

Running head: PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC

**Marino Institute of Education**

PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING  
PRACTICE IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT.

**Thesis by**

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master  
in Education Studies in Early Childhood Education**

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### **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original work. This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. Wherever the contributions of others are involved, every effort is been made to indicate this clearly. The work was done under the guidance of Dr. Siobhán Cahillane-McGovern at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the library may lend a copy this dissertation upon request.

**Signature:** Christine Mullen

**Date:** 9/6 /2017

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### **Dedication**

To my three beautiful children Stephen, Molly and Megan you are the next generation.

Always be true to yourself and follow your dreams. As you grow know that a loving family and a good education are worth their weight in gold.

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### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my gratitude to all the parents and children who contributed to this research project. Your participation has made a significant difference to literacy practice in our school. Thank you to the principal, staff and school management who believed in the research and offered encouragement, support and advice at every turn in the road.

I wish to thank most sincerely my supervisor Siobhán Cahillane-McGovern for believing in my passion for this research project. It was a privilege to journey with you Siobhán. I am most grateful for your wonderful support and strong guidance over the last year.

Growing up I often heard the old adage “It takes a village to raise a child.” I was reared in a unique and wonderful village with a family and home full of love and possibilities. I will always be thankful to my supportive husband Fearghal, my parents, Stephen and Evelyn and my siblings Michelle, Yvonne, Stephen, David and Seán for sharing our doubts and dreams in equal measures.

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**List of Abbreviations**

HLE	Home Literacy Environment
SES	Socio Economic Status
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
NCCA	National Curriculum Council Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NELP	National Early Literacy Panel
PEER	Prompt Evaluate Expand Repeat
CROWD	Completion prompts, Recall prompts, Open-ended questions, Wh questions Distancing prompts
NEPS	National Educational Psychology Service
CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education

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## Abstract

Literacy achievement from birth is supported by many factors. Literature indicates that one's culture, socioeconomic status, (SES) and home literacy environment (HLE) are factors that affect language and literacy skills in the early years. The study reported in this thesis examined how parent and child reading engagements and the home literacy experience impact upon emergent literacy and parental expectations for that literacy. The research was undertaken in a rural DEIS school (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) involving parents and pupils from the Senior Infant class.

Parents in a sample group received dialogic reading workshops and participated in daily dialogic reading with their children. Parents in a control group did not receive the training or participate in the daily readings. All participating pupils were tested in relation to their emergent literacy skills, before and after the reading intervention. The results supported the training and practice of dialogic reading among parents and practitioners in the early years. Furthermore the results of the study suggested that the dialogic reading approach was effective in developing children's emergent literacy skills. Finally the results strongly concluded that dialogic reading was effective in changing the perceptions, experiences and engagement of the parents and children in the sample group with regard to literacy in the home and school environments.

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### Chapter 1

The current curriculum for primary schools was devised 20 years ago. Irish society, its culture and people has changed a lot since then. We have lived through the ebb and flow of an economic boom. Irish society has experienced somewhat of a social revolution borne out of this economic boom. Two decades on, Irish homes and classrooms now embrace different languages, cultures and religions. Parents, teachers and policy makers now hold different perspectives regarding Irish primary education than they did twenty years ago. Curriculum reviews, national and international research are calling on those with responsibility for school curricula to evolve with the times and reflect up to date developments in teaching and learning.

The Primary Curriculum (1999) guidelines have been updated to reflect societal changes such as promoting our children's mental wellbeing and embracing a holistic view of the learner beyond the curriculum and classroom. Preschool and Primary educators are challenged by the constant changing nature of early childhood education. Placing the child at the epicentre of their learning within a cultural framework has revolutionised our thinking around early childhood development. This conceptual framework views the child and *their* learning, in the context of *their* world and provides parents, educators and researchers with deeper insight and understanding. Leading on from this one can derive that the immediate family plays a critical role in the early years. Hill and Tyson (2009) and the Department of Education (DES, 2011) emphasise the advantageous connections between parental support and literacy accomplishment. Nutbrown, Hannon and Morgan (2005) support such literature offering that "for most parents, it is intrinsically motivating to be involved in their children's development- becoming a parent in the first place- and literacy is part of that development." (p.23). Parents and the home environment are the child's first educators. This has considerable implications for the development of emergent literacy skills in the early years.

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It acknowledges the home literacy environment and the parent's role in the literacy process as central factors relating to the acquisition of literacy skills in the early years.

### **Background and Context**

The evolution of pedagogical practice in the early childhood sector has undergone fundamental policy and institutional change in recent times. A consultative approach to educational policy making by current and previous governments has led to an augmented interest in early childhood educational issues in Ireland today. Educators are now encouraged to view their teaching and the child's learning from a whole child perspective. Traditionally, early year's education was based on how children learn from a developmental perspective. This is clearly no longer deemed a comprehensive lens to examine children's learning today. The National Children's Strategy (2000) outlines a 'whole child' perspective approach and identifies nine dimensions of childhood. They include; Physical and Mental Wellbeing, Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing, Intellectual Capacity, Spiritual and Moral Wellbeing, Identity, Family Relationships, Social and Peer Relationships and Social Presentation. The 'whole child' "identifies the capacity of children to shape their own lives as they grow, while also being shaped and supported by the world around them." (DCYA, 2000, p.25)

In 2002 the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE, 2002) was established. Its primary objective was to coordinate early childhood care and education in Ireland. This was followed by the National Curriculum Council Association Consultative Document towards a Framework for Early Learning (2004) its main aim was "to provide all children with appropriately enriching, challenging and enjoyable learning opportunities from birth to six years." (NCCA, 2004, p.14) In the same year the publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education (2004) observed that the teaching approaches in our primary

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schools ‘appeared to be directive and formal’ (OECD, 2004, p.58). A direct result of this review led to the recommendation of a quality framework common to all early year educators dovetailing aptly with the NCCA’s Consultative Document on Framework Development.

In 2006 Ireland’s first quality framework entitled *Síolta: The National Childhood Framework for Early Childhood Education* (CEDCE, 2006) was produced. Another landmark document was the creation of *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009). *Aistear* presents children’s learning through interrelated themes rather than traditional methods of transmitting knowledge to students. Moloney (2010) proposes that *Aistear* advocates a more holistic approach for pedagogy including active participation and learning based on reciprocal relationships with understanding adults. Educators in mainstream infant classes and early year settings now incorporate *Síolta* and *Aistear* in their profession to facilitate the assurance of quality standards and service provision.

“The purpose of *Síolta* is to enhance all elements of early years practice while *Aistear* focuses exclusively on children’s learning and development” (NCCA, 2009, p.15)

The identity of the sector has been greatly shaped by cohesive policy planning, practice and research in recent times. The significance of the OECD Thematic Review (2004) cannot be overlooked as it highlighted the need for combined and cohesive planning from both Primary and Preschools sectors. The announcement of a second free preschool year for children aged between 3- 5 years in Budget (2017) demonstrates how stakeholders in education are committed to and recognise the importance of investment in early childhood education in Ireland today. Education policy places significant importance on international research and on current trends of best practice and so greater attention is now being given to the early years learning experience. Amidst this backdrop of nationwide interest and

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investment the researcher here in this study is presented with an opportunity to examine the impact a dialogic story reading project has on children's emergent literacy skills in the home.

The rationale for undertaking this research is both timely and well situated within the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (2011-2020). Furthermore, this research project embraces the new Oral Language Primary Curriculum (2016) and revised English curriculum explicitly and systematically designed to teach and assess key literacy skills and strategies in the learning environment. The new Primary Language Curriculum (2016) developed to reflect the 200 plus languages now spoken in Irish society. Educators have also voiced their concerns regarding the decline in oral language skills in primary school children today. This research may assist in establishing and developing emergent literacy skills at an earlier stage in Early Childhood Care and Education, (ECCE) settings, in infants classes and in the home.

On a local level this reading project reflects whole school planning regarding literacy targets and improvements within the researcher's school. It also combines international research and best practice within the national curriculum and presents it in a rural primary school setting. The school is banded as a rural DEIS school and opportunities to enhance the quality of the pupils learning is always welcome. Furthermore it offers parents an opportunity to become partners in the early years literacy process in our school and affords the researcher and her school an opportunity to embrace and furnish the parent body with an awareness of the importance of developing emergent literacy skills in the home setting.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The following section provides a brief overview of the main chapters contained within this dissertation. Chapter One examines the background and context for this research in line with advancements in educational policy and practice as well as the current needs and



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concerns in the area. Furthermore, Chapter One introduces the research topic and outlines the research objectives.

The study endeavours to investigate two main questions during a six week intervention:

1. How does a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment with parents as tutors effect the following emergent literacy skills?
  - Concepts of Print
  - Fluency
  - Letter Identification
  - Sight Words
2. What are the factors that support and challenge the parents experience in the implementation of a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment?

In Chapter Two the literature review examines the importance of literacy in early childhood. This includes emergent literacy, family literacy, literacy as a social practice and the significant role parents and the home environment play in literacy achievement. It also considers the challenges parents experience in the early years and how educators can support them through this process. Finally, the theoretical underpinnings and relevant, literature surrounding dialogic reading, its benefits and limitations are perused with the purpose of understanding the essence of this concept.

Chapter Three examines the research methodology undertaken by the researcher. This provides information on the research methodologies employed such that another researcher could replicate the study at another point in time. This chapter commences by outlining the primary research objectives. An outline of the research methodologies available to the researcher and the rationale for deciding on the suitability of the chosen

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methodologies is presented based on the objectives of the research. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the chosen methodologies, and details the process involved in collecting the primary data. Finally the limitations of this research study are outlined.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the intervention project and considers what the results might signify. Chapter Five discusses and connects the findings to the main research questions. Chapter Six is the final chapter of this dissertation and presents the conclusions drawn from the findings of the intervention. Lastly implications of this research and recommendations for possible areas of further research are suggested.

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## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The trajectory of language and literacy development from birth to formal reading is underpinned by many factors. This chapter examines literacy in the early years and the factors which impact upon literacy progress. In order to situate the theoretical underpinnings of the research in a contemporary perspective, an examination of early childhood theory will be undertaken. The dialogic reading technique its benefits and limitations as well as its relevance to this research study will be reviewed.

#### Literacy in the Early Years

“Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media.” (NCCA, 1999, p. 8). Surprisingly, even a definition as broad as this, does not fully encapsulate the complexity of issues that need to be addressed in relation to literacy achievement from a young age. The researcher embraces research that supports literacy intervention at the earliest possible opportunity (Bredenkamp, 2009; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Justice & Pullen, 2003) Such intervention therefore must be inclusive of the home environment as “literacy now begins at birth” (Fields, 1989, p.15). Acknowledging literacy origins in infancy Paris (2005) however, attributes the acquisition and development of literacy skills on a continuum which span over a life time of literacy learning. Thus, it is imperative to consider how parents can help improve their children’s language and literacy skills with the results being identifiable to the particular skill. Therefore, an analysis of home literacy practices, parental opinion and expectation are central to this research.

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Although its roots are laid down in the early years it is imperative that educators and parents are mindful of the fact that reading is a complex process that develops over a lifetime and is not limited to a set time and place. Scott Paris (2005) devised a Constrained Skills Theory which brought structure and organisation to the many emergent literacy skills necessary for reading success. He proposed that literacy skills are divided into two groups constrained and unconstrained. Constrained skills such as alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, and fluency are constrained, unlike vocabulary and comprehension which are unconstrained skills that constantly evolve over the lifespan of a reader. His research provided a framework for teachers to explore the amount of instruction time given to the development of such skills. It also analysed how each set of skills, constrained or unconstrained contribute to early and later reading acquisition.

Paris (2005) believed some reading skills, such as learning the alphabet, are mastered completely, whereas other skills, such as vocabulary, are not. Whether the learning occurs in childhood or adulthood does not change the fact that the degree of learning is complete. “What is most important is that there are some skills that are more constrained than others; they are learned quickly, mastered entirely, and should not be conceptualized as enduring individual difference variables” (p. 4)

Although he promoted intervention by parents and educators he advised that such intervention be on an individual level rather than a group setting. He advocated that constrained skills must be mastered early and consistently by teachers and parents. Paris (2005) claimed that excessive testing and instruction of constrained skills may be at the expense of unconstrained skills. He insisted that educators to be cautious when allocating instruction time for constrained skills teaching. A second risk stressed by Paris (2005) is that policymakers, parents and researchers may associate success of constrained skills with

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reading aptitude. This could create a ‘halo’ effect on reading assessment that does not adequately assess children's emerging use and control of literacy. (p. 201)

Stahl (2011) supported this point of view “constrained skills need to be taught to levels of automaticity because they are necessary but insufficient for the development of more sophisticated complex reading abilities.” Furthermore, she believed that “unconstrained skills are difficult to quantify” (p. 602) which makes teaching and assessing unconstrained skills a more difficult task for educators. The NCCA (2012) encourages educators to give equal attention to the teaching of both sets of skills to ensure that “from the outset so children’s language skills and higher-order thinking skills are enhanced in parallel with the basic skills.” (p. 226) This research has classroom implications for planning and prioritising what skills teachers should focus on and why. In view of these national and international recommendations educators must employ a balanced approach concerning the teaching and testing of constrained and unconstrained skills.

The NCCA (2012) further recommends that text-based discussions, shared reading, book reading, questioning the author, teacher modelling and dialogic reading as some of the most effective strategies to teach reading comprehension. In view of the fact that all these strategies draw on and build emergent literacy skills while simultaneously developing reading comprehension, strengthens the argument that incorporating several literacy skills in one lesson is more effective than teaching them in isolation. (p. 232)

The publication of the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP, 2008) highlighted various abilities evident in preschool years that form the basis for later reading achievement. The aim of NELP (2008) was to compile research which influenced educational policy and practice regarding early literacy development. NELP (2008) found that measures of reading readiness and concepts of print delivered in kindergarten or earlier were the *strongest* predictors of reading comprehension. It credited alphabet knowledge, oral language, and

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phonological awareness as having had a *moderate to strong* impact upon reading comprehension. Furthermore, NELP (2008) proposed that more complex aspects of oral language, complex measures of vocabulary and listening comprehension were clearly relative to developing reading comprehension. However, simpler measures of oral language did not deliver a strong correlation with later reading comprehension which strengthens the argument for high quality oral language programmes rich in meaning and quality in our classrooms.

Dickinson, Golinkoff and HirshPasek,(2010) criticised NELP (2008) on the developmental time frame (0-6years), claiming it to be too narrow a focus considering reading ability and skills develop over a life time. Furthermore they disagreed with the strong emphasis NELP (2008) placed on the direct effect language skills had on later reading but failed to rank language as the underlying factor that indirectly influenced reading beyond the scope of testing. They viewed the omission of “the pervasive effects of language” as a weakness in the research. (p.305) Fearing, that the results may be misinterpreted by educators and policy makers they proposed “that oral language and background knowledge should be viewed as Tier 1 skills that must not be neglected if we want to build strong readers.” (p.308) This critique brings new perspective and takes into account the central role background knowledge and language contributes to reading achievement. They are the bedrock of early literacy development and are critical components to future literacy success. Literature now advocates that learning and development is unique to each child’s immediate environment (Jim Anderson, Lenters, & McTavish, 2008; Auerbach, 1989; Brown, 2014; Carey, 1985; Hedges & Cullen, 2012; John-Steiner & Mahn, 2011; Longwell-Grice & McIntyre, 2006; Mooney, 2013; Moore, 1996). Literacy learners in homes and classrooms vary in the amount of oral language skills and literacy engagements they encounter prior to

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formal instruction. Therefore, educators must first assess a pupil's existing literacy knowledge and experience when they come to participate in formal learning.

The literacy experience of the early years has been recognised as a strong indicator of later reading success (Brown, 2014; Lomax & McGee, 1987; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Graver J. Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Considering the developing body of research acknowledging that children enter primary school with varying academic abilities, the role of parents and the learner's cultural experiences prior to formal schooling, are now of great importance to educators (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Hart & Risley, 1992; Kucuker, 2016).

Research indicates how some children may begin school with as little as 25 hours of read aloud experiences, while others may have as much as 1,500 hours. (Adams, 1990) Such research contributes to our understanding of the widening achievement gap in society today. The researcher contemplates such findings in an Irish context and considers the early years from birth to six as an appropriate platform to support parents and pupils in establishing emergent literacy skills at home and consequently cultivating the quality of the early literacy experience.

### **Emergent Literacy**

Makin, Hayden and Jones Diaz (2000) focused on multiple literacy practices of home, community and early childhood settings. Furthermore, they emphasised literacy learning "as a social practice" (Makin et al., 2000, p.368). Justice and Pullan (2003) supported such findings and proposed that "emergent literacy is best represented as a sociocultural process whereby emergent literacy development is highly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which children are reared."(Justice & Pullan, 2003, p.99) Collectively, Oral Language, Narrative Pretending, Concepts of print, Knowledge of

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graphemes, Syntactic Awareness, Emergent Writing, Phonological memory Print motivation and Phonological Awareness form the basis of emergent literacy.

The term “emergent literacy is best conceptualised as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child, rather than as an all-or-none phenomenon that begins when children start school” (Lonigan, 1998, p.848) This research calls for educators and parents to embrace an inclusive focus on developing emergent literacy skills in the child’s immediate learning environment. Snyder (2002) supported such discussions stating that “new literacy practices refer to the ability to read and write all texts, signs, artefacts, nuances, and images to which we come to understand and engage with society in the broadest sense” (p.369) The body of literature presented thus far supports the growth and development of new reading practices beyond the classroom environment. Hall (2003) supports such views proposing that “literacy is a way of the world” (p. 12)

The OECD (1999) define reading literacy as “understanding, using and reflecting on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society (p.12) For the scope of this study, this definition of literacy provided by the OECD (1999) will be drawn upon. This description and interpretation of literacy resonates with the researcher and reflects the wider aims and stakeholders involved in this literacy intervention. Furthermore, it invites educators, be they parents or teachers to “develop one’s knowledge and potential” (p.12) and to be cognisant of the individual learner and their literacy journey. The various definitions provided thus far exemplify the impact of one’s culture, socio economic status and life experience upon one’s literacy experience.

In recent years a substantial amount of research has been undertaken to examine particular reading methods and strategies that support literacy development in the early years. (D. K. Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Miller, 2010; National



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Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Paris, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002).

The notion of co-constructing meaning through reading engagements between adults and children has led to significant analysis surrounding interactive literacy discussions at home and in school. Wells (1985) reported that meaning was more collaboratively discussed when teachers acted as participants during read aloud engagements. Sipe (2008) agreed “that when students are encouraged to respond freely, meaning making profits from the insights of young children” (Sipe, 2008, as cited in Hoffman, 2011, p.185).

