as a form of self-instruction, which has high tutorial value for the learner (Clay, 2001). Self-correction “confirms the strategies being used as well as the decisions made” (Clay, 2001, p.204).

There are two possible theoretical interpretations for the findings of this study related to self-correction.

The first interpretation is directly connected to our current descriptions of Literacy Processing theory and particularly the concept of working systems as discussed in Chapter One. When reading narrative text it appears easier to assemble the required type of working system because there are more sources of information that can be drawn on as the developing young reader reads. Through their greater familiarity with narrative discourse and semantic content the young reader is more easily able to make attempts and subsequently detect a mismatch during the period when they are still in the process of building up orthographical and phonological knowledge. High ratios of errors corrected can then afford many opportunities for the young reader to independently strengthen their processing system.

Instructional implications that arise from this interpretation would be for teachers to use narrative text in Guided Reading when children are building a literacy processing system. Expository text containing new knowledge that takes time to integrate into children’s existing knowledge bases, and therefore is not immediately available to be drawn on, could be used in situations where more semantic support can be provided. This might be, for example, by embedding expository text in content area studies where the focus on a particular topic provides “rich semantic sources of information” (Clay, 2001, p. 111). Children could then begin to build working systems for expository text using all sources of information. Teachers in this study indicated that this was often their current practice when using expository text. There is support from this study for continuing this approach.

The second theoretical interpretation might be to question the extent to which our current descriptions of literacy processing, based as they are on research on children reading narrative text, have explanatory power for describing the reading of expository text during literacy acquisition. The configurations of working systems necessary for reading expository text successfully may need to be conceived somewhat differently from those needed to read narrative text. Until there is research that traces beginning reading using expository text we do not know if there may be different developmental pathways children could take when learning to read on different text types.

### **Interrelationships: Text, teaching and processing**

As anticipated the study uncovered complex interrelationships between the teachers' use of text type during Guided Reading and behavioural evidence about how the children were processing information, centred around factors influenced by the features of the different text types. In this section the issue of text difficulty in relation to children's processing will be discussed before consideration is given to how these interrelationships might influence the way we teach using expository text or, potentially, alter the way we conceive of literacy processing in the acquisition phase itself according to the text being read.

A major factor that underpinned both teachers' practice and child processing in this study was the difficulty level of the text. Clay (2001) contends that "the difficulty level relative to the child's current skill will create or constrain the opportunities for the child to use what he or she knows in the service of independently learning more through reading, making errors and self-correcting." (Clay, 2001, p.207). The levelling of text into a gradient of difficulty, important for the gradual expansion of a flexible processing system, is complex and inherently fallible because it cannot take account of each individual's current knowledge base (Clay, 1991). For this study publishers' estimations of appropriate levels were used for both the narrative and expository text and the children's current ability was assessed on the basis of their reading of classroom narrative text. This matching proved appropriate for most children for the narrative text but not for the expository text which despite extended introductions and discussion was in many cases too difficult for the children. Duncan and Thornton-Reid (2010) also found that many publisher determined levels represented texts as easier than they were for the children to read successfully.

The accuracy rate at which children read their instructional text has important consequences for the effectiveness of teacher instruction. From a Vygotskian perspective the teaching that occurred during the Guided Reading lessons on the narrative text can be argued to have been within the majority of the children's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), at the cutting edge of their learning, and therefore able to affect development. For those children who read the expository text at a hard level (below 90% accuracy) the teaching that occurred would have been outside their zone of proximal development and therefore unable to affect their development as readers.

This has several instructional implications. If teachers want to use both narrative and expository texts they will need to collaboratively trial the texts they use with the children in the schools where they teach (Clay, 1991) rather than using publishers' recommendations in order to avoid the mismatches and potential limiting consequences for learning that were found in this study.

This study found that with teacher assistance in a Guided Reading context most children were able to read narrative text at an appropriate level for instruction with many opportunities to develop self-regulation. On the other hand even those children who read the expository text at an instructional level did not appear to have as many opportunities for independent problem-solving. For the group of children who found the expository text hard to read opportunities for developing effective processing would have been extremely limited.