Literature informing best practice and development in shared reading and dialogic reading has been topical in recent times. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that reading aloud can increase many skills in the early years. Stahl (2003) associated an increase in word recognition as a result of read aloud engagements. Shiel, McGough & Archer (2002) observed a greater ability to engage in decontextualized language.

Decontextualized discourse is esteemed by many “because it promotes higher order thinking, such as reminiscing and planning, and requires children to use their imagination and memory to think about abstract ideas that are outside the immediate environment” (Curenton, 2008, p. 162). Morrow and Gambrell (2002) noted an improvement in children’s listening skills, while Elster (1994) observed that reading aloud supported emergent skills, with pupils exhibiting reading behaviours that revealed evidence of previous literacy engagements in the early years. Such findings calls for a deeper consideration of the importance of emergent literacy skill development in the early years. Heretofore, early childhood theory and perspective examined the child’s learning and development in isolation. Literature now advocates that learning and development is unique to each child’s immediate environment and supports examining that child’s learning in the context of *their* environment.” (Steiner & Mahn, 2011, Brown, 2014)

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Senechal & LeFevre (2002) indicate that linguistic precursors to reading such as vocabulary and phonological awareness are linked to later reading performance and that early experiences in the home which support the development of such skills should not be overlooked. Alexander & Entwisle (1988) agree citing “one way to improve children’s literacy development is to extend and improve their literacy experiences at home.”(p.492) Wells (1985) along with subsequent research undertaken by Snow et al., (1994) acclaimed children’s vocabulary and print skills before school entry as particularly worthy indicators of later reading ability.

Research undertaken by Adams (1990) and previously discussed in this chapter emphasised the difference in the number of shared reading engagements in preschool children. Anderson-Yockel and Hayes (1994) substantiated such conclusions, whilst acknowledging parental awareness surrounding the importance of read aloud experiences in the early years. Their study found that many children still begin formal schooling with considerably inadequate familiarity with books. Such research informs educators and those responsible for educational policy that more needs to be done to inform parents of the importance of read aloud experiences in the early years. A consideration of the challenges experienced by parents and practitioners regarding literacy in the early years will be presented.

### **Environmental Factors Affecting Early Years’ Literacy**

A considerable amount of research undertaken thus far indicates that literacy begins at birth and socio economic factors impact upon later literacy success (Brown, 2014; Halden, Clark, & Lewis, 2011; Hart & Risley, 1992; Snow et al., 1998). Therefore, one’s culture and home literacy environment (HLE) cannot be overlooked as factors that affect language and literacy skills in the early years. Niklas and Schneider (2013) examined environmental factors which impact upon children’s linguistic skills. They attributed “the reading

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behaviour of parents, the frequency a child is read to and the number of books in the home” as elements of the environment which “facilitates a child’s acquisition of linguistic skills.”(p.492) Liberman, Shankweiler, and Liberman (1989) cited the inability to process language phonologically as the most common barrier to early literacy skill development. Likewise their research highlighted other barriers for children at risk of reading failure. Mainly, fewer experiences and skill using the alphabet, limited access to books, parental expectations towards and a lack of awareness towards the benefits of reading. However Wasik and Slavin (1993) proposed that literacy difficulties are preventable for most children if the correct and effective form of early intervention literacy support is provided. The current Primary Curriculum (1999) acknowledged this also “much learning takes place through the interaction of language and experience. Language helps the child to clarify and interpret experience, to acquire new concepts, and to add depth to concepts already grasped.” (DES, 1999, p.15)

Oral language has been described by Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) as a complex system that relates sounds to meanings and is made up of three components: phonological awareness, semantics, and syntax. Snow et al., (1998) propose “spoken language and reading have much in common.” (p.108) Furthermore they suggested that three obstacles can potentially prevent children becoming skilled readers. Firstly, the difficulty in applying and using the alphabetic principle or the notion that written words systematically represent spoken words. Secondly, an inability to transfer spoken language to reading and to acquire new skills specifically required for reading. Finally the lack of initial motivation to read or failure to develop an appreciation or love of reading can throw children off course on the journey to becoming a skilled reader. Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) proposed that “motivations for reading” is an area that requires further analysis. Gambrell and Morrow (1996) posited that the social context is central to nurturing motivation during initial literacy

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engagements. Nurturing the motivation that exists in the homes of the participants of this study as well as creating a motivated reading environment in the home is an important aspect of my research. Baker, Serpell and Sonnenschein (1995) identified “children’s motivations for reading” as one of the four areas of early literacy development, others included “phonological awareness, orientation toward print and story comprehension.” (p.320) Shanahan and Lonigan (2010) encouraged teachers to “provide opportunities to talk, encourage analytical thinking, stay on a single topic and give information about the meanings of words” (p. 258) Cregan (1998) supported such recommendations and views oral language as “the primary means through which each individual child will be enabled to structure, to evaluate, to describe and to control his/her experience.”(p.7) Children, who have difficulties in literacy or indeed may have language impairment will greatly benefit from early intervention. It affords them the opportunity for early diagnosis and support.

Children’s oral literary response to story is also significant and provides adults with an understanding of how children engage with read aloud books. When one analyses the literacy and linguistic barriers that children face we may visualise the child in a formal school setting. However, the literature presented thus far identifies such obstacles from a much younger age reminding us that the literacy process truly does begin in infancy. Parents and early year practitioners who provide children with opportunities to develop and perfect such skills from a very young age, are better positioned to gauge children’s linguistic ability.

In a review article, *How Reading Books Fosters Language Development around the World*, David K. Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek (2012) proposed “language competencies that literacy builds upon begin to emerge as soon as children begin acquiring language; thus, the period between birth and age three also is important to later literacy.” (p.1) Alexander & Entwisle (1988) endorsed this research and view early literacy skills as the foundation of future literacy learning. Their research was central to the notion “that later

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language learning builds on prior acquisition; thus, earlier acquisition propels later learning.” (p.9) Such findings placed great significance on the role parents and the home environment play on the journey to subsequent reading success. The researcher recognises and supports such literature which values parents and the home environment as the child’s first educator. (J. Anderson et al., 1989; Britto, 2001; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001; Caspe, 2003.) However, Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) identified poverty as a well-established risk factor for poor emergent literacy and language skills. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges literature that recognises a strong correlation between a parent’s education level and a child’s vocabulary on entering school. (NCCHD, 2005) Such circumstances cannot be overlooked as major challenges for the learner. Education and income inequality continues to be an area of great debate for western countries. The ever-increasing gap between rich and poor societies dominates the political agenda of many western societies (OECD, 2015, p.26).

The report entitled *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* advocated “a focus on the early years, as well as on the needs of families with school children, is crucial in addressing socio-economic differences in education”(OECD, 2015, p.5). Further research presented by Magnuson and Waldfogal, (2008), propose that socio economic status gaps can be compounded by later school experiences, for example, advances made in preschool can be negatively impacted by later class size and reading instruction quality. (p. 156) The literature offered to this point advocate the home and school environments as being complementary rather than conflicting in regard to literacy development and advancement. Such literature identifies the need for more to be done to reach out to marginalised families in order to support the learner and literacy development beyond the school environment.

The researcher draws on one such study entitled *The 30 Million Word Gap* undertaken by Hart and Risley(1995) its purpose was to harness the power of positive

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parenting. It targeted marginalised families and aimed to support parents and children and in turn reduce the achievement gap in the early years. It provided parents and caregivers with guidelines and researched based tips on the influence of parent language, and how to read aloud to children. Additionally, it recommended various interventions which promoted emergent literacy skills, developed language, improved vocabulary and cultivated linguistic ability in the home.

One such reading technique appraised across class, culture, and capability is the Dialogic reading approach designed by G J Whitehurst et al., 1988. The dialogic reading style has been selected by the researcher as a suitable approach to support the examination of children's emergent literacy skills. The researcher is aware of other reading interventions such as Literacy Lift Off and Reading Recovery which is currently in operation in the researcher's school.

The literature presented thus far supports the implementation of dialogic reading across gender, class and socioeconomic status and therefore was an appropriate reading approach for my school. Bearing this in mind an exploration of dialogic reading theory will now be undertaken.

### **Dialogic Reading Practice and Implementation in the Early Years**

The dialogic reading approach can take many forms; one format designed by Grover J. Whitehurst (1988) has been researched nationally and internationally since the 1980s and will be adopted as a guideline for the intervention. It incorporates using the age old tradition of story book reading with a reciprocal style of dialogue. The technique focuses on children's language skills using a framework incorporating recall, open-ended and distancing prompts. The prompts used during dialogic reading encourage children to use more sophisticated vocabulary, speak in longer sentences, engage in reflective thinking and nurture narrative storytelling skills.

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According to De Temple and Snow (2003) dialogic reading is based on three principles: encouraging the child to become an active learner during book reading, providing responses that model more sophisticated language and raising the complexity of the conversation to a level just above their current ability. This interactive style of conversation between adult and child makes dialogic reading stand apart from other read aloud techniques and therefore enhance its suitability to the participants of this research project. “It provides a simple structure for making parent- child or teacher- child, read –aloud more effective and productive” (Lane &Wright, 2007, p.670)

Encouraging the child to extract meaning from text using dialogue and personal experiences beyond the book inspires the learner to examine the context of the story from their perspective. The natural dialogue and questioning between the adult and the child during dialogic reading engagement supports the development of decontextualized or abstract language.

Decontextualized language refers to language, such as that used in story narratives and other written forms of communication that is used to convey novel information to audiences who may share only limited background knowledge with the speaker or who may be physically removed from the things or events described.

(Whitehurst G. J., 1998, p. 851)

This specific dialogic reading format provides educators and parents with an opportunity to use stories to link early childhood life experience in society with literacy learning in the home. It also provides emergent literacy opportunities which are truly reciprocal and rich in value.

International research shows that how we interact and talk to our children impacts on their emerging skills. This also applies to the written word. Many authors now conclude that *how* we read to our children, is as important as *what* we read to them. Dialogic reading has

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been extensively researched with much success worldwide.(Brown, 2014; David K. Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2012; Flynn, 2011; Simsek & Erdogan, 2015; G J Whitehurst et al., 1988)

Such research informs current practice and has considerable implications for the development of language and literacy skills in the early years. Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998) described the process of dialogic story reading as a practice whereby a child and adult share a picture book together while they focus on the book through talk and dialogue. Their research showed that changes in the way adults traditionally read books to children produced considerable changes in children's language skills. Table one outlines the specific dialogic reading prompts under the acronym PEER and the five different types of prompts using the by the acronym CROWD.



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Table 1

*Dialogic Reading Prompts (Whitehurst G. J., 1992)*

PROMPT	EVALUATE	EXPAND	REPEAT	
The adult prompts the child to say something about the book.	The adult evaluates the response given by the child.	The adult expands and rephrases the response by adding information to it.	The adult repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.	
5 Types of Dialogic Reading Prompts				
COMPLETION PROMPTS	RECALL PROMPTS	OPEN ENDED PROMPTS	Wh QUESTION PROMPTS	DISTANCING PROMPTS
The adult leaves a blank at the end of a sentence for the child to finish. E.g. Rhyming or repetitive phrases.	The adult questions the child on a book previously read. This develops memory skills, comprehension and plot.	The adult encourages talk about pictures in books which helps improve expressive fluency and detail.	Who, what, where, when, why and how questions are used to focus on the pictures in books.	Children are asked to relate the pictures or words in the book to life experiences beyond the book.

It is important to note that multiple readings of the same book over time will develop oral language on a gradual scale. The reader begins with lower order prompts and extends right up to the use of descriptive sophisticated vocabulary as well as expressive and narrative language, thus encouraging the development of more complex decontextualized language and thought. However dialogic reading technique is only one element of the reading engagement. How children react and respond to different types of stories is also relative to this research. It informs practitioners and parents of the ways young children assimilate and associate the text to their own lives.

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### *Children's Engagement with Story*

When a child takes ownership of a text during dialogic reading, they take on a performing role in the way they respond to the story. Sipe (2002) believed “children respond to stories in various ways” and proposed that children comprehend story through “narrative elements” such as storyline, setting and characters, while others may “compare or contrast the events in the story to their own lives” or “to other stories they know” (Sipe, 2002, p.476)

Sipe (2002) was of the opinion that children engage in such behaviours because they want to take part and take ownership of the text and make the story their own. He presented noteworthy research regarding the kinds of oral responses children provide to story book read aloud. Such literature is relevant to this study as it may contribute to understanding the participants' responses to read aloud texts used during the intervention.

Sipe (2002) maintained that when children react in a theatrical, dynamic and animated manner in response to the text they become “active participants in the story.” He referred to such literary responses as “expressive performative engagement.” (p.477) Dialogic reading interventions in the home setting afford parents and educators a lens to capture children's expressive responses.

However parents and teachers must provide books that appeal to the children's interests, have exciting plots and twists, detailed illustrations and are rich in language. Sipe (2002) focused on children's “conversational turns” beyond the “narrative elements” during the reading engagement, (p.477) resulting in the creation of five conceptual categories of children's expressive engagement with text. Table 2 demonstrates Sipe's (2002) findings.

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Table 2

*Categories of Expressive Engagement Sipe (2002)*

Dramatizing	The child imitates the story in a natural and physical manner.
Talking Back	The child responds to the characters in the story.
Critiquing/Controlling	The child changes the storyline, characters and setting to control the story from their perspective.
Inserting	Inserting themselves or people known to them in the text.
Taking Over	The child uses the story for one's own purpose and creativity.

Sipe (2002) proposed that such reactions are “deeply pleasurable” for the child and that “culture, readers, texts, and teacher” influence the type of response displayed by the child. (p.481) Furthermore, the responses lie on a continuum with Dramatizing showing the highest level of engagement with the text and Taking Over displaying the least amount of engagement with the child completely dominating the text for their own purpose and ingenuity. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the type of book we read to our young learner is equally as important as the dialogue we use during the reading engagement. Barthes (1974) agreed and proposed that books can be “writerly” because they “encourage active participation” or “readerly” as they may be one dimensional in meaning and nature, stimulating a very different response from the listener. (as cited in Sipe, 2002, p.480)

Selecting books which appeal to the participants of this study and create an engaging context for dialogic reading is central to any intervention. In an era where much emphasis is placed on drilling synthetic phonics programmes and reading boring and repetitive “reader” style books that lack interesting plots, this dialogic reading programme has the potential to reignite children’s love for books and empower children to immerse themselves in the

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pleasure of story. Promoting positive messages about reading in the early years may cultivate an active and enthusiastic engagement in formal reading at a later stage. The creation of such an atmosphere during dialogic reading may nourish “the exuberant enjoyment of stories that takes children out of the world of the familiar and into the delightful world of the story.” (Sipe, 2002, p.479) Nevertheless, it is essential that educators strive to create meaningful and enjoyable contexts for dialogic reading and are mindful of the benefits of letting children enjoy “literacy pleasure and playfulness.” (p.479) Concurrent with the awakening knowledge, that a child’s initial linguistic and emergent literacy experiences are deeply rooted in the home environment, an examination of family literacy will now be undertaken.

### **Family Literacy**

Berk (2009) invited us to acknowledge that “the family is the child’s first and longest lasting context for development.” (Berk, 2009, p.563) The term “family literacy” originated with research undertaken by Taylor (1983). Her research examined how parents created literacy experiences for their children in the home environment. Research surrounding the teaching of literacy in the home environment and the impact of such programmes has been examined extensively since then. Heath (1983), Morrow (1995), Wolfendale (1996) and Topping (1996) are among some of the scholars who undertook research examining how families initiate literacy interests and practice, in their children’s lives in the home setting. Their research informed us of the strong impact family literacy interventions have on children’s literacy achievement. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991) explored the family’s contribution to language and literacy development. They sought to establish the main factors that separate high achieving children from low achieving children. Their findings specified five variables in the Family as Educator model. They included the

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following; literacy environment of the home, direct teaching, creating opportunities to learn, parental education and parental expectation.

These results advocated that family support had a positive impact on children's linguistic and literacy development. The home literacy environment, parental education and parental expectation were identified as delivering the most effective outcomes in relation to word recognition and vocabulary. Nutbrown, Hannon and Morgan (2005) stressed that the influence of positive literacy approaches around emergent literacy skills in the home environment gave some children a lead when formal schooling begins. Drawing on the work of Heath (1983) they contended that "knowing about literacy practices and skills valued by schools confers advantages on some children starting formal education just as the lack of it disadvantages others" (as cited in Nutbrown, Hannon & Morgan, 2005, p.23)

Considering that the level of parental involvement is unique to every home, it stands to reason that direct intervention by means of parental participation through skills and training is a real way of indirectly supporting a pupil's literacy skills in the home environment. Dialogic reading supports empowering parents as the child's first educator. It provides parents with opportunities to extend their own skills and training whilst simultaneously developing their child's ability to engage with literacy in a more expressive style. Cognisant of the role the family plays in the literacy process we will now examine how best to support parents as partners in education.

### *Parents as Partners in Literacy*

Educators must realise that the acquisition of children's knowledge is no longer solely teacher or school founded. Taylor (2008) proposed that early exposure to literacy in the home and school environment plays a pivotal role in the development of literacy skills and highlights dialogic reading as being "particularly effective" when used in a shared reading setting. According to Snow et al., (1991) families who supported the learning

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objectives of the school were in a more favourable position to assist their own child's language and literacy development. Nutbrown (1999) agreed, upholding that the more parents know about their children's learning the better placed they are to understand what their children are doing and how they might further enhance learning opportunities for them. Therefore schools should be inclusive, progressive and willing to involve parents as partners in education.

The Parent –School Partnership model, devised by Snow et al., (1991) generate five variables; formal parent school involvement, frequency of contact with teachers, homework help by parents, nature of parent child interaction during homework help, school attendance and punctuality which impact on children's language and literacy learning. These outcomes showed that formal parent school involvement has a powerful and positive bearing on children's word recognition, vocabulary, reading and writing skills. The researcher concurs with such findings and views them as relevant to all schools regardless of the socioeconomic status of its pupils. The results provided by Snow et al., (1991) are most pertinent to this study and further justify the position of dialogic reading as a suitable platform to include parents as partners in education while promoting emergent literacy skills in the early years. Whitehurst (1998) suggested that parents can greatly enrich the quality of a young child's natural language development by providing an environment full of language opportunities. This is reflective of the role of the teacher in the classroom and is critically important to language development in the early years. However, the idea of a parent reading to a child "speaks of love, the importance of a family unit, and parental commitment to a child's future and shared reading embraces goals of educational advancement, cultural uplift, and literate discourse" (Whitehurst G. J., 1998, p. 848)

Sénéchal and Lefevre (2001) provided evidence of a positive link between parents' home literacy practices and children's later language and literacy skills. Additionally they

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associated home factors such as the amount of books in the home, library access and parents own literacy interests as features related to children's vocabulary skills. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) believed vocabulary plays a crucial role in the initial stages of literacy acquisition in the early years. Cregan (1998) concurred claiming that "oral language is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it" (p.7) Dialogic reading acts as a catalyst for young readers to develop their oral and literacy skills at the heart of their own culture. On reflection of the literature surrounding the role of parents in the literacy process the researcher acknowledges that much is written about what parents do or do not undertake to promote literacy in the early years. Equally there appears to be less literature representing their voice and perspective on what literacy practice resembles and entails in the early years.

### **Dialogic Reading and Critical Literacy**

Even though its roots are not placed in critical literacy engagement, dialogic reading as a technique has the potential to convey such critical understandings of text through natural dialogue and an empowerment of readers from an early age. Roche (2015) supported "critical thinking" and "book talk" from an early stage in the literacy process. According to Roche (2015) this approach encouraged children to become "thinkers, speakers, listeners and readers" through the enjoyment of reading and dialogue (p.62) Likewise she advocated critical thinking as a "means of looking at something from all sides and weighing up the evidence before adopting a particular stance or point of view" (p.63) If one is to reflect on Freire's (1993) view that "every reading of the word is preceded by a reading of the world" (p.58), one can begin to fully appreciate the deep connection between the interpretation of language meaning and cultural influences. An essential component of the dialogic reading approach is that the quality of the reading experience must be richer, than anything that has gone before, if we are to truly engage in the process. Scholars supporting Freirean pedagogy

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applaud the influence of his work in various areas. Luke (2012) supported “a focus on the possibilities of literacy for the critical analysis of self/other relations and the restoration of power to readers.” (p.7)

Beckett (2013) drew on Freire’s view that “dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.14 as cited in Beckett, 2013, p.51) Comber (2001) argued that “No texts are neutral; the discourses that shape them constitute particular versions of the world”(p.10) The researcher agrees with Comber (2001) believing that discourse leads to debate which is always exciting when exploring the deeper message in text with young readers. Shannon (1995) proposed a most enriching assessment of how the practice of critical literacy impacts upon our traditional view of literacy.

Critical perspectives push the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding or encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one's own history and culture, to recognize the connections between one's own life and the social structure, (Shannon, 1995, p.83)

In order to situate dialogic reading in a theoretical context an examination of early childhood theory will be undertaken.

### **Dialogic Reading and Early Childhood Theory**

Perspectives and theories of child development have deepened, developed and delivered an understanding of young children today. Mindful of the fact there is no universal theory that answers all our questions on child development, each perspective is to be valued for its contribution. It is imperative that early year practitioners are mindful of the theoretical framework which underpins and supports our current understanding of child development. Influential theorists such as Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) were significant names in developing early childhood theory.



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The benefits of both theories will be drawn upon in the context of dialogic reading as they are of particular relevance to this study. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was one of the first theorists to place far greater weight on the social context in which children explore and learn. Possibly, Vygotsky's greatest contribution to early childhood pedagogy today is the notion that 'a contextualised rather than a universalistic theory of development' must now be considered. (Stiener & Mahn, 1996, p.197 as cited in Edwards, 2003) This contribution is of particular relevance to this research study as the learning context and home environment of each participant is unique to their learning.

The socio cultural approach examines how language learners engage "psychological (thinking) tools" and "cultural (communicating) tools" simultaneously in order to make sense of their experiences. (Mercer, 1995, p.4) Dialogic reading supports the socio cultural image of the child being an active participant in their own learning. However, dialogic reading also resonates with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems theory which highlights the influence and interconnectedness of the home environment and education. He encouraged educators to view human development in the context of the environmental settings to which the child is linked. He proposed that child development does not take place in isolation but rather through relationships with family, peers and society.

Considering research formerly presented that links socioeconomic factors and literacy achievement it stands to reason that all aspects of culture impact upon on children's education. Schaffer (1996) expressed that "Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes the fact that children's development can only be understood if closely related to the particular environment which they experience, whether directly or indirectly" (p.335) Over time early childhood frameworks and curricula have been influenced by a wide range of learning and developmental theories. In order to fully appreciate the deep theoretical

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connections that exist between dialogic reading and socio cultural theory a closer examination of both will be undertaken.

### **Dialogic Reading & Sociocultural Theory**

Socio-cultural perspective has greatly influenced pedagogical practice and curricular advances in the early year settings. Advancements in social learning theory place the child at the epicentre of universal development within a cultural framework. The landscape of learning has been transformed from traditional and didactic to contemporary and inclusive and dialogic reading is well situated as an approach to literacy that facilitates learning from a cultural perspective. “In a socio-cultural environment, young children are encouraged to speak, to be active in their learning and to construct meaning with knowledgeable others” (Mhathuna & Taylor, 2012, p.7) Theory no longer informs best practice to view the child’s learning in isolation but rather suggests an interdisciplinary approach which embraces learning from various early childhood perspectives. Sociocultural philosophy views the child as a powerful player in his/her own learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This theoretical framework which views the child and their learning, in the context of their world has revolutionised our thinking around early childhood development. (Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Moore, 1996; Spodek & Saracho, 1999.)

The dialogic reading approach researched and developed by G J Whitehurst et al., (1988) is enveloped in socio cultural theory. Dialogue is largely described as a conversation, exchange or discussion of events between two or more people. The information or meaning gained from conversations however is subject to both the purpose and content of the dialogue. The practice of dialogic reading employs a social-interactionist approach to the development of emergent literacy skills and places an emphasis on evocative and thought provoking prompts and techniques used by the adult to facilitate the child to take ownership of the text. The dialogic reading framework supports Vygotsky’s (1986) idea that after

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children acquire language further cognitive development depends on social interactions with adults and peers. Vygotsky (1978) placed great emphasis on the role of language in learning and the importance of adult intervention between the child and the environment.

Furthermore he attributed language with developing thought. He postulated the idea, that children learn from 'a more knowledgeable other' and that this learning is not context bound. "Whether the child is engaging with peers in the playground, visiting the doctor's surgery or making a trip to the supermarket will all involve social interaction, communication, thought and talk." (Vygotsky, 1978, p.162) Parents and educators can relate to this idea of language development in a social context as we experience this in our homes and classrooms on a daily basis. However, socio cultural theory calls for the unification of these parallel worlds as the child's learning is context and culture bound.

Whilst the early years teacher cannot have such a detailed knowledge and understanding of each child as parents, it is the professional responsibility of teachers to gain as much understanding of individual children as possible and attempt to gain an insight, not only into the child's cognitive functioning, but also his/her social and cultural context. (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002, p.38)

Barbara Rogoff (1998) examined and expanded Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to include the idea that *all* cognitive development is relative to its context and is realised by the child's partaking in the context itself. Rogoff (1991) asserted that "routine arrangements and interactions between children and their caregivers and companions provide children with thousands of opportunities to observe and participate in the skilled activities of their culture." (p.351) Likewise, external factors in the home and society are now considered important factors which impact on the child's ability and achievement. ( Moore, 1996; Spodek & Saracho, 1999; Hedges & Cullen, 2012.)

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The expansion of Vygotsky's theory by Rogoff (1998) is to be credited and welcomed as it gives parents and teachers a deeper appreciation of the link between a child's cognitive development and their culture. Dialogic reading supports the contribution made by Rogoff (1998) and encourages children to be active agents in the context of their own learning. Traditionally, "the adult reads and the child listens, but in dialogic reading the child learns to become the storyteller" (Whitehurst, 1998, p. 859). The dialogic reading approach adopted for my research study resonates with such theory as it requires the adult to draw out language and thought from the child's meaningful interpretations of the story. The reciprocal nature of the dialogic reading experience requires both adult and child to interchange opinions and ideas in response to the text and each other.

Rogoff (1998) further proposed that individual cognitive development transpires on three levels 'intrapersonal', 'interpersonal' and 'contextual'. Rogoff (1998) suggested that observing the child in a context relative to their learning environment can ultimately lead us to a deeper understanding of that child. Fler (2002) acknowledged such contributions made to sociocultural theory, recommending that the three planes of development identified by Rogoff (1998) be applied as a theoretical framework for early years' education.

As practitioners we can more usefully think about children and their learning by focusing our analysis on the learning context through the three lenses. This allows us to observe, analyse and plan from three perspectives. That is we can consider use of a personal perspective for planning, an interpersonal perspective for planning and a community/institutional perspective for planning. (Fler, 2002, p.12)

Such recommendations have direct implications for educators. Although it may demand more time from educators, the importance of observing, analysing and planning from a wider perspective will guide us to a more profound understanding of the whole child as a learner.

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### **Limitations of Dialogic Reading**

Dialogic reading theory and techniques have been studied and analysed nationally and internationally with considerable results for students, parents, teachers and researchers. The model has grown in popularity and has been used in many studies with preschool and kindergarten aged children since its initiation by G J Whitehurst et al., 1988. Considering that dialogic reading has been proven as an effective intervention for pre-schoolers (Graver J. Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), children of low socio-economic status, children of middle-class families and children who may already show very good use of decontextualized language. (Zevenbergen et al., 2003) It is difficult for the researcher to comprehend why this approach is not being undertaken as common practice in early years and primary school settings in Ireland.

Literature offered by Crain-Thoreson & Dale (1998) established dialogic reading as having a potentially positive effect on communication and language competencies for children with disabilities. However, it is important to point out limitations that have been identified with dialogic reading and perhaps may explain why dialogic reading has not been used to its full extent beyond the boundaries of developmental research. Studies undertaken by Whitehurst et al., (1988) and Whitehurst et al., (1994) demonstrated that dialogic reading when compared to “regular” shared reading is not any more beneficial to the development of receptive language skills. All parents differ in how frequently they read to their children and it is difficult to monitor whether or not parents are implementing the technique at home.

Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello, and Ginsburg-Block (2010) proposed that dialogic reading could have a potentially negative impact on families who feel insufficiently supported by the state. According to Manz et al., parents who are already challenged by factors such as low levels of education, low socioeconomic status and limited reading resources may feel increased pressure in participating dialogic reading programme .This

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may lead to negative reading engagements between the parent and child. Dialogic reading has been proven to be more effective with small groups and this can be a disadvantage to pupils who attend schools where class sizes are larger. (Morrow & Smith, 1990) Bearing in mind the average class size in Ireland remains among the highest in Europe with new figures published by the Department of Education (2016) demonstrated just fewer than 24% of all pupils in Irish primary schools have class sizes of 30 or more students. It would not be practical to implement dialogic reading on an individual level with such larger numbers. The average class size in most developed countries is around 21 (OECD, 2017) which may also explain why other countries with smaller class sizes are engaging in the dialogic reading process.

According to Senechal & LeFevre (2001) much of the dialogic reading research undertaken examined the effects of a small set of approaches, many of which may not be feasible to employ in developing countries or in poorly resourced communities in Western countries. Dialogic reading has not been found to be as effective with older children. It may be that the method is best suited to book reading with infants, toddlers, and younger preschool children as literacy habits have yet to be established. De Temple & Snow (2003) proposed that as children age they prefer to engage in more independent literacy experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Dialogic reading is considered to be an effective strategy to foster and develop oral language skills in the home and early years. The NCCA (2012) has endorsed dialogic reading as one of the most effective strategies in developing reading comprehension; others include text-based discussions, shared reading, book reading and teacher modelling. In view of the fact that all these strategies draw on and build oral language skills whilst simultaneously developing their reading comprehension, it strengthens the argument that

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combining and teaching several literacy skills in the one lesson is more effective than teaching them in isolation.

Considering the literature offered above and in view of how cost effective dialogic parent training is to implement with face to face and video recorded instruction proving equally effective, (Whitehurst & Lonigan 1988, Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005) it is reasonable to suppose that dialogic reading should be embraced in homes everywhere. Furthermore, dialogic reading should be used as a strategy to promote positive parent and school connections. When children arrive in school they encounter a different linguistic world from the home environment. Formal and informal speech, new dialects and discourse will challenge and stimulate the child's linguistic ability. O'Reilly (2016) highlighted the inclusion of parents' perspective as being central to further developing this literacy approach within the Irish context. She believed the "need for the parents to be asked for their experience and their perspectives" (p.41) as crucial to further advancing dialogic reading practice in the early years. The research study reported in this thesis endeavours to explore such parental experience and opinion over a six week reading intervention using dialogic reading theory and techniques. Parent's views on how the reading intervention impacted on their lives and their children's emergent literacy skills will then be analysed. "The transformative orientation of dialogic learning transcends the individual vision of the development of the person and englobes the transformation of sociocultural context, including the entire community into the learning spaces" (Garcia, 1994, p.66)

The researcher embraces such "transformative learning" but contends that the child remains at the centre of dialogic education; all life experiences should be articulated, read about or written about cultivating a new way of connecting curriculum, community and child. The following chapters outline the format and measures undertaken in carrying out this research study.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Methodology**

##### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design. The researcher discusses the rationale behind the research project and explains why an active intervention approach is adopted. Firstly the statement of the problem and the objectives of the study will be examined. Next the research design and ethics involved in an intervention of this kind will be undertaken. Following this the participants and the method of sampling will be discussed. The collection of the quantitative and qualitative data pre and post intervention, for this mixed method study is then described. Finally a description of the implementation of the intervention and its limitations will be presented.

##### **Statement of the Problem**

The researcher considered her school in the context of the extensive research presented thus far reflecting the deep connection between emergent literacy skill development and later reading ability (Brown, 2014; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Neaum, 2012) The diverse and different literacy needs of the infant classes which must be developed as early and as timely as possible is also a reason for undertaking this project. The researcher was of the opinion that if parents are aware of how they can best support their child's learning, it may accelerate individual performance and encourage parent participation in the literacy process.

However, with no literacy supports or training currently available to parents in our school, and acknowledging the developing research recognising children enter primary school with varying academic abilities, (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988; Hart & Risley, 1992;



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Kucuker, 2016), the researcher decided to undertake research focusing on emerging literacy skills through story book reading with parents as tutors in the home setting.

The motivation for undertaking this research was well situated and justified in line with the provision of interventions at an earlier stage in ECCE settings and infant classes, early detection of children with early literacy learning problems including oral language difficulties and a National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (2011-2020). Additionally a revised English curriculum explicitly and systematically designed to teach and assess key literacy skills and strategies including a new Oral Language Primary Curriculum (2016) as well as current whole school planning and targets for literacy development and improvement within the researcher's school.

### **Study Objectives**

The dialogic story reading technique designed by G. J. Whitehurst et al., (1988) was adopted as a guideline for the intervention. The Literature Review examined the principles of dialogic reading and subsequent research completed by numerous scholars in this area. The literature review was symbolic in pointing out to the researcher that a natural association between emergent literacy and story book exists. Dialogic reading facilitated this deep connection by alternating the role of reader, speaker and listener during the literacy engagement.

Although the literature review provided an understanding of the subject at hand it also stressed some disparities in the research, namely the lack of focus on the parent's experience and sentiments during such literacy interventions. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether children's emergent literacy skills would increase as a result of participating in a six week dialogic reading programme delivered by parents in the home environment. However, the researcher sought to identify as central to the research, the parents voice and involvement during the six week process. As a result all six parents in the

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sample group were asked to keep a reflective journal documenting the reading engagement and their experiences over the six week period. Ultimately this would assist the researcher in concluding if a dialogic reading intervention such as this one effected how parents read to their children and if they observed any changes in their own reading practice as well as the reading behaviours of their children. The research aimed to examine:

- 1) How does a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment with parents as tutors effect the following emergent literacy skills?
  - Concepts of Print
  - Fluency
  - Letter Identification
  - Sight words
- 2) What are the factors that support and challenge the parents experience in the implementation of a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment?

### **Research Design**

Remeyi and Money (2006) identified several research strategies including action research, case studies, forecasting, survey, ethnography, grounded theory and archival research that lead the general direction of any investigation. This study was a case study intervention informed by the ethical principles of action research. Action research, according to Rapoport's (1970) widely used definition, is a form of research that attempts to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework. Galliers (1992) believed this research strategy is "largely concerned with the management of change while the researcher obtains results of practical value for groups with whom an alliance has been formed" (p.85) Baskerville (1999) cited the involvement of the researcher in the process as the main weakness of the approach, as this direct involvement

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may introduce research bias into the equation. However, a key strength of action research is its focus on change. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) believed this strategy seeks to introduce change with positive social values, the focus on the perceived problem and its possible solutions. However Morris and Wood (1991) contended that “a case study is of particular interest to the researcher who wishes to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the process being enacted” (p.82) This strategy was of greater relevance to the researcher and although the strategies mentioned above are similar, the case study research strategy was seen as the more appropriate option for this particular research project.

Four tests have become the standard by which the quality of any empirical social research is judged. Yin (1994) proposed that whether a quantitative or qualitative research approach is employed a good research design requires the following tests to be considered.

- 1) Construct validity: establishing correct operational measures for the concept being measured.
- 2) Internal validity: this test is for explanatory or causal studies only and does not apply to descriptive or exploratory studies.
- 3) External validity: reflects how accurately the results represent the phenomenon studied and the generalisability of results.
- 4) Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of a study, such as the data collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results. (Yin, 1994, p.35)

The data for this study was collected from several sources. A mixed method approach was used to collect and collate the relevant data. Qualitative records were used to focus on parental practice and perspective whereas quantitative measures established children’s test results before and after the intervention process. Survey questions were drawn up to gather unique information on current literacy practices and beliefs in the participant’s home environment. The survey included a combination of close ended and multiple choice

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questions. The questions were based on the objectives and research questions.

Questionnaires are “a good way of collecting certain types of information quickly and relatively cheaply as long as you are sufficiently disciplined to abandon questions that are superfluous to the main task.” (Bell, 1999, p.119)

Prior to induction, an initial questionnaire was piloted on two parents from the Junior Infant class. (See Appendix B) This helped test the validity and gauge the amount of information the questionnaire would generate. Subsequently the Likert scale and open ended questions were included in the questionnaire in order to elicit more information and perspective from the parents. A revised questionnaire was then given to the parents involved in this research study. “A pilot has several functions, principally to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire” (Cohen et al., 2000, p.260).

In order to evaluate the effectiveness the project had on the children’s emergent literacy skills, pre and post standardised test results from both sample and control groups were collected in the following areas vocabulary, phonological awareness and concepts about print. (See Appendix D) While questionnaires and test scores gathered quantitative data, interviews and workshops provided opportunities to use qualitative techniques. A focus group at the midway point of the project provided constructive feedback on how the parents were progressing and what was going well during the reading engagements. A sample transcript from this meeting can be seen in Appendix E.

During the six week intervention period, parents recorded the literacy engagements using a daily reflective journal. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993) believed that the most powerful learning happens when learners self-monitor, or reflect. The method of engaging in journal writing was explained and modelled to the parents during the initial information evening. Journal prompts and questions were provided in each diary and encouraged participants to explore their thoughts on the daily reading engagements. (See Appendix F)

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The journals were very thought-provoking and provided the researcher with rich, valuable data that contributed somewhat to a more detailed analysis of the research outcomes. The researcher studied the journals carefully several times before coding initial themes. Subsequent readings of the journals served to refine the coding categories to more precisely reflect the perspectives of the participants. Excerpts from journal entries and transcribed audio recordings were included in order to trace the shift in participant perspectives and to support interpretations of the data. The journals are examined further in the next chapter and samples of journal entries are included in Appendix F.