Given that the goal of Guided Reading is to foster the development of independent problem-solving abilities it would appear that the use of expository text at these early levels of reading development may not be as supportive of that goal as narrative text. As discussed previously the findings of this study support the position that narrative text are more useful for promoting the early development of active searching and checking behaviours.

However the practice of Guided Reading in classroom instruction may itself need examining. As has been noted the model of Guided Reading currently in use has been developed for narrative text. If, as the teachers in this study intuitively provided, additional support is necessary to read expository text successfully in this setting then two positions could be considered.

The first position would be to recommend that Guided Reading (when delivered as designed), in the context of classroom literacy instruction, be confined to narrative text, until the children's literacy processing systems are able to draw more heavily on visual/phonological information. This would allow both the text and the teacher to support the young reader to learn how to problem-solve and make decisions based on their existing knowledge. Self-correction would then continue to provide an important observable signal of the development of increasingly effective working systems being put together.

An alternative position might be to consider the need to reconfigure the practice of Guided Reading differently when using expository text with beginning readers. Research would be needed to ascertain the most effective reconfiguration. It may be that additional support of some kind needs to be built into the framework of the lesson to enable the child to learn how to problem-solve using this different type of text. However, it must be noted that in this study even when the teachers provided extensive support before and during the reading, records of processing revealed that more children could construct simple working systems for narrative text than for expository text.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions***

This was a small-scale study focussing on the practices of five experienced teachers. While it raised many relevant issues related to teacher practice the generalisability of the findings is limited. Also, although a relatively large number of young children in total were involved in the study, the number of children involved at each of the three points of reading development sampled was small. This places limits on the generalisability of the data in describing inter-individual change. In order to investigate intra-individual change in processing when different text types are read longitudinal research would need to be undertaken across a larger population.

The focus on teacher beliefs and understandings, on their Guided Reading practices, and on child processing, provided a broad perspective on instruction and learning. However, as noted earlier, it also meant that some finer details of analysis, particularly in relation to child processing, were not able to be undertaken.

The literature review for this study identified a lack of research concerning the use of expository text for instructional purposes in the early stages of learning to read. The study

has raised several important questions that need to be considered and identified a number of possible directions for future research. Such research is urgently needed in order to provide a sound base for future professional development resources for teachers. While there exists a research base for teacher practice and child processing with narrative text there is no comparable research on which to base guidance for teaching practice using expository text. This study has uncovered a number of areas concerning the use of expository text that need to be explored including the nature of Guided Reading and teacher interactions, children's literacy processing, text characteristics and establishing gradients of text difficulty. Until we have access to more research evidence in these areas a cautious approach is recommended for the use of expository text in Guided Reading with children who are in the process of literacy acquisition and particularly for those children finding literacy learning challenging.

This study has contributed to a meagre knowledge base in this area but raised many more issues still to be addressed.

Text Characteristics: Early Level Text

Type	Narrative	Expository
Title	Brave Father Mouse	Sleeping Animals
Series	PM Readers	alphakids
Publisher	Nelson Price Milburn	Horwitz Martin Education
Level	Yellow (6-8)	Yellow (6-8)
Word count	91	193
Pages	16	16
Content	A story about a father mouse eluding capture from a family cat to obtain food for his family. He succeeds.	Description of how different animals sleep.
Illustrations	Original art work, little detail.	Photographs
Sentence structures	Simple, varied sentence structures.	Simple structures, one structure repeated 22 times “It can sleep...” One structure repeated 11 times i.e. “This is a ...” Complex structures on final page.
Vocabulary	A variety of common words repeated, some less common words e.g. brave, hungry	Repetition of common words in repeated structures, many unusual words e.g. anywhere, ground, hanging, curled, different.
Text Features		Labelled photographs on final page.