On completing the project, parent views and opinions on the intervention were obtained from one to one interview incorporating a triangulation of data. Cohen et al., (2000) define triangulation as “The use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 112) The parent interviews provided an opportunity to check the consistency of the responses in the questionnaires. Diary entries in the journals also provided another check of the consistency of the questionnaire and interview answers.

Triangulation of the relevant data acquired from questionnaires, focus group, journals and interviews authenticated and validated the parent’s responses and provided detailed perspectives that are central to this study. The researcher acknowledged the interviewer holds two positions during the interview process. This dual role involved satisfying the needs of the line of the inquiry whilst simultaneously putting forth approachable and non-threatening questions in an open ended manner. The interviews were held one week after the intervention ceased and immediately after the analysis of the data. The list of questions used to stimulate and steer the interview and sample transcript responses can be seen in Appendix F.

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### **Sampling**

The researcher accepted that a small scale research study such as this requires the selection of a non-probability sample group. Additionally by selecting senior infant pupils to partake in this study the researcher engaged in convenience and purposeful sampling. These types of sampling choose subjects who in the researcher's opinion are accessible and relevant to the study. Considering the nature of this research project, the target group in question and the participants, a non-probability sample group was chosen. Cohen et al., (2005) advise caution when using such non- generalisability sampling due to the selective nature in which candidates are selected. Bearing in mind that the aim of this project was to examine early literacy intervention the research is limited to the infant classes. Additionally, other classes were committed to other reading initiatives within the school. The constraints of the research limited the researcher's ability to engage in other types of non-probability and probability samples.

### **Participants**

Twelve parents/ guardians and children from the senior infant class were invited to take part in this piece of action research. The researcher wrote to each of the potential participants providing them with the details and layout of the project. (See Appendix A). The participants invited came from comparable cultural and socio economic backgrounds and therefore provided a true reflection of this sample population. The age of the pupils was of particular importance as child development research offered by Marie Clay (2002) proposes this age bracket to be the most opportune time for literacy development in young children. On acceptance of their place in the study parents were asked to attend an information evening and give written permission for their child to take part. Finally and in line with best practice the participating child's assent was obtained. (DCYA, 2012) (See Appendix A) The twelve pupils were selected under the following criteria:

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- 1) All of the participants had English as their first language.
- 2) All of the participants were Senior Infant pupils aged between 5y:11mths &-6y:6mths and had completed one full year in primary school.
- 3) None of the participants had received any form of school based learning supports prior to undertaking the project.

The participating cluster was randomly divided into two groups. Each group was made up of three boys and three girls and created a gender balance between the pupils involved in the research. The sample and control research groups had been formed. The six children selected for the control group received no intervention of any kind from their parents. The remaining six participants in the sample group received parental intervention through a dialogic reading project over a six week period. The training workshops, focus group and interviews were conducted with the parents. However, the children were also considered to be active participants as the dialogue with parents during the reading sessions as well as any changes in their reading behaviour and test results were all relevant to the implementation, discussion, findings and research outcomes of this reading intervention.

### **Reflexivity**

Elliott (2001) advocated that undertaking any “educational research” ought to result in an “improvement of educational practice” (p.564). However, the contributions of Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) conveyed a description of action research that is most germane to this study. “Action research is concerned equally with changing *individuals*, on the one hand and on the other, the *culture* of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong.”(as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005, p.227) . These very principles are central to the researcher’s commitment to this study. Moreover, the researcher is fully aware that school management and Government policy view parents as partners in education. Such affiliation affords parents a voice in the collaborative ethos that exists

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within the school. Opportunities to embrace home and school links are always welcome.

“The school is regarded as an extension of the home and an active partnership between parents and teachers make this a reality, especially in the eyes of the young child, who is the central figure.” (DES, Circular, 24/91.) This research was original to the school but in order to distance it from previous work undertaken in the field, the researcher endeavoured to concentrate on supporting and scaffolding the parent’s participation throughout the study. Embracing the work of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) who supported a mutually influential relationship between the environment, child and caregiver, the researcher aimed to examine whether intense scaffolding and support of the parents influenced their commitment and deliverance of the project and in turn impacted upon the emergent literacy skills of the participating pupils.

The researcher has held a position in the school for the last 13 years. Over the years the researcher has earned respect in creating home /school links in relation to many projects right across the curriculum. Fullan (2010) stated “if you want to change any relationship, you have to behave your way into it. Trust comes after good experiences” (Fullan, 2010, p.97)

As a mainstream teacher, the researcher often called upon parents to share their knowledge, gifts, talents and experience with the pupils of the school. Parents were regularly invited into the classroom to give a career presentation, discuss charity work undertaken, share arts and crafts demonstrations, assist with Maths for Fun, partake in Discovery Science exhibitions etc. Such parental commitment and dedication to school life throughout the year was always rewarded with an end of year school play or musical. These “good experiences” demonstrate empathy, goodwill, openness, honesty, respect, reliability and reciprocity. They also capture the essence of trust between various stakeholders in education. The researcher is the current union staff representative and also holds a post of responsibility on the middle



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management team within the school. The Green Schools post involves liaising with staff, community bodies and parents on many local community commitments.

The researcher is of the opinion that Irish Curricula objectives are common to all primary pupils; however the nature of teaching such objectives is always local. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) echoed such opinion:

Even as teaching becomes more and more public, it remains at its heart *radically local*---embedded in the immediate relationships, of students and teachers, shaped by the cultures of schools and communities, and connected to the experiences and biographies of individuals and groups.( as cited in Comber, 2016, p.26)

Acknowledging that the participants are known to the researcher and that the researcher's experiences and commitments heretofore within the school community are familiar to the participants, the researcher takes a reflexive position and accepts her place within the research.

### **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis typically involves methodically applying analytical approaches to pronounce and explicate the data collected during research engagement. According to Shamo and Resnik (2003) different analytic measures “provide a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal (the phenomenon of interest) from the noise (statistical fluctuations) present in the data.” (p.32)

The breadth and depth of the data generated throughout this research project was immense. The data collected lends itself strongly to develop a dialogic reading programme across the infant classes in the researcher's school. Even though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine every potential aspect of the data collected, all the results will be presented with opportunities for the researcher to revisit them at a future date as part of further research in this field. In line with research offered by Savenye and Robinson (2004)

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the researcher analysed the entire data collection for patterns in observations revealed in the qualitative and quantitative data forms. Initial examination of the questionnaires did not reveal any openly observable outcomes. However when these results were triangulated with the reflective journals, the focus group and interview transcripts strong tangible themes arose from the data. Such intense examination of the data required much time and organisation on behalf of the researcher. (See Appendix E) Many of the prevailing themes discussed in the literature review were reflected in the qualitative and quantitative data gathered prior to during and after the reading intervention. Preliminary data analysis considered what impact this piece of research had on the participants. The researcher anchored the data collected to the participants involved in this dialogic reading intervention. The first anchor examined what evidence of change to parent beliefs and behaviours existed within the data collected. The second anchor queried what evidence the project had on the children's emergent skills. The journals and interviews were revisited and cross examined with the questionnaires and focus group transcripts many times in order to corroborate the findings. As a result of this process prevailing themes were identified and the main research questions were then revisited and examined in relation to the findings obtained.

### **Ethics**

As previously stated the researcher acknowledged and accepted a reflexive position rather than an objective one within the research and was mindful of the fact that the participants were known to the researcher and to each other. Considering such relations it was of particular importance to the researcher that the highest possible ethical standards be upheld for the entirety of the study. The researcher reflected on the ethical considerations offered by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003). The ethical refers to "the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it." (p.131). This quote resonated strongly with the researcher as it was of

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utmost importance that parent, pupil teacher relations were maintained throughout the intervention process and that all parties felt equally involved and valued.

Saunders et al., (2003) listed a number of key ethical issues that must be considered across the stages and duration of a research project. These include:

- 1) The right to privacy of possible and actual participants;
- 2) The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process;
- 3) Maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants and their anonymity;
- 4) The effects on participants to the way in which you use, analyse and report your data, in particular the avoidance of stress, discomfort, pain and harm;
- 5) The behaviour and objectivity of you as the researcher; (Saunders et al. 2003. p.131)

In keeping with these key issues the collection of data for this research has a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality. During the induction evening participants involved in the research were also asked to consider their ethical role in the study and were made aware of the following: (See Appendix A)

- 1) That they understand that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason.
- 2) That they must give written consent for themselves and their child to participate.
- 3) That responses and opinion shared within the group are sensitive to the nature of the research project and are not to be shared outside of the group.
- 4) That the need for open and honest dialogue (negative or positive) is of supreme importance in order to ensure authenticity in the research findings.

The researcher drew on the work of Kathy Hall (2003) to impart upon the participants the importance of “a positive climate for literacy work” and how research interventions such as

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this one contribute and support “hospitality and respect for the culture that the children bring to the school” (Hall, 2003, p.121.) Finally, the participants and the Board of Management received a statement of ethics (See Appendix A) to further demonstrate the researcher’s commitment to preserving ethical standards throughout the study.

### **Pre Intervention Data Collection (Parents)**

On accepting their place in the research all 12 parents were asked to complete a questionnaire relating to their children’s reading and current reading practices in the home. All the parents in the sample and control groups were asked to complete the questionnaire as these responses would be beneficial in substantiating outcomes at the post intervention stage. Furthermore, the researcher intended to corroborate responses provided in the questionnaires with perspectives from the reflective journals in order to authenticate the depth of change in parental behaviour, perception and practice before and after the reading intervention.

### **Pre Intervention Data Collection (Children)**

On accepting their place in the research study all 12 children completed different tests related to their emergent literacy skills. The battery of tests took 40 minutes to administer to each child. This was completed over two consecutive school days. In order to determine any variations in the children’s emergent literacy skills Table three displays the areas examined pre and post the dialogic reading intervention.

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Table 3

*Emergent Literacy Testing (See Appendix D)*

Phonological Assessment	Concepts About Print
The PhAB Fluency Test Friederickson, Frith & Reason (1994)	Concepts About Print, Letter Identification & Duncan Sight Words                      Clay (2002)
This test examines the children's articulation and focused on the areas of Semantic, Alliteration and Rhyming. The children were timed for 30 seconds in each area and were given a practice item at the beginning of each section. This test was quick and easy to administer.	C. A. P deals with how comfortable and confident children are with handling books and their attention to detail with the text itself. Letter Identification Tests the children's letter /sound knowledge. The Duncan Word Test consists of 23 sight words.

**The Intervention**

This research took place in a rural DEIS primary school and involved Senior Infant parents and pupils undertaking a literacy intervention using storybooks in the home setting. For this reason, the researcher sought to use an intervention programme that was easy for the parents to administer and cost effective for the school implement. Parents of children in Senior Infants participating in the sample group were invited to attend the dialogic reading workshop. The researcher deliberately created a circle formation seating arrangement to ensure all participants could see and hear the researcher and each other. Parents were given a power point presentation on dialogic reading, its origins and research findings. Parents received their dialogic reading starter pack which included a beanbag, timetable, reflective journal and a dialogic reading bookmark. (See Appendix C) Finally the researcher presented an overview of the main objectives and expectations of the six week project. This outlined the participant's role within the research and included;

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- 1) Reading to their child daily for 15 minutes and engaging in the dialogic reading prompts provided on each page.
- 2) Engaging in a timetable of repeated readings of the same book and using a dialogic reading bookmark to further enhance the interactional dialogue and questioning during the reading engagement.
- 3) Recording the book title, time, date and reading engagement outcomes in a reflective journal over a six week period. (See Appendix F)

At this stage of the workshop we had a 10 minute refreshment interval. This was an important part of the session as the researcher wanted to cultivate discussion and interaction among the parents and the researcher, on an individual level. The second half of the tutoring session involved introducing the participants to the PEER and CROWD reading techniques Whitehurst et al., (1988). Following on from that the researcher emphasised how the children would be assessed in their emergent literacy skills before and after the intervention. Finally the researcher discussed how she has embraced the dialogic reading approach as a result of undertaking this research study and modelled the approach for parents.

The researcher recorded her own dialogic reading footage whilst reading to her daughter. (See Appendix C) It was hoped that such modelling would impress upon the participants how comparative and practicable this technique was to engage with during story time in the home. To draw once again on the words of Fullan (2010) “if you want to change any relationship, you have to behave your way into it. Trust comes after good experiences.” (p.97) The researcher sought to convey a positive, organic and authentic image of the possibilities and expectations of the intervention from the outset. In doing so she provided all participants with an equal starting point regardless of previous read aloud techniques practiced at home prior to the intervention. Parents were then presented with the PEER and CROWD dialogic reading techniques. Whitehurst et al., (1988) (See Figure 2)

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In order to further enhance the validity and credibility of the research data (Yin 1994) and the reading engagements the researcher decided to attach individual prompts (See Appendix D) to the pages of all 12 story books used during the project. Such prompts specifically guided and directed the interactional dialogue between reader and listener. This in turn provided all participants with equal access to the dialogic reading techniques although it did not guarantee the researcher that all participants would avail of them. Parents were also encouraged to use the bookmarks to create and nurture their own natural dialogue between the text and the child.

Engaging in literacy as a social practice with a view to developing reading experiences and emergent literacy skills is one of the fundamental messages of this study. It seizes the Vygotskian (1978) view of interactive discussion and meaning making with text as the foundation for language development motivated by social interactions between the adult and child. Parents were then presented with a beanbag to create a story space in the home environment. A quiet time and space in the home was recommended for the project. Parents were encouraged to draw attention to the title, author and illustrator of each book.

Furthermore, they were instructed to track the print with their finger during the intervention. Parents were then presented with the story books for the project and were encouraged to alternate their readings over 4 days. This is in line with National Educational Psychology Services (NEPS, 2015) guidelines proposing that reading on a daily basis is most effective for literacy development. The parents were asked to observe how their child responds to the different storybooks over the six weeks. Participants were asked to consider such reactions and record such observations in their reflective journals. A focus group date to meet and reflect on how the intervention was progressing was agreed upon. Parents were given an opportunity to put forward any questions arising from the tutoring session. The

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workshop ended with participants agreeing to communicate with the researcher via text message and email.

### **Scaffolding**

The term scaffolding relates back to the work of Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). Although their descriptions of scaffolding relates heavily to the well-thought-out exchanges between an adult and a child with the final outcome helping the child to reach a particular objective, the researcher aimed to use such a concept to support the parents in this study.

Boblett (2012) viewed scaffolding as a temporary support structure for the learner until it is no longer necessary. The researcher intended to support participating parents engaging in this study with a variety of temporary support structures throughout the six week process. In doing so and drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems theory, the researcher hoped that directly scaffolding and supporting the participating parents through the process would circuitously benefit the participating children. In order to ensure parents were well supported throughout the training and six week dialogic reading intervention the following supports were provided for participating parents.

### **Dialogic Reading Intervention Support for Parents**

- 1) DR technique training workshop and DR video modelling the approach.
- 2) DR starter pack including; beanbags for parents to provide a unique story space for the research, bookmarks to assist prompting during literacy engagements, timetables showing books to be read each week, DR page prompts to ensure PEER & CROWD techniques are utilised and reflective journals with prompts in each diary.
- 3) DR story book exchange Mondays & Thursdays 2pm (pupil collection time)
- 4) Focus Group at 3 week point.
- 5) Researcher contact details.
- 6) Graduation ceremony and certificate for participants. (See Appendix G)



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### **Post Intervention Data Collection (Parents)**

On concluding the dialogic reading intervention parents were invited to partake in an interview relating specifically to their thoughts, opinions and outcomes of the study. (See Appendix F) Journals were also collected post intervention.

### **Post Intervention Data Collection (Children)**

On concluding the research study all 12 children were retested in relation to their emergent literacy skills. These tests were administered to each pupil in the sample and control group using the same procedures as pre intervention assessment. They were also completed over two consecutive school days. Finally the children were invited to express their views on the reading project. (See Appendix F)

### **Limitations**

The most ostensible limitations to this study is the authentication of parents responses in the questionnaires, parents undertaking the actual daily reading engagements with the children (undertaken in the home environment) and the practice of the dialogic reading techniques during these sessions all depend on the honesty of the participants. Additionally the legitimacy of journal and interview responses is subject to the truthful answers of the participants involved.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the research method that was used to explore the research objectives presented in Chapter One. The major objective of the study was to examine parental perspectives and measure children's emergent literacy skills in relation to dialogic reading over a six week period. Therefore a case study intervention informed by the ethical principles of action research was considered the most fitting methodology for this particular research project. This chapter also gives a detailed account of the data collection methods

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chosen and the rationale for their use in this research. Finally, the limitations of the research were also considered. The following chapter discusses the results from the research.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter summarises and presents the main findings of the research carried out for this study. The findings presented in this chapter are based on the data gathered from qualitative and quantitative sources and the research questions directing the study. Firstly the quantitative data findings from the pre and post emergent literacy tests and questionnaires are presented. Following that the qualitative data from the one to one parent interviews, focus group and reflective journals are presented. Finally the children's opinions on the dialogic reading intervention are presented.

#### **Participants Profile**

The participants involved in this study were all parents and pupils from the Senior Infant class in the researcher's school. All 12 parents involved in both the sample and control group were mothers. Of the 12 children involved six were boys and six were girls. All the children involved were aged between 5.11years and 6.6 years. Table four illustrates the data on each pupil. In order to protect their anonymity each pupil has been given an identifier referred to as Target Child (TC).

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Table 4

*Pupil Participant Profile*

<u>SAMPLE GROUP</u>			<u>CONTROL GROUP</u>		
<b>CODE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>
<b>TC1</b>	F	5.11 YRS	<b>TC 7</b>	F	6.6 YRS
<b>TC2</b>	F	5.11YRS	<b>TC 8</b>	F	6.6 YRS
<b>TC3</b>	M	6.6 YRS	<b>TC 9</b>	M	6.5 YRS
<b>TC4</b>	F	6.5 YRS	<b>TC10</b>	F	6.2 YRS
<b>TC5</b>	M	6.2 YRS	<b>TC11</b>	M	6.6 YRS
<b>TC6</b>	M	6.4 YRS	<b>TC12</b>	M	5.11 YRS

Average Age of Children in the Sample Group = 5.9 YRS

Average Age of Children in the Control Group = 6.2 YRS

### **Pre &Post Emergent Literacy Test Results**

On receiving written consent from parents and children to participate in the intervention the initial testing for both sample and control groups was undertaken. The children were tested individually in a quiet room. The tests were short and took 40 minutes in total to administer. One of the main research questions, sought to examine the difference in children's emergent literacy skills before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention. The individual tests and the results for both groups are presented and analysed in the following Tables.