Text Characteristics: Middle Level Text

Type	Narrative	Expository
Title	The Toytown Racing Car	Spikes, Scales and Armour
Series	PM Plus	Sails
Publisher	Thomson Learning	Heinemann Education
Level	Blue (9-11)	Blue (9-11)
Word count	188	172
Pages	16	15
Content	An anthropomorphic story about a racing car that after splashing the Toytown tow truck gets stuck in mud. After apologising and promising not to do it again the tow truck rescues him.	Description of how different animals protect themselves using spikes, or scales or armour.
Illustration	Original art work, little detail.	Photographs, 1-3 per page
Sentence structures	Simple varied structures. Use of direct speech.	Many repeated structures e.g. “Some animals have (e.g.scales)” (3), “The (e.g. spikes) help/s to keep them safe” (3), “This (e.g.animal) has (e.g.spikes)” (6).
Vocabulary	Repeated common words, some less common words, e.g. sorry, tow truck, puddle, again	Some common words in repeated structures, Many less common words e.g. tortoise, armadillo, pangolin, smooth, stick, scales.
Text Features		Index

Text Characteristics: Late Level Text

Type	Narrative	Expository
Title	The King's Birthday	Build, Build, Build
Series	Ready to Read	Sunshine
Publisher	Learning Media	Heinemann Education
Level	Turquoise (17-18)	Turquoise (17-18)
Pages	12	24
Word count	293	356 (half book)
Content	Story about a medieval king who is tricked by his household staff into thinking they had forgotten his birthday. The story culminates in a surprise banquet at which the queen jumps out of a cake.	Description of types, location and construction of buildings. Locates buildings in a historical context, then unconnected topics with headings for all pages, 2-6 sentences under each heading. Captions for photographs on most pages.
Illustrations	Original art work, some detail.	Photographs, 1-3 per page. One double page with original art work.
Sentence structures	Straightforward varied structures, some complex phrases e.g. "as their needles", "To his surprise" Direct speech used.	Varied structures. Unusual phrases e.g. "lends a hand", "High above the buildings.." "If you.."
Vocabulary	Many common words. Some unusual words e.g. Royal Gardeners, courtyard, banner, banquet, throne, ordered.	Many common words, and many unusual words in the text e.g. timber, thousands, temporary, unusual, material, different, Aborigines. Captions also contain unusual vocabulary e.g. quarry, cottage, thatch.
Text Features		Contents page, headings, captions, index.

## **Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Study Teachers**

### **Questions**

How many years teaching experience do you have (after training)?

How many in the junior school (years 1-3)?

Did this involve teaching reading?

How did you gain your knowledge of teaching reading?

How or where do you think you gained most knowledge about teaching reading?

What do you understand by the term Guided Reading?

How did you come to this understanding?

Where did you first learn about it?

Do you have a book you refer to?

If I wanted to learn about Guided Reading what would you recommend?

How do you organise for reading instruction?

How do you form groups? What makes a group?

How often do you take Guided Reading with each group?

How do you know when its time to increase the challenge of texts in Guided Reading?

What evidence do you use?

Does the school have special guidance on this?

What changes do you expect to see over time in children's reading?

What changes would you expect to see in reading between the three levels of book in this study, yellow, blue, light blue?

Would you expect this to be different for fiction or nonfiction text?

When do you allow or discourage the use of the finger to point to text? Why?

What do you understand by the terms fiction and nonfiction text?

Do you use these terms with the children rather than such terms as narrative or expository text? If so, why?

How do you talk to the children about the differences between text types?

How often do you use nonfiction text in Guided Reading?

Would this differ between the three levels in the study, yellow, blue and turquoise?

What percentage would there be between fiction and nonfiction at each level?

How often and how would you use nonfiction text in other instructional settings?

Would this include little readers?

What proportion would be little readers?

What are you thinking of when you are teaching Guided Reading?

Is it the same with fiction and nonfiction?

Was it the same for the different levels of books in the study?

Do you do anything differently in different phases of Guided Reading i.e. teacher introduction, interactive reading and post reading for nonfiction and fiction text?

In 2-3 statements can you tell me what do you think is important about literacy learning in year 1-3?

Do you have a special position on the importance of nonfiction

in years 1-3?

in Guided Reading?

Do you have any comments for me on the books used in this study? e.g. Level, content etc.

Do you have any other general comments?

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