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Table 5 presents the pupil's Letter Identification scores before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention.

Table 5

*SAMPLE GROUP LETTER IDENTIFICATION TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	Score (Pre Intervention)	Score (Post Intervention)	Variation	Letters Unknown To Participant
T C 1	52/54	52/54	NONE	q Z
T C 2	51/54	53/54	+ 2	q l g
T C 3	50/54	54/54	+ 4	l y G g
T C 4	51/54	53/54	+2	q c g
T C 5	52/54	50/54	-2	l d q Q
T C 6	50/54	52/54	+2	q J l

*CONTROL GROUP LETTER IDENTIFICATION TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	Score (Pre Intervention)	Score (Post Intervention)	Variation	Letters Unknown To Participant
T C 7	54/54	54/54	NONE	-----
T C 8	52/54	53/54	+ 1	Q
T C 9	53/54	53/54	NONE	L
T C 10	50/54	52/54	+2	L Q W
T C 11	53/54	54/54	+1	L
T C 12	52/54	50/54	-2	L v Y y q

The test results show that 66.6% of the sample group improved their Letter Identification score. In comparison to 50% of the control group improved their results after six weeks.

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Table 6 presents the pupil's Sight Word scores before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention.

Table 6

*SAMPLE GROUP DUNCAN SIGHT WORD TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	Sight Reading Score (Pre Intervention)	Sight Reading Score (Post Intervention)	Stanine Before	Stanine After	Sight Reading Variation	Stanine Score Variation
T C 1	21/23	21/23	6	5	NONE	+1
T C 2	19/23	23/23	5	7	+4	NONE
T C 3	22/23	23/23	5	6	+1	+1
T C 4	20/23	23/23	4	6	+3	+1
T C 5	22/23	21/23	6	4	-1	+1
T C 6	20/23	23/23	4	6	+3	+2

*CONTROL GROUP DUNCAN SIGHT WORD TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	Sight Reading Score (Pre Intervention)	Sight Reading Score (Post Intervention)	Stanine Before	Stanine After	Sight Reading Variation	Stanine Score Variation
T C 7	22/23	23/23	5	6	+1	+1
T C 8	23/23	23/23	7	7	NONE	NONE
T C 9	22/23	23/23	6	7	+1	+1
T C 10	22/23	23/23	6	7	+1	+1
T C 11	23/23	23/23	6	7	NONE	+1
T C 12	11/23	21/23	4	6	+10	+2

66.6% of both the sample and control groups improved their Duncan Sight Word reading score.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Table 7 presents the pupil's Concepts About Print scores before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention.

Table 7

*SAMPLE GROUP CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT (C.A.P) TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	C.A.P Score Pre Int.	C.A.P Score Post Int.	Stanine Before	Stanine After	C.A.P Variation	Stanine Variation
T C 1	15/24	16/24	5	4	+1	-1
T C 2	18/24	19/24	7	6	+1	-1
T C 3	14/24	22/24	2	7	+8	+5
T C 4	15/24	19/24	3	5	+4	+2
T C 5	6/24	19/24	1	5	+13	+4
T C 6	9/24	18/24	1	5	+9	+4

*CONTROL GROUP CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT (C.A.P) TEST RESULTS*

Participant Number	C.A.P Score Pre Int.	C.A.P Score Post Int.	Stanine Before	Stanine After	C.A.P Variation	Stanine Variation
T C 7	16/24	18/24	3	5	+2	+2
T C 8	17/24	23/24	4	8	+6	+4
T C 9	14/24	20/24	2	6	+6	+4
T C 10	19/24	22/24	6	7	+3	+1
T C 11	15/24	17/24	3	4	+2	+1
T C 12	12/24	18/24	4	6	+6	+2

100% of both control and sample groups remained the same or improved their Concepts About Print score.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Tables 8, 9 and 10 presents the pupil's Fluency scores before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention.

Table 8

*SAMPLE GROUP FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (SEMANTICS)*

Participant Number	Semantic Raw Score Pre Int.	Semantic Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Semantic Raw Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 1	16	27	106	131	+11	+25
T C 2	17	21	109	119	+4	+10
T C 3	16	15	103	109	-1	+6
T C 4	17	22	109	119	+5	+10
T C 5	6	17	69	109	+11	+40
T C 6	16	18	103	109	+2	+6

*CONTROL GROUP FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (SEMANTICS)*

Participant Number	Semantic Raw Score Pre Int.	Semantic Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Semantic Raw Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 7	10	8	83	74	-2	-9
T C 8	13	18	95	109	+5	+14
T C 9	13	11	97	87	-2	-10
T C 10	16	19	125	114	+3	-11
T C 11	12	13	91	95	-1	+4
T C 12	3	7	69	115	+5	+46

The fluency semantics results show that 83.3% of the sample group improved their semantic raw score compared with 50% of the control group.



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Table 9

<i>SAMPLE GROUP</i>		<i>FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (ALLITERATION)</i>				
Participant Number	Alliteration Raw Score Pre Int.	Alliteration Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Alliteration Raw Score Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 1	8	12	102	115	+4	+13
T C 2	14	11	120	91	-3	-29
T C 3	11	13	111	116	+2	+5
T C 4	8	10	109	108	+2	-1
T C 5	8	14	102	120	+6	+18
T C 6	8	10	102	108	+2	+6

<i>CONTROL GROUP</i>		<i>FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (ALLITERATION)</i>				
Participant Number	Alliteration Raw Score Pre Int.	Alliteration Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Alliteration Raw Score Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 7	7	7	95	95	NONE	NONE
T C 8	16	15	124	121	-1	-3
T C 9	9	7	106	95	-2	-11
T C 10	14	11	120	113	-3	-7
T C 11	5	8	85	100	+3	+15
T C 12	3	16	74	106	+13	+32

83.3% of the sample group improved their alliteration raw score in contrast to 50% of the control group who remained at the same level or improved their result.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Table 10

*SAMPLE GROUP FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (RHYMING)*

Participant Number	Rhyming Raw Score Pre Int.	Rhyming Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Rhyming Raw Score Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 1	5	7	106	115	+2	+9
T C 2	5	8	106	119	+3	+13
T C 3	6	14	108	131	+8	+23
T C 4	2	2	89	89	NONE	NONE
T C 5	1	1	69	69	NONE	NONE
T C 6	7	13	115	133	+6	+18

*CONTROL GROUP FLUENCY TEST RESULTS (RHYMING)*

Participant Number	Rhyming Raw Score Pre Int.	Rhyming Raw Score Post Int.	Standardised Score Pre Int.	Standardised Score Post Int.	Rhyming Raw Score Variation	Standardised Score Variation
T C 7	5	3	104	93	-2	-11
T C 8	6	14	108	131	+8	+23
T C 9	2	1	89	69	-1	-20
T C 10	12	11	115	130	-1	+15
T C 11	1	1	69	77	NONE	+8
T C 12	2	7	89	97	+6	+8

100% of the sample group remained the same or improved their rhyming raw score in comparison to 50% of the control group who improved or retained their rhyming raw score.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Questionnaire Responses**

The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher to ascertain current reading practices in the home as well as parents perspectives on their children's approach to literacy. Each questionnaire consisted of two parts (Reading to Your Child/Your Child as a Reader) and was completed by the parents prior to the reading intervention. One of the main research questions sought to examine the difference in parental literacy opinion and awareness before and after the six week dialogic reading intervention. The researcher did not include a follow up questionnaire post intervention however she did use specific questions from the questionnaire in the one to one post intervention interviews with the sample group parents. The following responses were noted before and after the six week project.

Table 11

*Sample Group Parent Questionnaire Responses*

Question	Survey Response	Interview Response
	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention
Do you stop at various parts of the book to discuss the story?	67% Sometimes 33% Always	100% of parents interviewed have continued to do this post intervention.
Do you relate the story to a similar experience in your child's life?	83% Sometimes 17% Never	100% of parents interviewed now use this technique when reading.
Do you repeat and expand your child's vocabulary?	67% Sometimes 33% Rarely	100% of parents interviewed engage in this technique when reading.
Do you feel that your child is a motivated reader?	50% Sometimes 50% Often	100% of parents said their child was a more motivated reader as a result of taking part in the research project.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

### **Focus Group Meeting**

Qualitative data collected from the focus group meeting (See Appendix E) provided the researcher with an insightful representation of the parents' opinions, feelings and overall experience of the dialogic reading intervention. In order to protect their right to anonymity, participating parents' have been given the following identifiers; Lily, Heather, Rose, Daisy, Dahlia and Poppy. The researcher decided upon these identifiers when transcribing the focus group recordings as it became apparent that even at three weeks in to the reading intervention the parents had flourished and bloomed into the intervention. The focus group was enlightening as parents were very vocal and frank about what was going well at the halfway mark. Two major talking points ran through this meeting from the outset. The first was that the parents spoke at length about their child's individual daily reading experience and the second was parents noted a remarkable difference in their child's approach to reading.

*Parents spoke at length about their child's individual daily reading experience.*

From the outset parents shared with each other the reasons why they believed the engagements were positive or negative. "I found that (X) did not really like "The Witch's Children" so I made up some of my own but it was late and she was tired and she mainly answered yes and no and shrugged her shoulders till the end. She enjoyed the previous week's stories. I just don't think this book appealed to her that's all." (Poppy) Another parent supported this view on this particular book suggesting that "(X) was disinterested in it and found it hard to relate to also."(Lily) However other participants explained what their children liked about the story books used in the intervention. "The big books are a hit in our house he loved opening it out on the floor and standing back to look at the pictures."(Dahlia) This was supported by another parent stating that "(X) loves the big books this is her first week to have one and she loves the size. She even said "Wow! Look at the size of the

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

pictures Mom”. We are going away tonight and she actually said to me “don’t forget to pack my two books.”(Daisy) The open and direct dialogue between the participants brought about much discussion within the group.

*Parents noted a remarkable difference in their child’s approach to reading*

The second talking point to dominate the focus group meeting was the degree of change the parents had noticed in their children’s approach to books and reading since undertaking the project. One parent commented “Yes we have lots of books at home but I can see now why he might not look at them.” (Dahlia) Another parent added when referring to her own child “It’s about finding the right one for him really.” (Heather) The following statement signifies how even at three weeks into the dialogic reading intervention both parent and children’s positions regarding literacy had changed.

“I noticed that (X) was mad keen to go to the Annual Book Club last week and I had definite books in mind. I also had a book picked out but she really wanted this particular book. So I gave in because I was doing this project and I knew how important it was to go with what they can relate to. She got it and has not put it down all week and prior to this I would have bought the book I thought was best.” (Daisy)

### **Interview Responses & Journal Entries**

Common themes transpired from the qualitative data when triangulation of the data was incorporated. *Time, Engagement, Relationships* and *Perceptions* were mutual areas of discussion in the focus group, interviews and journals.

#### *Time*

Throughout the interview process many of the parents’ highlighted time as the most challenging aspect of reading at home. However all the parents involved committed to engaging in dialogic reading with their children as they believe it has benefitted their child.

“I would never have thought to read like that” (Daisy) Another parent added “It was so

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enjoyable I find myself more conscious and I now dig deeper as a result of doing this.”

(Heather) Although time was a factor at the onset one of the parents suggested in the follow up interview that “you have to make the time really don’t you?”(Lily).

### *Engagement*

The level of engagement required between all parties involved in this six week reading intervention was quite profound. On one level the children had to engage with testing pre and post intervention as well as the daily reading sessions with their parents. The parents were required to engage in the training workshop, focus group, journal entries, interviews and the daily reading sessions with their children. Finally the researcher had to engage with the school management, the parents and children as well as embracing current research and best practice for our school. The participants were aware of the impact of such engagements, “We found it great fun one on one and she enjoyed it “(Rose) “He cuddled up to me more, it opened up dialogue and discussion which I loved. It got other family members involved too.” (Heather) “It has changed our format for reading” (Daisy). It is clear that these high levels of engagement were met with a high level of interested participants.

### *Relationships*

The relationships between adult and child, parent and teacher as well as the school and home communities have all benefitted from a storybook reading intervention. All participating parents expressed an interest in playing a leading role in future literacy projects of this kind in the infant classes. Drawing on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) once more, who advocates that individuals influence and are influenced by social experiences and perceives all social influences as a nested system completely interdependent on each other, consisting of the Microsystem -family, Microsystem-school, Mesosystem-family-school links, Ecosystem-parental employment and Macro system- government economic policies,

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one can see the advantages of parallel partnerships between home and school communities especially with regard to literacy in the early years.

### *Perceptions*

The final common thread corroborated between the qualitative data sources was the participant perceptions of the dialogic reading intervention and how it revealed itself in their children as readers. Responses from the parents were extremely positive with dialogic reading leading to an increase in engagement and vocabulary. One parent mentioned that her daughter's "reading skills are a lot better." (Poppy) Another said "her vocabulary has just rocketed through the roof." (Rose) and one parent observed a significant change stating that "his reading interest has intensified he enjoys it now, I suppose it has sparked an interest." (Heather).

The level of detail provided by the participants in the reflective journals was indicative of how interested and committed the parents were to the six week programme. It portrayed to the researcher the struggles, successes and transformation of parent and pupil reading experiences during this time. It was also reflective of the remarkable energy and evolution that this reading project brought to our school. The participants were honest in documenting the challenges and achievements experienced along the way. The journals provided a most enriching layer of data which greatly assisted in corroborating other qualitative sources. (See Appendix F)

### **Challenges**

It is imperative to point out that the many successes experienced during the data collection phase were not without their difficulties. It was evident at the three week focus group that the timing of the daily reading sessions and book changeover day were issues among participants. Therefore it was agreed that Monday was a better day to change the reading books. Parents revealed that fatigue affected the quality of their child's reading

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performance. Consequently parents agreed to complete their reading sessions as early in the day as possible. Furthermore the parents questioned the researcher on the quality of their journal entries. Rose pointed out “I feel I am writing the same thing all the time because she seems to have the same experience with every book and I write that.” Poppy mutually shared her journal experience “if a book doesn’t appeal to her interests I don’t know what to write after.” The researcher suggested the following to all participants who were struggling with the entries.

Maybe you should change your writing perspective for the next 3 weeks. Instead of writing about what your child does during the reading time, write from your point of view. Make connections and write about your observations of how he or she thinks about the story and how she relates it to herself. (Researcher)

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the statistical outcomes and the results from the present study. In order to situate the results and their relevance to the main research questions and the literature review a discussion of these results will be undertaken.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Five presents the discussion of the research findings of this study. It also explores the implications for these results in the context of providing dialogic reading training for parents and early year practitioners. The limitations of this study are also discussed. An examination of the main research findings and their connection to the research questions will now be undertaken.

#### **Main Findings**

The analysis of the data collected and presented in the previous chapter resonated repeatedly with the findings in the literature review as well as identifying implications specific to the local context for this research. This research study sought to answer two main research questions in relation to literacy intervention in the early years. (1) How does a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment with parents as tutors effect children's emergent literacy skills? (2) What are the factors that support and challenge the parents experience in the implementation of a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment?

The results of this study revealed positive changes among parent and child reading experiences. A deeper analysis of the individual research questions in relation to the data collected will assist in establishing to what degree each research question has been answered. Four major themes materialised from the data analysis and in particular triangulation of the data collected. Time, Engagement, Relationships and Perceptions all emerged as prevailing themes of this dialogic reading study. The findings in response to research question one will now be undertaken.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

### **Emergent Literacy Skills**

How does a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment with parents as tutors effect the following emergent literacy skills? Letter Identification, Sight Words, Concepts of Print and Fluency.

#### *Letter Identification*

Letter Identification test results indicate that 66.6% of the sample group remained the same or improved their Letter Identification score in comparison to 50% of the control group. This informs the researcher that the dialogic reading intervention undertaken in her school has had little effect on the participating pupils' letter identification knowledge. However when the researcher further analysed the number of letters unknown to the control group (10 pre&8post) and sample group (18pre&10post) before and after testing, it was the sample group who reduced their incorrect responses by four times as much as the control group. If we draw on Paris (2005) Constrained Skills Theory the parallel teachings and strategies employed in the Senior Infant classroom must be acknowledged as factors affecting these results. Furthermore it can be argued that the sample group had more to achieve in relation to Letter Identification as their scores were lower at the pre intervention stage.

#### *Duncan Sight Word*

The Duncan Sight Word test results revealed that both sample and control groups improved their sight reading score. However when the results were examined collectively the control group outperformed the sample group in reducing the number of incorrect responses after six weeks. Pre intervention results indicate the control group had a collective score of 15 incorrect sight words compared to 14 from the sample group. Post intervention results show the control group reduced the deficit to 2 incorrect sight words in contrast to 4 incorrect responses given by the sample group. It is reassuring to know that both groups

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

reduced their margin of error steadily and in line with each other over the six weeks.

However the researcher is drawn to the control group results and those in particular of TC12.

This outlier student skewed the results as he improved his sight word score from 48% (pre-test) to 91% (post-test). Therefore accounting for 43% of the control groups combined score.

Nevertheless it can be argued that this student had the lowest score from the outset and

therefore had the most scope for improvement. This result also supports the opinion of Paris

(2005) that much time is dedicated to the teaching of constrained skills in the early years.

### *Concepts About Print*

On the face of it the Concepts About Print results show that all participants in the sample and control groups have improved on their performance since the intervention began. However on deeper analysis of the data it was the sample group who made the most gains in relation to their print awareness and familiarity with books. They reduced their response rate error by 25% compared to a 17.5% reduction made by the control group. In particular sample group children TC3, TC5 and TC6 made extraordinary gains during the reading intervention with their parents. Overall the Concepts About Print test results are encouraging as this test was specifically design by Marie Clay (2002) to measure children's print awareness and knowledge about books and text. These results also inform the researcher that the participating sample group parents embraced the DR training and engaged in the reading sessions. Furthermore this had a positive impact on how the sample group children became more aware of the quality and purpose of reading during the sessions. Such findings validate Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Lindon (2012) equally supported Bronfenbrenner's perspective of childhood being altered and effected by economic, demographic, cultural and political influences.

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One advantage of the ecological approach is the attempt to grapple with parts of the social system that indirectly affect children. Children are influenced by the details of culture or faith, of current economic policy or the demands of adult employment as they trickle down through the layers and into personal relationships.

(Lindon, 2012, p.43)

### *Fluency*

*Semantics.* The sample group outperformed the control group by a margin of 36.6 %. This test required the pupils to list various categories within a 30 second time frame. However in the post intervention test the researcher noticed that the sample group participants spoke with greater ease and enthusiasm in comparison to the control group. The intensity of the questioning and dialogue experienced by the sample group pupils over the six week reading intervention may contribute to these results and explain this surge in confidence and motivation.

*Alliteration.* Once again the sample group performed better than the control group with the results showing an 83.6% improvement in the sample group compared to a 50% improvement in the control group. However once again the results obtained by control group participant TC 12 skew the results with no other participant in either group reaching this level. TC 12 is 5.11yrs making him the youngest boy in this research project and further research involving boys of a comparative age may explain the bloom in his emergent literacy skills at this stage of development. However the sample group results show that five out of the six pupils have improved their alliteration score which bodes well for the effect of the dialogic reading intervention in the researcher's school.

*Rhyming.* The Fluency Rhyming results show that 100% of the sample group remained the same or improved their rhyming raw score in comparison to 50% of the control group. Overall the three elements of the Fluency test, semantics, alliteration and rhyming

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significantly support the undertaking of a dialogic reading programme in the infant classes. The sample group surpassed the control group in all three areas of Fluency which indicates that the frequent dialogue used during the reading sessions with parents contributed to the participating pupils' phonological ability. This is a valuable finding as fluency is an important unconstrained skill. Paris (2005) believed that fluency was an essential element in the later development of reading comprehension.

In summary the six week dialogic reading intervention carried out by the parents had a strong and favourable impact on the emergent literacy skills of the sample group children. Concepts About Print and Fluency demonstrated the most notable improvements for the sample group with Letter Identification and Sight Words proving slightly favourable for the sample group. However it can be easily determined from the results that the control group consisted of higher ability students as many of the participants scored high in the pre intervention testing. Additionally with an average age of 6.2 years they were collectively older than the sample group who had a collective age of 5.9 years. Literacy practice in the Senior Infant classroom must also be taken into account as the use of a graded reader approach became embedded in the classroom in the second school term. However the researcher is satisfied that out of all the areas tested, the sample group performed extremely well in the tests most relative to the dialogic reading approach. The Concepts About Print and Fluency results relate strongly to an increase in book familiarity and dialogue among sample group participants. The sample group excelled in these particular assessments which shows that direct intervention from parents who have received training in a reading approach such as dialogic reading has a positive and immediate impact on emergent literacy skills in the early years. Such findings speak directly to the writings contained in the literature review and in particular to the work of Bredekamp, (2009), Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins and Weiss (2006), Justice and Pullen, (2003) who advocate early intervention in relation to early

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literacy success. The emergent literacy test results also support the research offered by Paris (2005) and Stahl (2011) who both concur that high levels of constrained skill ability does not adequately assess and reflect literacy success in its entirety.

The participating parents also reported evidence of change in the children's approach and attitude to reading. One parent was quite open about the difference in her child's literacy awareness as a result of the reading engagements.

I noticed more so that he is reading stuff now, other stuff, more stuff, I see he had a newspaper last night; he had the headline of the Star newspaper read in no time. I see everything we buy now food wise he is looking at it. Which I found that wasn't the case before. Now I notice he has more interest in the words and the reading now than before. (Dahlia)

Another parent noticed "He is asking more about vocabulary, I suppose he is inquiring more what does this word mean and recognising words. He automatically reads the title and author now without me asking him to." (Heather) Rose observed "I have noticed throughout the weeks of this project X's vocabulary has increased and she has surprised me with different statements and how she can put these words into a sentence." Such insightful accounts from the parents provided the researcher with additional confirmation that a dialogic reading intervention of this kind influences the development of emergent literacy skills beyond the daily reading engagement.

### **Dialogic Reading in the Home**

What are the factors that support and challenge the parents experience in the implementation of a six week dialogic reading intervention in the home environment? The post intervention interview perspectives gathered from parents strongly indicate the dialogic reading approach was successful in transforming how parents read to their children. It was evident to the researcher after the focus group meeting that the participants were interested,

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vociferous and determined to get the best out of this project for themselves and their child. This was further confirmed during the one to one interviews post intervention and on exploring the journal entries. All of the parents agreed that they saw the benefit of using this style of reading and would continue to use it in future reading engagements. Rose remarked “I am sorry now it’s finished to be honest I’d keep going but I suppose we could keep going ourselves” When asked if the taking part in this study had changed how you read to your child Poppy commented “yeah it did because I kind of tend to ask her more questions now during the book whereas before I tended to just read it” Daisy thought “It was so enjoyable, and I now dig deeper as a result of doing this. The fact that she wants to read now is the big thing.” It is evident to the researcher that once the parents observed the positive changes in their child’s literacy experience they further involved themselves in the study. The fact that the level of support among the parents was so substantial was a leading factor in the success of the reading intervention. There was an increase in many other features related to the parent child reading experience, such as the frequency of reading, knowing the prompt their child related most to, knowing the type of book their child likes to read and the importance of developing language throughout the reading engagement. These are positive and significant changes in the development of emergent literacy skills in the home environment and support previous research undertaken by Brown 2014, Lomax and McGee (1987), Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) and Graver J. Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998).

The positive disclosures made by the parents in relation their child’s emergent literacy ability informs the researcher that parents in general are unaware of the stages and skills of early literacy development in the early years. Insufficient knowledge regarding how children learn to read and the strategies that can enhance this process is a challenge for parents. Cognisant of the evidence gathered during this study that shows a tangible connection between parents input and emergent literacy development there is a need for

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practitioners to communicate more with parents regarding specific reading skill development from an early stage. The results gathered by the researcher are in line with the Parent – School Partnership model, devised by Snow et al., (1991) that show formal parent school involvement has a powerful and positive bearing on children’s word recognition, vocabulary and reading skills. Therefore it is incumbent of practitioners and educational policy makers to do more to include the parent body in understanding how children learn to read and how parents can utilise the home environment to facilitate literacy progression.

The type of book being read to the child was also a challenging factor in delivering a successful reading engagement. The parents were definite about the type of book that resulted in a positive or negative reading engagement. All parents agreed that the children engaged more in the reading session when they were able to relate to the book at hand. Research offered by Sipe (2002) and explored in the literature review supports the findings presented by the parents. A certain type of book will create a certain type of response from the child and this adds to the quality of the reading experience.

Equally all parents agreed that they were now more aware of the specific dialogic prompts and genre their child could relate to and enjoy. All agreed that they would have liked to have received the dialogic reading training last year when their child was in Junior Infants. Participant responses included “Yes but with easier prompts. I had a niece present for one of the readings she is in Junior Infants and she was bouncing off the seat to answer questions so definitely.” (Poppy) “Yeah I would have loved to have known a lot of this last year. It definitely would do no harm.”(Daisy) However one parent made a motivating point. “Actually I would love to have had it last year *and* this year and then compare how much further on they would be.” (Rose) All Parents reported that they had increased their time and attendance to reading in the home environment.



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### *Emotional wellbeing in young children.*

On examination of the reflective journals the researcher noticed several references made by the parents about their child's reaction to the storyline or the dilemma of a particular character in the book. The journal entries varied from "I was surprised when she said at the end that Delphine felt guilty for being nasty towards Bella. I didn't realise she had those words and meanings in her vocabulary" (Daisy) Another journal entry read "she was reluctant to read this book tonight as she said it made her feel sad" and finally "she says she gets frustrated when she doesn't get her own way!" (Poppy) "We discussed the topic of sharing, not sharing and feelings." (Heather) "I noticed that she said she felt "relief" when the boy had saved the whale and that it was a happy ending" (Rose) Although the research questions did not seek to focus on emotional wellbeing and feelings it is clear that the dialogic story reading project lends itself to examining the whole child perspective in the context of their world. This supports the National Children's Strategy (2000) which acknowledges Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing, Spiritual and Moral Wellbeing, Identity and Family Relationships as just some of the dimensions of childhood.

### **Study Limitations**

All research studies have various limitations and are constrained by different factors. Firstly time and other resource constraints resulted in a small scale sample and the research being limited to just one project over a six week period. This limits the implications and conclusions that can be drawn from the research. It is difficult to rigorously analyse the data collected from such a small sample size. Extrapolation is more valid from the qualitative data gathered as a result of such a small sample size and sampling methodology. A longitudinal study of the programme using a larger sample would provide more robust findings and increase the generalisability of the study. It is important to point out that 100% of the parents in the sample and control groups were female. All the data collected was

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based on a maternal point of view. Further research undertaken with fathers may show different outcomes. Additionally all parents volunteered to take part in this study and this may explain the high interest rate among participating parents. Finally in order to situate these findings and the possibility of replicating this study in comparable rural DEIS schools more research in this area is necessary.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings in light of the two main research questions. It also presented additional findings relative to the literature review. Finally the limitations of this study were presented. The recommendations and conclusions arising from the findings will be examined in Chapter Six.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

#### Implications for Parents and School Personnel

Educators must prepare their classroom settings to reflect the next phase of linguistic development. Acknowledging where the child has come from and what oral language abilities need to be developed will greatly inform planning and practice. The teacher must prioritise early intervention, early language acquisition and reading vocabulary as indicators for successful reading ability. Parents and teachers should work together to create an atmosphere ripe with opportunities for emergent literacy success; ensuring children of all abilities can participate in the process.

Dialogic reading can be used as a strategy to promote positive parent relations within the school. When children arrive in school they encounter a different linguistic world from the home environment. Formal and informal speech, new dialects and discourse will all challenge and stimulate the child's linguistic ability in the child's school and community. Libraries should be accessible and organised with reading corners, to enhance language development. Investing in a variety of books rich in language and wordless books to stimulate the imagination will return dividends in conversation.

Encouraging active participation in read aloud activities, posing questions, prompting, problem solving, clarifying and explaining word meanings will all nourish positive literacy habits in home and school. On completing the intervention the researcher asked the participating pupils what they thought of the dialogic reading programme. Their responses included "I liked all of the pictures. It gives me hints what words there is." (TC2) In a post intervention interview this child's parent noted a remarkable increase in TC2's vocabulary. TC1 reported that "I liked when we lie down, cuddle up and read the books" This child's parent spoke about the enjoyment and quality time the reading programme

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brought into their home. TC3 said “I liked sitting on the beanbag” This child’s parent mentioned the story space as being a very important part of reading in their home. TC4 said “I liked the questions best.” This child’s parent reported that her child enjoyed the questioning element of the engagement. TC5 commented “I liked when the boy got the whale out of the bath. I liked the big books they were so big” This child’s parent spoke about how he would use his imagination and predict the story ending. Finally TC6 said “The books were kind of good, they had stories in them that weren’t the same” This child’s parent remarked that his reading interest had strengthened over the six week period. Corroborating parent and child responses further validates the importance of setting aside quality literacy time in the early days of formal schooling in order to provide a solid foundation for future literacy engagements.

The implementation of a dialogic reading has had a positive impact on emergent literacy skills in the Senior Infant class in the researcher’s school. In particular the emergent literacy skills of the sample group children improved significantly in comparison to those of the control group children. Furthermore all participating parents have agreed to act as mentors to guide new parents through the process and some are even willing to speak about how this reading approach affected their reading experiences in the home environment.

It is evident that participating parents have developed a sense of ownership and agency having been the original group to undertake the dialogic reading training in the school. Participating parents, infant teachers and school management are currently planning on implementing dialogic reading training for new and current parents and pupils in the infant classes. 5 major findings from this research have led to this change in the researcher’s school. They included children’s emergent literacy skills, the importance of dialogue between parents and children, parental expectation, emotional wellbeing in children and home school connections. A focus on each finding will now be undertaken.

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### 1) *Children's emergent literacy skills.*

This research study impacted positively on the Senior Infant children's emergent literacy skills at a crucial time and age in literacy development. (Clay, 2002) The results signify the importance of early literacy intervention as outlined by Adams (1990)

### 2) *The importance of dialogue between parents and children.*

This research study also highlights the absolute importance of parents entering into daily dialogue with their children. The research provides a home literacy approach which complements the implementation of a new Primary Oral Language Curriculum (2016) in the classroom environment. Both initiatives aim to develop dialogue and literacy learning within the child.

### 3) *Parental expectation/perception.*

The findings of this study show a stark distinction between what the parents thought their children were capable of and what they actually experienced during the reading engagements during the six weeks. Not only did their perceptions change but so did their expectations. One parent commented "I would never have thought to read to her like that. It has changed our format for reading." (Daisy) Another parent remarked "I was gobsmacked that she had that word (camouflage) in her vocabulary. Let alone define its meaning." (Rose) Therefore this study suggests that parental attitudes to reading in the early years are of primary importance. Young children may not have much opportunity to act on their interests if parental beliefs present a barrier to literacy-related activities.

### 4) *Emotional wellbeing in children.*

Children participating in the research study voiced their concerns or worries about a plot, character or story ending. The parents also noted such comments as remarkable and spent time during the reading engagements discussing such worries and feelings. This indicates

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that the medium of dialogic story time can be used as a valuable channel to discuss worries or anxieties in children today.

### 5) *Home and school connections.*

An opportunity to engage in positive parent partnership relationships is always welcomed in the researcher's school. This research study has proven that this can occur with current parents participating in the study offering to take a leading role in future programmes. Snow et al., (1991) recognised formal parent school involvement as having a powerful and positive bearing on children's word recognition, vocabulary, reading and writing skills

### **Recommendations**

1. The results of the study support recognising "the family is the child's first and longest lasting context for development." (Berk, 2009, p.563) Dialogic reading has been recognised as a literacy approach that is easy and manageable for parents to undertake in the home environment. (Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005) Therefore parents should be given this training as part of the Junior Infant induction process. Parents could be given storybooks with prompts to read over the summer prior to Junior Infants commencing. On a local level the immediate initiation of dialogic reading will be available to the infant classes in the researcher's school. However a comparison of schools of a similar size and status whose parents are not engaging in the dialogic reading approach with their children may provide vital national research. This would bring renewed interest and research to dialogic reading in an Irish context.
2. All early year educators should engage in Dialogic Reading training as part of continuous professional development especially with regard to the new

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Primary Oral Language curriculum and emergent literacy skill development in the early years.

3. School libraries and public libraries should be utilised to their full potential to encourage communities to avail of the facilities that are readily available to the young reader.
4. Training senior classes in a Dialogic Reading Buddy system which could be used during reading engagements with the junior classes could further develop positive reading experiences in the school community.
5. The use of dialogic reading and technology in the home and school environments is an area that warrants further research.
6. Regarding my own studies, the immense amount of data generated over the course of this reading project lends itself to be further analysed and perhaps further triangulated with regard to how family size, socioeconomic status, the age of the boys and girls and the parents' level of education impacted upon their results and participation in the six week research study.
7. A longitudinal study examining early intervention, phonological awareness and later reading comprehension skills involving the sample group children could also be undertaken as part of further research.

### **Conclusion**

Literacy learning in the 21st Century is changing and will continue to do so. Recent governments have invested heavily in early education in this country. Nevertheless it is imperative that such investments undertaken by the state are inclusive of parents, pupils and educators. The message on educational investment must be generational. In other words what we do for our children we hope they will do for theirs. However presuming that parents know everything about learning is equivalent to presuming that educators know everything

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about parenting. This research study was led by a teacher and enacted by parents. Both parties have engaged in a sharing of minds, skills and experience and the learning expectations and experiences have been valuable. It has changed the quality of parent and child literacy experiences in the home environment. The results of this study would certainly suggest that dialogic reading strongly lends itself as an effective and practical reading approach for parents to use to promote oral language, emergent literacy skills and positive reading experiences in the home environment.

The NCCA support the use of dialogic reading on a national scale. (Shiel et al., 2012) Yet the practice of dialogic reading is not commonplace in early year settings or primary school infant classes. Therefore more needs to be done to impress upon those responsible for educational development that funding new curricular areas like the Primary Language Curriculum on a large scale must be met with effective initiatives such as this one. Dialogic reading has rooted itself in the homes and heart of our school and the results have been encouraging and transformative for the families and educators involved.



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**APPENDICES****APPENDIX A****Letter of Consent (Board of Management)**

My Address

10/1/2017

Name and Address of Principal/ Chairperson of Board of Management.

Dear, (Chairperson)/ (Principal),

I am currently completing my second and final year of a Master's research programme in Early Childhood Education. As part of my thesis, I am required to submit a research proposal and complete a research project. My chosen research area examines the home literacy environment and emergent literacy skills using a Dialogic Reading project. I am seeking the Board's permission to undertake research with regard to literacy in (School Name) over a six week period.

The intervention project will run for 6 weeks and will be open to Senior Infant parents and pupils. Participating parents will receive training workshops in the Dialogic Reading approach. The participating children will be tested pre and post intervention. Parents and children must provide written consent to partake. Copies of consent will be available to the Board.

The intervention involves parents reading to their children at home. However, I am seeking the Boards permission to use the school hall as the venue for training workshops. I will secure permission from parents and children to involve them in the research. All children will remain anonymous throughout the process. I guarantee confidentiality of all

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

data collected and assure that no names of the parents, pupils or the school will be published when I present this study.

Data collected will be used for examination purposes only. Photographs, test results, questionnaires, reflective journals and interview recordings will be used for study purposes only and will not be published or used in any other capacity.

I would be grateful for the permission and support from the Board of Management in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued support.

I/ we give permission to undertake a Research Intervention Project in (School Name).

I/ we give Permission to use (School Name) School Hall for research purposes.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Yours Sincerely,

Christine Mullen (Mobile Number)



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Letter of Consent (All Parents)**

My Address

10/1/2017

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

My name is Christine Mullen. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for a Masters in Early Childhood Education and I would like to invite you and your child to participate. I am researching Literacy in Senior Infants. The project lasts for 6 weeks and involves reading one book to your child every evening. If you do not have the time to commit to the project but would like your child to be part of it you may appoint a grandparent or any other guardian to take part.

If you decide to participate, you and your child will be asked to take part in a Story Reading Project for 15 minutes every evening. You the participants will make up two groups, a sample and control. Selection for each group will be random. However regardless of which group you and your child are initially selected for, please note the project will be offered to all the children involved over two rounds. There is no cost to participate. You will be asked to attend an information meeting, complete a short questionnaire and receive your starter pack, which includes a beanbag for every participating child. This beanbag will create your Story Space for the duration of the project. All the story books will be provided by me and they will be read by you, to your child at home. Your child will be tested before and after the story project. The project lasts for 6 weeks and does not include reading at weekends.

The introductory meeting will take place in the school hall and should last about 45 minutes. The times and dates will be confirmed in a follow up letter next week. All

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

participating parents and guardians will then receive a one hour training session on Dialogic Reading. During this session, I will show you the books we will share over the 6 weeks and a short video that shows you exactly what Dialogic Reading entails.

Over the course of the 6 weeks you will receive my full support and guidance. I will also be available to answer any questions you may have. At the end of the 6 weeks, I will ask you to meet with me for a follow up questionnaire and an interview about your thoughts and feedback on the project. Data collected will be used for examination purposes only and will not be published or used in any other capacity. College regulations require that data is store for 13 months post examinations. After this time, all recordings and samples will be destroyed. I will observe the highest possible ethical standards and I will maintain the integrity of each individual in my data gathering and research.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you begin the project and can no longer continue for any reason, you have the right to withdraw. I will not use any data I have collected from you to that point. Participants' records will be collected using a record number rather than a name. The findings will be recorded in group form so individual names, voice or details will not appear when I present this study or publish its results. All transcripts, questionnaires and interviews will be saved on a password protected laptop.

Please read the following statements carefully. If you are willing to participate in the research, please tick each box and sign below. You may return this letter to the school in the envelope provided.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

- I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without giving reason.
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
- I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in publications.
- I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to be tested before and after the project.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address or number listed below. Thank you for your consideration.

With kindest regards and thanks,

Christine Mullen

[\(email address\)](#) (Mobile Number)

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this letter by Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017.**

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Letter to Parents (Sample Group)**

School Address

30/1/2017

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the study and for returning your letters of consent. You and your child have been selected to form the sample group for this research project. Our introductory meeting will take place this **Thursday Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>** at **3.30pm** in the **School Hall**. It should last no longer than an hour and refreshments will be provided. This session will be relaxed, enjoyable and informal. This project is designed to ensure that you and your child enjoy your daily story engagement. I will present each of you with you starter pack and your child's beanbag. The starter pack has everything you need for the duration of the study. I will show you the books we will share over the next 6 weeks. Finally I will give you some background information on Dialogic Reading and share some story reading video footage with you. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study during this session.

I am enclosing a questionnaire on literacy at home please take some time to fill this out. You may return this questionnaire to the school in the envelope provided. I am really looking forward to getting started and indeed to working with you and your children over the next 6 weeks.

With kindest regards and thanks,

Christine Mullen

[\( Email Address \)](#) (Mobile Number)

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Letter to Parents (Control Group)**

School Address

30/1/2017

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the study and for returning your letters of consent. You and your child have been selected to form the control group for this research project. To that end I will require you to fill out a questionnaire and I will testing your child before and after the reading project takes place. However, in the interest of fairness and considering my ethical obligations that all children benefit from the research project. I will be repeating the reading project with you and your child after the initial 6 week project is complete.

I am enclosing a questionnaire on literacy at home please take some time to fill this out. You may return this questionnaire to the school in the envelope provided. I am really looking forward to getting started and indeed to working with you and your child.

With kindest regards and thanks,

Christine Mullen

[\( Email Address \)](#) (Mobile Number)

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Letter of Assent**

School Name

Date

Dear (Student Name),

My name is Ms Mullen. I am a student at Marino College. I am asking you to be part of a study because I am trying to learn more about how young children can read at home with grown-ups. Your parents have already given permission for you to be in the study.

If you agree to be in the study you will be trying out a new reading style at home. This will help you and I understand more about how we read books together. It will help you and your parents to look at stories in different ways too. There are no risks that will result from you doing the story reading project.

The benefits of this study are that you and your parent will read many new books together. You do not have to participate in this study and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate. You can ask me any questions you have about this study. Writing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Statement of Ethics Letter**

January 2016

To whom it concerns,

My name is Christine Mullen. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for a Masters in Early Childhood Education. As part of my thesis, I am required to submit a research proposal and complete a research project. My chosen research area examines a six week dialogic reading intervention provided by parents on senior infant pupils. The researcher aims to engage in the following:

- Examine the effectiveness of Dialogic Reading in the home environment, with parents as tutors as an intervention to increase emergent literacy skills.
- Examine the effectiveness of Dialogic Reading in the home environment, with parents as tutors as an intervention to increase oral language skills.
- Examine and analyse the parent's perspectives and experiences before, during and after the intervention.

As a member of staff and a primary school teacher, I am aware that I am in a position of responsibility and trust. Therefore, I give you my word that I will uphold the highest possible ethical standards possible. With your permission this research will be conducted in collaboration with the parents and children in senior infants of (School Name). I consider this research study to be of relevance to the participants and important to the literacy targets of the whole school plan. At no time will the study interfere with daily class time. The child's learning and how the intervention will benefit and support their literacy abilities is of great importance to the researcher.

Data will be collected by means of questionnaires, focus groups, individual interviews, test results and journaling. I will receive written consent from participants prior

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

to data collection. Strict confidentiality will be observed and no names of the school or its participants will be made public.

I would be grateful for the permission and support from the Board of Management in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued support.

I/ we give permission to undertake a Research Intervention Project in (School Name).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Yours Sincerely,

Christine Mullen (Mobile Number)



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## APPENDIX B

Literacy Pre-Intervention SurveyPILOTPart 1Reading To Your Child

1) How often do you read to your child? (Please circle one)

Never      Daily      More than once a day      Weekly      Several times per  
week

2) What age was your child when you began reading to them? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you read a book from start to finish in one sitting with your child? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

4) Do you stop at various parts of the book to discuss the story? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

5) Do you begin a sentence in the story and allow the child to complete it? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

6) When you have finished reading the book. Do you ask your child questions about what happened in the story? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

7) Do you praise your child's responses? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

8) Do you relate the story in the book to a similar experience in your child's life? E.g. remembering a time your child went to the beach/ a dental appointment/ first day at school etc. (Please circle one)

Never            Always            Sometimes            Rarely            Often

9) Do you repeat and expand your child's vocabulary? E.g. if the child says "I see a dog in the picture" would you the adult say "Yes you do see a big brown dog in the picture". (Please circle one)

Never            Always            Sometimes            Rarely            Often

10) How many books does your child own (approximately)? (Please circle one)

0-10            10-25            25-50            50-75            75-100

11) How many books do you own (approximately)? (Please circle one)

0-10            10-25            25-50            50-75            75-100

12) Do you have a library card?

Yes            No

13) Does your child have a library card?

Yes            No

14) How often do you use the public library for books for your child? (Please circle one)

Never            Rarely            about once a month            about once a week            a few times a year

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

15) How often do you use the public library for books for yourself? (Please circle one)

Never      Rarely      about once a month      about once a week      a few times a  
year

16) Do you enjoy reading to your child?

(Please circle one)

Yes      No

**Part 2**

**Your Child as a Reader**

1) Do you feel that your child is a motivated reader? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

2) Does your child comment on pictures without being prompted when you read stories together? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

3) Does your child ask about pictures without being prompted when you read stories together? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

4) Does your child pretend to read the story in a book and make up their own version of the story to match the pictures? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

5) When you read a book that your child is familiar with do they talk about the next word or line before you read it? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

6) Does your child ask questions about characters or pictures during story reading?  
(Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

7) Is your child interested in books? (Please circle one)

Yes              No

8) How often does your child ask you what words mean? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

9) Would your child ever talk to you about books that they are reading? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

10) How often do you listen to your child reading aloud? (Please circle one)

Never              Daily              Weekly              2-3 times a week              Rarely

11) How often does an adult in the home read to your child? (Please circle one)

Never              Daily              Weekly              2-3 times a week              Rarely

12) Who is the most likely person to read to your child at home? (Please circle one)

Mother              Father              Sibling              Grandparent              Other\_\_\_\_\_

13) How much time does your child spend watching television per day? (Please circle one)

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

14) How much time does your child spend on a tablet per day? (Please circle one)

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

15) How much time does your child spend on a computer per day? (Please circle one)

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

16) How much do you agree with the following statement? (Please circle one)

There is not enough literacy support and training provided for parents in order to help them with reading to their children.

Strongly agree            Agree            Undecided            Disagree            Strongly  
Disagree

17) How much do you agree with the following statement? (Please circle one)

I would take part in a training workshop for parents, who what to learn more about new curriculum approaches to reading in the Infant classes.

Strongly agree            Agree            Undecided            Disagree            Strongly  
Disagree

*Thank you for your patience!*

*Please return this survey in the envelope provided on or before*

*Friday February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017.*

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Literacy Pre-Intervention Survey****Part 1****Reading To Your Child**

1) How often do you read to your child? (Please circle one)

Never      Daily      More than once a day      Weekly      Several times per  
week

2) What age was your child when you began reading to them? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you read a book from start to finish in one sitting with your child? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

4) Do you stop at various parts of the book to discuss the story? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

5) Do you begin a sentence in the story and allow the child to complete it? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

6) When you have finished reading the book. Do you ask your child questions about what happened in the story? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

7) Do you praise your child's responses? (Please circle one)

Never      Always      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

8) Do you relate the story in the book to a similar experience in your child's life? E.g. remembering a time your child went to the beach/ a dental appointment/ first day at school etc. (Please circle one)

Never            Always            Sometimes            Rarely            Often

9) Do you repeat and expand your child's vocabulary? E.g. if the child says "I see a dog in the picture" would you the adult say "Yes you do see a big brown dog in the picture". (Please circle one)

Never            Always            Sometimes            Rarely            Often

10) How many books does your child own (approximately)? (Please circle one)

0-10            10-25            25-50            50-75            75-100

11) How many books do you own (approximately)? (Please circle one)

0-10            10-25            25-50            50-75            75-100

12) Do you have a library card?

Yes            No

13) Does your child have a library card?

Yes            No

14) How often do you use the public library for books for your child? (Please circle one)

Never            Rarely            about once a month            about once a week            a few times a year

15) How often do you use the public library for books for yourself? (Please circle one)

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Never      Rarely      about once a month      about once a week      a few times a  
year

16) How would you rate your level of enjoyment when reading to your child?

(Please circle one number)

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Least Favourite activity      Moderately favourite activity      Favourite  
activity

**Part 2**

**Your Child as a Reader**

1) Do you feel that your child is a motivated reader? (Please circle one)

Never      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

2) Does your child comment on pictures without being prompted when you read stories together? (Please circle one)

Never      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

3) Does your child ask about pictures without being prompted when you read stories together? (Please circle one)

Never      Sometimes      Rarely      Often

4) Does your child pretend to read the story in a book and make up their own version of the story to match the pictures? (Please circle one)

Never      Sometimes      Rarely      Often



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

5) When you read a book that your child is familiar with do they talk about the next word or line before you read it? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

6) Does your child ask questions about characters or pictures during story reading?  
(Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

7) How would you rate your child's interest in books? (Please circle one number)

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9            10

Least Favourite activity                      Moderately favourite activity                      Favourite activity

8) How often does your child ask you what words mean? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

9) Would your child ever talk to you about books that they are reading? (Please circle one)

Never                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Often

10) How often do you listen to your child reading aloud? (Please circle one)

Never            Daily            Weekly            2-3 times a week            Rarely

11) How often does an adult in the home read to your child? (Please circle one)

Never            Daily            Weekly            2-3 times a week            Rarely

12) Who is the most likely person to read to your child at home? (Please circle one)

Mother            Father            Sibling            Grandparent            Other \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

13) How much time does your child spend watching television per day? (Please circle one)

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

14) How much time does your child spend on a tablet per day? (Please circle one)

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

15) How much time does your child spend on a computer per day? (Please circle one)

0 mins            20- 45 mins            1-2 hours            2-3 hours            3-4 hours

16) How much do you agree with the following statement? (Please circle one)

There is not enough literacy support and training provided for parents in order to help them with reading to their children.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Agree            Strongly Agree            Undecided

17) How much do you agree with the following statement? (Please circle one)

I would take part in a training workshop for parents, who what to learn more about new curriculum approaches to reading in the Infant classes.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree            Agree            Strongly Agree            Undecided

*Thank you for your patience!*

*Please return this survey in the envelope provided on or before*

*Friday February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017*

PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

APPENDIX C

Dialogic Reading Workshop



# PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## Dialogic Reading PowerPoint Presentation

### Welcome

- > Introduction
- > Information on why I am undertaking this project.
- > Purpose of Research  
Essentially the study aims to examine how the school can provide more support for parents in the Infant classes in relation to their child's literacy experience at home and in school.

### CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANTS

Why was your child included in the study?

- > Your child is in Senior infants.
- > Your child has completed a full year in Junior Infants in this school.
- > Your child is aged between 5 and 6 years.
- > English is your child's first language.
- > English is the language spoken in the child's home.

### What is dialogic reading?

- > Dialogic reading is a reading approach based on dialogue or conversation between the adult and the child.
- > Unlike traditional reading dialogic reading involves families reading *with* their children rather than *to* their children.
- > Dialogic reading uses questions at different points of the story to steer and prompt vocabulary and oral language development within the child.

### Why target Oral Language?

Research shows us:

"In those schools where children achieve high standards of literacy, parents are seen as key partners. Reading aloud to a child has an indisputable positive influence on literacy. When a parent interacts with their child during picture book reading aloud, they explain vocabulary, provide information, explain new concepts and develop their language ability."  
(Morrow 1987)

"Reading in the home from a young age is the biggest influence on later literacy achievement"  
(Welsh 2004)

### Why dialogic reading?

- > Dialogic reading has been widely researched on an international level.
- > It has been seen as a positive framework for empowering parents to use questions and answers to develop children's thoughts and ideas through the medium of picture story books.
- > Interactive reading will make you the adult more familiar with how your child learns and will give you the skills to support your child's learning at home.
- > [Dialogic Reading Video](#).

### READING STYLES

#### TRADITIONAL

- > Adult selects the book.
- > Adult reads the book aloud.
- > Child listens but does not participate in the story.
- > No opportunity given to stop and discuss the story.
- > After the story is read the adult may or may not ask some questions about the story.
- > No opportunities given to connect to the child's world.

#### DIALOGIC

- > Adult & child select the book together.
- > Adult & child discuss the title, the author and cover of the book.
- > Adult reads the book aloud and **stops** at various points of the story to ask questions.
- > Prediction skills are encouraged as well as relating child's own life experiences to the story.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## READING STYLE VIDEOS

**TRADITIONAL**

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What would **I** do differently?

**DIALOGIC**

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What would **we** do differently?

We use Reflective Journals are used to record how the "reading experience" went.

## Parents Reflective Journal

- You will be given a journal to record your thoughts, opinions and learning over the duration of the project.
- Please write freely, openly and honestly as if you were writing a note to a friend.
- Keep it as short or as long as you like .
- Some days you may have a lot to write, other days it may literally be 3 lines or 3 words the choice is yours!
- If you are completely unsure what to write think back to what went **well** , what went **wrong** or indeed what **would** you do differently next time. (The 3 W's).

## DIALOGIC READING INTERVENTION PROCESS

- Reading Project lasts from Feb 5<sup>th</sup> - Mar 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 2 storybooks will be read on alternative nights. E.g. **Book 1**: Monday & Wednesday.  
**Book 2**: Tuesday & Thursday.
- Reading lasts for 15-20 mins approximately.
- Parents must track their feelings about the "reading experience" in a Reflective Journal.
- We will exchange books every Friday at 2pm in the school hall.
- No reading Friday or over the weekend.

## TIPS FOR DIALOGIC READING

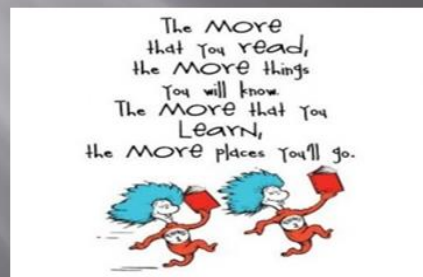
- Chose a suitable "Story Space" in your home.
- Place the beanbag here and explain to your child that you would like to share some new books with him/her in that Story Space.
- You will have 2 story books invite the child to chose one to begin the week. Let the child know you will read the other book the following day.

## Reading Format

- Discuss title , author and cover with your child.
- Begin reading and **track** every word using your **finger**.
- Stop reading when a question pops up from the book or the child.
- Repeat the child's answer, expand it and reply.
- **PRAISE! PRAISE! PRAISE!** Every response your child offers it is important to them.
- Use your Parent Dialogic Bookmark if necessary.
- Remember every story book in the world can be read using dialogic reading. It's not new just new to us!

## Thank You For Participating!

Dr Seuss



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Dialogic Reading Timetable**

STUDENT'S NAME

Week 1: 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
ROSIE'S HAT Julia Donaldson	BELLA THE BRAVE FAIRY Claire Henley	ROSIE'S HAT Julia Donaldson	BELLA THE BRAVE FAIRY Claire Henley

Week 2: 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
FRIENDS Kim Lewis	SONNY'S BIRTHDAY SURPRISE Lisa Stubbs	FRIENDS Kim Lewis	SONNY'S BIRTHDAY SURPRISE Lisa Stubbs

Week 3: 20<sup>th</sup>- 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
LUCKY MUCKY PUP Ken Brown	HERE COMES THE TRAIN Charlotte Voake	LUCKY MUCKY PUP Ken Brown	HERE COMES THE TRAIN Charlotte Voake

Week 4: 27<sup>th</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
THE STORM WHALE Bengi Davies	OLLY THE OCTOPUS Narinder Dhamni	THE STORM WHALE Bengi Davies	OLLY THE OCTOPUS Narinder Dhamni

Week 5: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
GIRAFFES CANT DANCE Jiles Andrea	ONCE UPON A TIDE Tony Mitton	GIRAFFES CANT DANCE Jiles Andrea	ONCE UPON A TIDE Tony Mitton

Week 6: 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 1	BOOK 2
RABBIT'S WOOLLY JUMPER Mark Birchall	THE WITCH'S CHILDREN AND THE QUEEN Ursula Jones	RABBIT'S WOOLLY JUMPER Mark Birchall	THE WITCH'S CHILDREN AND THE QUEEN Ursula Jones

## Dialogic Reading Bookmark

# Dialogic Reading CHEAT SHEET



*Where is the \_\_\_\_\_?*  
*Can you touch the \_\_\_\_\_?*  
**What noise does that animal make?** **What is this called?** **Who is that?** *What can you find in this picture?* *What is that person doing?* *What is happening in this picture?*  
*Where do you think they are going?* **WHY DO YOU THINK HE DID THAT?** **Have you ever done that?** **How do you think she feels?** **Have you ever felt like that?** **WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN NEXT?** **What would you do if that happened to you?**

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Dialogic Reading List**

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>PUBLISHER</b>
Here Comes The Train	Charlotte Voake	Walker Books
Sonny's Birthday Prize	Lisa Stubbs	Piccadilly Press
The Witch's Children And The Queen	Ursula Jones & Russell Ayto	Orchard Books
The Storm Whale	Benji Davies	Simon and Schuster
Once Upon A Tide	Tony Mitton & Selina Young	David Fickling Books
Friends	Kim Lewis	Walker Books
The Rainbow Fish	Marcus Pfister	Northsouth
Come On, Baby Duck!	Nick Ward	Little Tiger Press
Giraffes Can't Dance	Giles Andreae & Guy Parker-Rees	Orchard Books
Lucky Mucky Pup	Ken Brown	Andresen Press
Rabbit's Woolly Jumper	Mark Birchall	Andresen Press
Olly The Octopus	Narinder Dhani & Jeffery Reid	Heinemann Publishers



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## APPENDIX D

## Emergent Literacy Tests

## DUNCAN WORD TEST SCORE SHEET

Use either list of words

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

TEST SCORE: 

Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_

STANINE GROUP: 

Record incorrect responses beside word

LIST A	LIST B
and	to
my	I
it	is
up	you
Mum	for
in	went
on	are
Dad	he
go	no
me	can
we	was
big	said
of	come
going	see
she	but
little	here
have	got
out	not
down	am
they	some
what	that
there	with
came	all

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Letter Identification Test**

A	F	K	P	W	Z
B	H	O	J	U	
C	Y	L	Q	M	
D	N	S	X	I	
E	G	R	V	T	
a	f	k	p	w	z
b	h	o	j	u	a
c	y	l	q	m	
d	n	s	x	i	
e	g	r	v	t	g

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## Fluency Test

*Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB) Record Form***Fluency Test**

<b>SEMANTIC</b>	
Practice item. things in your school	
1. things to eat	S1: Score
2. animals	S2: Score
<b>SEMANTIC FLUENCY TOTAL SCORE</b>	
<b>ALLITERATION</b>	
Practice item. /k/	
1. /b/	A1: Score
2. /m/	A2: Score
<b>ALLITERATION FLUENCY TOTAL SCORE</b>	
<b>RHYME</b>	
Practice item. bat	
1. more	R1: Score
2. whip	R2: Score
<b>RHYME FLUENCY TOTAL SCORE</b>	

*Illegal photocopying is theft and may result in prosecution*

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Concepts of Print**

<u>Emerging Concepts of Print Assessment</u>
<u>Name</u>
<u>Date</u>
CONCEPT OF BOOK
Cover of book
Show me the cover of the book.
Show me the front of the book.
Show me the back of the book.
Title
Where is the title?
CONCEPT OF TEXT
Print tells a story
Show me where the book tells the story.
Concept of a word
Can you point to a word?
Can you point to two words that are the same?
Point to each word as you read.
Do the words you read match the words on the page?
Concept of a letter
Can you show me a letter?
What are the names of some of the letters?
DIRECTIONALITY

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Beginning at the front
Where do we start reading the book?
Where do we finish reading the book?
Which way do we go when reading?
Show me the top of the page.
Show me the bottom of the page.
Left to right page turning
Which way do we turn the page?
Return sweep
Where do we go when we get to the end of the line?
Concept of first
Show me the first word on the page.
Concept of last
Show me the last word on the page.
Concept of middle
Show me the middle of the page.
CAPITALISATION
Where is a capital letter?
Punctuation
Where is a small letter or a lower-case letter?
Full stop
What is this? (point to full stop)
Comma
What is this? (point to comma)

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Question mark
What is this? (point to question mark)
Quotation marks
What are these? (point to quotation marks)
Score    /27

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Sample Dialogic Storybook Prompts**

Sonny's Birthday Surprise by Lisa Stubbs

Can you remember a time when you got an invitation?

What can you see in the picture?

How do you think Sonny feels before going to the party?

Can you name some of the presents Katie got for her birthday?

What is happening at the table?

How old do you think Katie is?

Which party hat do you like best?

Which game would you like to play? Why?

Have you ever felt like Sonny?

Where did Sonny look for all the other ducks?

Where do you think Sonny might be?

Can you remember your birthday party?

What did you like best about it?

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## APPENDIX E

Christine Mullen 30/4/17

## DATA ANALYSIS TRAJECTORY

<u>Research Question 1</u>	<u>Research Question 2</u>
How does a 6 week dialogic reading intervention in the home with parents as tutor's effect children's emergent literacy skills?	What factors support parents and the implementation of dialogic reading in the home environment?

**DATA COLLECTED****THEMES EMERGING FROM DATA ANALYSIS (T.E.R.P)**

<b><u>TIME</u></b>	<b><u>ENGAGEMENT</u></b>	<b><u>RELATIONSHIPS</u></b>	<b><u>PERCEPTIONS</u></b>
<b>PARENTS</b> 66% of parents believed finding time to read to their children a challenge.	<b>PARENTS</b> How parents engaged with their child as a reader, the DR project and the researcher has emerged data analysis.	<b>PARENTS</b> Analysis of the data shows references of a positive impact on relationships between adult, child, school, community and other parents.	<b>PARENTS</b> Evidence of changes in parent's beliefs and behaviours surrounding story books and reading is common and central to the data collected.
<b>CHILDREN</b> The time of day children participated in the reading effected the experience.	<b>CHILDREN</b> How children engaged with the books, the parent, the pre & post testing and the researcher is also a relevant theme.	<b>CHILDREN</b> Analysis of the data shows references of a positive impact on relationships between children and parents.	<b>CHILDREN</b> Evidence of changes in children's behaviours is equally apparent in the data collected. Sub themes such as participant's motivation, attendance to reading and expressive language have also emerged.
	<b>RESEARCHER</b> How the researcher engaged with the participants is an important aspect of the data analysis (draw upon reflexivity and scaffolding to explain findings that emerge)	<b>RESEARCHER</b> How this intervention has impacted on the researcher and her relationship with parents in education and on her view of parents in partnership.	<b>RESEARCHER</b> The researcher's perceptions, beliefs and observations of the participants during the project will also be presented.



## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

The 2 Anchor Approach

<u>What effect the programme had on the children's emergent literacy skills?</u>	<u>How the parents experienced the dialogic reading intervention?</u>

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Sample Focus Group Transcript**

Researcher: Welcome everyone. We are now half way through the project and I am interested to hear how you are getting on. Is two books enough?

All participants: Yes.

Researcher: What have you all noticed on the second nights reading engagement?

Rose: (X) flies through it and says I know what's happening next.

Poppy: I find the same with (X).

Researcher: Have you all stuck to the post it prompts or are you brave enough to create your own?

Poppy: I found that (X) did not really like "The Witch's Children" so I made up some of my own but it was late and she was tired and she mainly answered yes and no and shrugged her shoulders till the end.

Researcher: Would she usually do that?

Poppy: No she really enjoyed the previous week's stories. I just don't think this book appealed to her that's all.

Researcher: Did anyone else have that experience?

Lily: Yes with that same book actually (X) was disinterested in it and found it hard to relate to also.

Daisy: No. I stick to the prompts but I found (X) can relate that book to her own life.

Lily: I find if he can't relate to a book he switches off.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Heather: I would agree, that happened me too.

Lily: He loved last week's books about saving the whale on the beach and talked a lot more during that sitting.

Researcher: Have any of you noticed any differences in the children's interactions with big books as opposed to small books?

Dahlia: The big books are a hit in our house he loved opening it out on the floor and standing back to look at the pictures.

Daisy: (X) loves the big books this is her first week to have one and she loves the size. She even said "wow look at the size of the pictures Mom". We are going away tonight and she actually said to me "don't forget to pack my two books".

Rose: I find (X) loves the big books too. I couldn't see her behind the big book last week driving home from school. She read it before we got home and then I read it to her. We spent way over the time. But she talked at great length about the big pictures and what would happen next.

Heather: I find the whole family can get involved and we can go over on time also but if the talk is flowing it can be hard to stop.

Rose: (X) told me that the word "Olly" was spelt wrong on the big book and that it should have "ie" at the end. I told her that there are two ways to spell it. But I was surprised that she noticed that. She read that book many times. Is that okay to let her read it over and over?

Researcher: Absolutely. There is no limit on how many times the children can read the books but try and be the first to read it them and then let them off and you can observe what they do with it after that.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Rose: We could spend 15 minutes on each page. She just talks and talks and talks.

Researcher: You may have to rein her back in, to keep the storyline flowing. Would she still follow the storyline with such lengthy dialogue?

Rose: Yes she can tell me what it is all about at the end.

Researcher: Has anyone else had this experience?

Dahlia: Yeah. We spend a lot of time chatting about how different trips and days out relate to the story.

Lily: I like that part too it's amazing the times they remember.

Daisy: And forget! (Laughing)

Researcher: Sounds interesting Daisy would you like to share it with us?

Daisy: Well we took a day trip to Dublin on the train when (X) was two and during the reading of "The Train" I told her about that time and she has absolutely no memory of it at all. I couldn't believe it I wrote about it in the journal.

Researcher: That is interesting. I look forward to reading about it. How is the journal writing going?

Heather: Good it helps me try different things. I keep the bookmark on the fridge.

Rose: I feel I am writing the same thing all the time because she seems to have the same experience with every book and I write that.

Poppy: I have the same problem.

Researcher: Would you be able to give us an example?

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Rose: Well I write that she knows what's going to happen next and she talks about the story.

Researcher: What does she say about the story?

Rose: Well in "Bella the Brave Fairy" she said she was just like "Bella" the fairy who helped everyone.

Researcher: So she related to the "good" character.

Rose: Yes and I noticed that she does that a lot when we are reading books like that.

Researcher: Would you find that too Poppy?

Poppy: No it's more if a book doesn't appeal to her interests. I don't know what to write after.

Researcher: Maybe you should change your writing perspective for the next 3 weeks.

Instead of writing about what your child does during the reading time write from your point of view. Make connections and write about your observations of how she thinks about the story and how she relates it to herself.

Rose: Yes that's a good idea because I noticed she wants to be a certain character in every book and names other people in her life as the other characters.

Poppy: I will try it and see.

Researcher: Maybe all of us could try it and see if there is a difference in our writing?

Lily: I might try that too because I am struggling to write different things.

Researcher: It is ok if some of the comments in the journal are the same. The main thing is just be honest and write what happened positive or negative it is a learning curve for all of us. Writing from your perspective will tell you more about your child and how they read.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Remember different factors affect the reading engagement. Do you all have a set time for the project?

Poppy: I find the earlier the better.

Daisy: Between 2 and 3 is the ideal time and it is when I get the most out of (X). I have done it later and earlier is definitely better.

Lily: Yes I find some evenings it's late and I rush through it. Could we keep the books over the weekend?

Daisy: Yes I agree Monday change over for the books would be better and they can bring the new books home that day if that is okay?

Researcher: I don't mind as long as everyone commits to Monday morning returns because I like to check over them and make sure the prompts are in place for the next reader. Would Monday suit everyone?

Poppy: Yes

Heather: No problem

Dahlia: Yes for sure I will have more time then too.

Rose: I don't mind at all. (X) loves it and can't wait to sit and do it every evening. I saw lovely books in Aldi last week. They are only €1.99 and I got some.

Researcher: What kind of books were they?

Rose: They had lovely pictures. It was about an orange fish who was different and how all the other fish thought he was strange and different at first but then as the story went on the other fish discover how nice he is.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Heather: I might get some of those.

Researcher: That is great to hear thank you for sharing that with the group. One of the things your children will discover as they become more experienced readers is the underlying message in print. Children discover issues like as you mentioned Rose identity, gender, race and equality or fairness in stories. It is referred to by the experts as “Critical Literacy” and in many ways this Dialogic reading project is asserting your child albeit on a basic level to find the hidden meaning in the story. So don’t underestimate the power of what you are doing. It will plant a seed that may take some time to germinate.

Lily: Wow! I never thought about that.

Daisy: I noticed that (X) was mad keen to go to the Annual Book Club last week and I had definite books in mind. I also had a book picked out but she really wanted this particular book. So I gave in because I was doing this project and I knew how important it was to go with what they can relate to. She got it and has not put it down all week and prior to this I would have bought the book I thought was best.

Researcher: That is very interesting would you all agree that your ideas of what books are best for your children have changed?

Dahlia: Yes we have lots of books at home but I can see now why he might not look at them.

Heather: It’s about finding the right one for him really.

Researcher: That is really quite a positive thing. Now that we are midway through and you have some DR experience behind you do you think this project would be of use to the parents in the Junior Infant class?

Lily: Yes but with easier prompts.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Rose: No. I think it is good for the older children because they can read.

Poppy: Yes. I had a niece present for one of the readings she is in Junior Infants and she was bouncing off the seat to answer questions so definitely.

Daisy: It definitely would do no harm.

Rose: Actually I would love to have had it last year *and* this year and then compare how much further on they would be.

Daisy: Yeah I would have loved to have known a lot of this last year.

Researcher: That is great feedback thanks for being so honest about it. We have 3 weeks left and for the final 3 weeks I would like you all to keep reading and recording as you have been but try and draw your child's attention to the speech marks, exclamation marks and the full stop. Call them by name and use them with meaning. They are in Senior Infants and are able for this. Plus it will give you all an added focus for the final 3 weeks.

Lily: I am doing that as I go but I will tell him they are called now.

Researcher: Yes please do and see if the children imitate or use them at any time and please record this in your reflection journals. Have you any other questions?

All Participants: No

Researcher: Thanks for coming and contact me if you have any queries next week.



**APPENDIX F****Post Interview Questions**

1. Do you think the 6 week dialogic reading programme has changed how you read to your child?
2. Was it difficult or easy to use in the home?
3. What is the most challenging thing about reading at home do you think?
4. Do you think using the beanbag as a story space helped in any way?
5. Did you notice any changes in your child's oral language skills or reading over the 6 weeks?
6. Did you notice any changes in your child's reading skills over the 6 weeks?
7. Have you used any of the questioning techniques during story time since finishing the project?
8. Have you tried these techniques with brothers or sisters in the house?
9. Has this project informed you on the type of book to buy for your child?
10. Did you enjoy taking part?
11. Do you think your child enjoyed it?
12. Would you recommend this programme to other parents?
13. During the 6 weeks did you use this approach with other books?
14. Do you think Junior Infants would be a more suitable age group for this project?
15. What page prompts did you find worked best for your child?
16. Which one of the follow best describes how your child responds to a story?

Dramatizing Talking Out Inserting Critiquing/controlling Taking Over

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Post intervention Interview Transcripts Children**

What did you like about the story reading project?

TC1 "I like when we lie down and cuddle up and read the books"

TC2 "I liked all of the pictures it gives me hints what words there is."

TC3 "I liked sitting on the beanbag."

TC4 "I liked the questions best."

TC5" I liked when the boy got the whale out of the bath. I liked the big books they were so big."

TC6 "The books were kind of good they had like stories in them all of it wasn't the same"

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

**Post intervention Interview Transcript Parents**

Researcher: Do you think the 6 week dialogic reading programme has changed how you read to your child?

Heather: "Yes it opened up dialogue and discussion which I loved."

Researcher: Was it difficult or easy to use in the home?

Heather: "It was very easy but I found that I had to switch off all social media and the radio and all the other distractions."

Researcher: What is the most challenging thing about reading at home do you think?

Heather: "Parents have to make a conscious effort to turn off social media"

Researcher: Do you think using the beanbag as a story space helped in any way?

Heather: "No not really we used the couch a lot. The whole family got involved."

Researcher: Did you notice any changes in your child's oral language skills or reading over the 6 weeks?

Heather: "Yes his reading interest has intensified. He enjoys it now."

Researcher: Did you notice any changes in your child's reading skills over the 6 weeks?

Heather: "I suppose I would actually say he is inquiring more what does this word means, recognising and asking more questions. I think it has sparked an interest."

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Researcher: Have you used any of the questioning techniques during story time since finishing the project?

Heather: "Yes I use it all the time now."

Researcher: Have you tried these techniques with brothers or sisters in the house?

Heather: "Yes it was a family bonding thing."

Researcher: Has this project informed you on the type of book to buy for your child?

Heather "Yes I know what he likes now. He was very proud that he recognised the author of one of the books that rhyme."

Researcher: Did you enjoy taking part?

Heather: "Yes it was most enjoyable"

Researcher: Do you think your child enjoyed it?

Heather: "I asked him and he said he liked it."

Researcher: Would you recommend this programme to other parents?

Heather: "Yes definitely"

Researcher: During the 6 weeks did you use this approach with other books?

Heather: "No but I have since I finished the other books."

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

Researcher: Do you think Junior Infants would be a more suitable age group for this project?

Heather: "Yes I would have liked to have known all this last year."

Researcher: What page prompts did you find worked best for your child?

Heather: "Prompts regarding feelings and what can you see in the picture."

Researcher: Which one of the following best describes how your child responds to a story Dramatizing, Talking Out, Inserting, Critiquing/controlling or Taking Over?

Heather: "Definitely Taking Over he loved it and he has a great imagination."

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

## Sample Journal Entries

If in doubt think about  
The 3 W's

- ✓ What went well?
- ✓ What went wrong?
- ✓ What would I do differently?

Aim to write every day  
 Or a minimum of 2  
 evenings a week.

Monday 6th February 2017

Time 5:30pm

Today we read Friends by Kim Lewis. Bobban was extremely excited to get started. It went very well. She interacted brilliantly throughout the whole book.

I felt that her interest through the story became stronger and she was able to relate back to me about different times things that had happened to her that were similar in her life.

I would definitely change the time we read to her. I think she would ~~be~~ interact even more if we did it at an earlier time.

Thursday 9th Feb

Emlyn was reluctant to read this book tonight as she said it made her feel sad. However we did read it & she talked about feelings... sad, guilty then happiness. I think this was a good book for Emlyn & taught her the importance of being nice & kind to everyone always & the importance of forgiveness.

\* - She said Delphine looked like her but that she would not behave like her.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

2/3 + 3/3  
 Billy the Octopus

Skills

Owyn enjoyed this book, loved the unapologetic graphics. On page 2 she says that the octopus is saying hello & chatting with the little red fish. Owyn can be a devil so she ~~says~~ sees the devilment & can describe that the crab is about to pinch one of his <sup>other</sup> tentacles she felt so sad for Billy when he couldn't juggle like Fiona. She thought he felt angry & I started to explain frustration to her!

Behavio

Tuesday 7th Feb bpm

Adam read to Owyn tonight.

Owyn didn't like Delphine & her behaviour towards Bella. I was surprised when she said at the end that Delphine felt guilty for being nasty towards Bella. When asked who teaches her something new - she talked about Ellen teaching her, her Irish Dances & wanted to show me!

\* Recall

→ Didn't realise she had those words & meanings in her vocabulary.

## PARENTAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGIC READING

found exciting. While reading the story we chatted about various topics eg why the buses Matthew has travelled on have no bus conductors and also why Greenland has no queen. Although this story-book takes longer to read it did keep Matthew's attention.

Weds - 1<sup>st</sup> March - 19.00

Rabbit's Woolly Jumpers <sup>skills</sup>

Matthew noticed more details in the pictures this time eg the dirty bath, the watch on Mrs Rabbit's wrist having no numbers and the traffic outside the window. We spent more time chatting about his experiences his likes and dislikes of

I will continue to read to her and ask questions and really get her mind going. I've never seen her so excited about reading until I started this. Behaviour & belief  
I am so thrilled that Siddhan and I were chosen to take part. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication Christmas. Oh and the bean bag was a hit.  
Thanks again  
Ashling.



**Appendix G**

**Graduation Certificate**

